
a *Grace Notes* publication

Galatians

Dr. Grant C. Richison

Galatians

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Foreword

These lessons in **Galatians** are compiled from the writings of Dr. Grant C. Richison, which were published on the Internet beginning in 1997 in the Campus Crusades (Canada) daily online devotional Today's Word.

Dr. Richison is a highly experienced pastor, lecturer, and Christian servant who is dedicated to a lifetime of studying and teaching God's Word. Almost immediately after his salvation he began to desire to teach the Word, and he set about a lifelong program of preparation and ministry.

Dr. Richison has a diploma from Detroit Bible Institute, a bachelor's degree in religious education from William Tyndale College (Detroit), a Masters in Theology from Dallas Theological Seminary, and a doctorate in ministries from Luther Rice Seminary in Jacksonville, Florida.

Dr. Richison has been pastor and senior pastor of Baptist churches from 1965 to 1992. His most recent pastorate was at Grant Memorial Baptist Church, Winnipeg, Manitoba, where, over a 20 year period, he had oversight of a ministry that expanded from about 350 to more than 2500 communicants. During the period of his pastorates, Dr. Richison was also a lecturer at Detroit Bible College and Winnipeg Theological Seminary.

From 1993 to 1995, Dr. Richison was Director of Leadership Ministries for Campus Crusade for Christ (Canada). He currently has a world-wide lecture ministry with Campus Crusade.

Dr. Richison is an experienced writer, and he provides materials for three areas on the Internet: Sermon on the Net; Today's Word, and Pastors' Power Points. He has considerable ability to communicate God's Word verse by verse in a relevant, clear, applicable and insightful manner and to communicate vision and establish a philosophy of ministry in the local assembly. .

Dr. Richison has served on the following boards and conferences:

- Lower Michigan Baptist General Conference (district of Baptist General Conference, board member)
 - Great Lakes Baptist Conference (district of Baptist General Conference, chairman)
 - Central Canada Baptist Conference (district of Baptist General Conference, chairman)
 - Child Evangelism Fellowship (Manitoba)
 - Evangelical Fellowship of Canada
 - International Ministries to Israel (Canada)
 - Chairman of Greater Manitoba Sunday School Convention
 - Chairman of Marney Patterson Evangelistic Crusade (city-wide in Winnipeg)
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- Chairman of Terry Winter Evangelistic Crusade (city-wide in Winnipeg)
 - Chairman of the "Why Campaign" (city-wide evangelistic trust in Winnipeg)
 - Chairman of the Board of Regents of Canadian Baptist Seminary (part of consortium of seminaries on Trinity Western University)
 - Baptist General Conference of Canada (board member)
 - Briarcrest Bible College and Seminary, Moose Jaw, Sask.
 - Electronic Bible Society, Dallas Texas
 - President's Cabinet, Campus Crusade for Christ, Canada

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Verse-by-verse courses are available in more than 30 books of the Bible. Some of the courses include word studies (categorical doctrine) or historical articles (isagogics) that are relevant to the passages being discussed. Other courses offered are Bible character studies, comprehensive studies of the Christian Life and Basics of the Christian Life, an extensive series on the Person and Word of Jesus Christ, and a thorough study of the Attributes of God. You are invited to write to the address below, or write by e-mail, to inquire about Grace Notes materials.

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Introduction

I. IMPORTANCE OF THE EPISTLE TO THE GALATIANS

A. One of the greatest and most important letters of Paul.

Contains the core of Paul's teaching (1:12)

B. Galatians is a short Romans

1. Both are similar in theme and content.
2. Both teach justification that results in ethical imperatives.
3. The relationship of Galatians to Romans:
 - Galatians is not a rough outline of Romans
 - There is a different argument in the two books:
 - i. Romans is a treatise on Christianity
 - ii. Galatians is a polemic against legalism

C. Great men of history have esteemed the epistle of Galatians highly.

1. The battle cry of the Reformation – the manifesto of freedom in Christ.
2. The book of Galatians is called the "cornerstone" of the Reformation.
3. A favorite of Luther – "The pebble from the brook with which the Reformers smote the papal giant of the Middle Ages."

Luther referred to Galatians as his "wife" -- "The epistle to the Galatians is my epistle. To it I am as it were in wedlock. It is my Catherine."

D. Galatians embodies the crucial credo on Christian freedom.

E. It is the Magna Carta of Christian liberty.

F. It is an unassailable citadel against an attack on the gospel.

G. It guards against salvation by works, spirituality by works and assaults on Christian liberty.

H. Galatians is one of the most influential of Paul epistle.

I. Galatians proclaims the power of the gospel over the penalty and power of sin.

II. AUTHOR

A. The church generally accepted the book of Galatians from Paul's hand.

B. Church fathers accepted Galatians as from Paul Polycarp, 116; Clement of Rome, 96; Ignatius, 115; The writer of the epistle to Diognetus, 117, shows his dependence on it.

Marcion, 130, included it in his catalogue, omitting, however, two passages in it that contradicted his peculiar teachings [Marcion excluded great sections of NT writings from his early canon].

Justin Martyr, 145, quotes it, and so does Tatian the Syrian, 150-170. It is found in the Muratorion Canon, 170, as well as in the Syriac, 160, and Old Latin, 170 Versions.

Certainly early heretics, including the Ophites and others, used it.

Irenaeus, 175, Tertullian, 190, and Clement of Alexander, 195, repeatedly quote it by name and ascribe it to Paul.

C. Internal evidence is strong for Paul's authorship

calls himself Paul, 1:1; 5:2

all of the historical references in the first two chapters fit flawlessly into the missionary expeditions of Paul recorded in Acts.

the letter exhibits the intelligence, passion, logic and style of Paul in every detail.

the doctrine of freedom in Christ is characteristic of Paul's teaching, 5:1

III. BACKGROUND

A. The term "Galatia" began with the immigration of a large body of Gauls from Europe into Asia Minor (Turkey today), 278-27 BC.

B. Their boundaries were set after 232 BC. and their kingdom became known as Galatia. In 121 BC., Galatia fell subject to the Roman empire and became a province of Rome in 25 BC.

IV. JUDAIZERS

A. Galatians written to counteract Judaistic legalism.

B. Who were the Judaizers?

1. The term "Judaizer" is a religious designation, not a description of a national people.
2. Judaizers believed that Christians should live under legalistic principles.
3. They viewed Paul's view of grace as "cheap grace."
4. They were circumcised and expected others to be as well.

C. They attacked Paul in three areas:

1. His authority
2. His gospel of grace - must be saved by faith plus works
3. They claimed his view of sanctification leads to license - they believed in spirituality by faith plus works

D. This was the old pharisaism that Jesus challenged in His day.

V. SEQUENCE OF EVENTS BEHIND GALATIANS

A. Gentile Church formed in Antioch, Acts 11:19-15:35. Acts 13:2 --first missionaries sent out (AD. 46).

B. Legalists from Jerusalem subvert the first missionary expedition, 13:1-14:28.

C. Paul and Barnabas visit Jerusalem for the "famine" visit.

D. Writing of Galatians: AD 49.

E. First Church Council corrects legalism and substantiates grace, Acts 15.

VI. DATE AND DESTINATION OF WRITING

Destination: southern Galatia

Date: AD. 49, just before the Jerusalem council.

VII. PURPOSE: TO PROVE THAT THE LAW COULD NOT SAVE A SINNER NOR SANCTIFY A SAINT.

- A. To defend the true gospel
- B. To expose and condemn this false teaching
- C. To show the true purpose of the law
- D. To show how the believer is to be completed in the Christian life by walking in the Spirit, 5:16

VIII. CHARACTERISTICS:

- A. Exceptionally high doctrinal content.
 - B. Apologetic in nature.
 - C. No praise in introduction.
 - D. Not a word of commendation in the entire epistle.
 - E. No salutation to individuals.
 - F. Only epistle written completely by Paul's own hand.
 - G. Galatians and 2 Corinthians most autobiographical of all New Testament epistles.
 - H. Most caustic of all the epistles, 1:6,8; 2:6,11; 3:1; 4:11; 5:4,10,12.
 - I. Contrast between law and grace.
(The most important thing that law does is to drive man to the grace of God because of his inability to keep the law.)
 - J. Similar to Romans:
 - K. Hebrews, Romans and Galatians are all based on Habakkuk 2:4.
 - L. Few books in history have had greater effect on man than this tract.
 - M. 3,098 words in the KJV, 149 verses, 6 chapters.
 - N. Only New Testament book written to a group of churches, 1:2.
 - O. Tone:
 1. Warlike
 2. Crackles with indignation, 1:8
 3. Abrupt and stern style
 4. A sharp defense of the faith
 - P. Highly doctrinal and extremely personal.
 - Q. Almost a third of the book is biography (most autobiographical of Paul's epistles).
 - R. Highly emotional with pathos and abrupt.
 - S. Unique ending in Gal 6:11.
- #### IX. OCCASION
- A. Legalists (saved and sanctified by works) dogged Paul's missionary expedition to Galatia.
 - B. Twofold attack on Paul:
 1. Discredits Paul's person
 2. Discredits Paul's message

C. The Galatians were gullible toward legalism.

X. KEY VERSE - 5:1

XI. KEY WORDS:

Law = 32 times

Faith = 21 times

XII. THEME: THE GLORY OF GRACE OVER LAW ESPECIALLY IN SANCTIFICATION

Man cannot obey God's law by his own power. Only grace through faith can give him liberty to live the Christian life.

XIII. OUTLINE

Introduction, 1:1-10

A. Salutation, 1:1-5

B. Proposition of Galatians, 1:6-10

I. Proof of Paul's apostleship in history, 1:11-2:21

A. Paul's gospel not from men but by revelation, 1:11-12

B. Paul defends the nature of his gospel by two arguments:

1. Paul received his message by direct revelation and apart from any human source, 1:13-17

2. Paul's confirmed his message in three ways, 1:18-2:21.

1st confirmation, 1:18-24

2nd confirmation, 2:1-10

3rd confirmation, 2:11-21

II. Paul's doctrinal vindication of justification by faith alone, 3:1-4:31

A. Proof from the Galatians' personal experience with the gospel of grace, 3:1-5

B. Proof from Abraham's life, 3:6-14

C. Proof from the permanence of the promise, 3:15-16

D. Proof from the purpose of the Mosaic law, 3:17-29

E. Proof from the confirmation of their position in Christ, 4:1-11

F. Proof from their prior embracing of Paul's doctrine, 4:12-20

G. Proof from their true relationship to Abraham, 4:21-31

III. Paul's practical appeal, 5:1-6:10

A. Life under the legalism, 5:1-12

1. Legalism enslaves the believer, 5:1-2

2. Legalism puts believers in debt, 5:3

3. Legalism alienates the believer from Christ, 5:4-6

4. Legalism hinders orientation to grace, 5:7-10

5. Legalism removes the necessity of the stigma of the cross because man does the doing rather than

Christ doing the doing, 5:11-12

B. License is no justification for falling into legalism, 5:13-15

C. Life by the Spirit is a life lived under God's provisions (grace), it is the liberty to live for the Lord, not the liberty to sin, 5:16-21

D. The Holy Spirit, as over against the law, empowers the believer to live for God, 5:22-26

E. Grace serves people, 6:1-10.

1. Grace serves the sinner, 6:1

2. Grace serves those the burdened person, 6:2-5

3. Grace serves the leader, 6:6-9

4. Grace serves all, 6:10

Conclusion 6:11-18

A. Authenticity of the epistle, 6:11

B. True motives of legalists, 6:12-13

C. Paul's motives, 6:14-17

D. Benediction, 6:18

Galatians 1:1

"Paul, an apostle (not from men nor through man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father who raised Him from the dead)..."

The introduction to Galatians covers the first 10 verses. The first five verses make up the salutation.

Paul, an apostle

Christian legalists called into question Paul's apostleship and, therefore, his authority. They claimed that his apostleship was a fake since

Christ did not commission him while He was on earth. These legalists in Galatians believed that the law -- rather than the power of the Holy Spirit through faith -- sanctifies the saint.

The office of an "apostle" carried the highest authority in Christianity. The word comes from two Greek words: to send and from. The idea is someone with authority sending someone else. An apostle has the right to found the church and write Scripture. There are no apostles in the official sense today.

The New Testament employs the word "apostle" in an official and non-official way. The term carries the idea of sending as a missionary or one sent with the full authority of an official apostle. The latter meaning is the sense of our verse.

Paul only used the term "apostle" when necessary to affirm his credentials. He preferred the term "servant."

not from men

Paul's first point in the epistle challenges his legalistic protagonists decisively -- "not...nor." His apostleship did not come from men but from God Himself.

"Men" is in the plural and refers to a group of men. Paul did not receive the commission of his apostleship from a group of men in some church. No official church body gave him the credentials of an apostle.

nor through man,

"Man" is in the singular and refers to an individual man. Neither Barnabas nor Ananias (Acts 9:17) or other single individual conferred the gift of apostleship on Paul. When Ananias' laid his hands on Paul, this recognized a fact already true. Paul's apostleship was absolutely independent of man.

but through Jesus Christ and God the Father

Paul's apostleship came through the authority of "Jesus Christ and God the Father." Paul's apostleship did not come from men but from God.

Paul did not receive his apostleship by some common occasion. He received it supernaturally. The Father and the Son both bestowed on Paul their certificate for his apostleship.

"Father" is a term of relationship. "God the Father" is a unique expression in the New Testament (1 Peter 1:2; 2 Peter 1:17; Jude 1). We never read "God the Son" in the New Testament. The New Testament does use the term "Son" for the deity of Jesus Christ (Matthew 28:19,20).

Paul's relationship to the Father was one of grace. Paul was a foremost exponent of legalism before he came to Christ. He murdered Christians in the name of legalism.

"For I am the least of the apostles, who am not worthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me was not in vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me" (1 Corinthians 15:9-10).

"Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ, by the commandment of God our Savior and the Lord Jesus Christ, our hope..." (1 Timothy 1:1).

who raised Him from the dead

The other apostles received their apostleship when Jesus was on earth. Paul received his apostleship after Jesus rose from the dead. He defends his apostleship against the legalists throughout the first two chapters.

In order to be an apostle, one must see Jesus face to face. Paul saw him on the Damascus road. He personally saw the resurrected Christ.

Principle

Any claim that Christ plus something saves or sanctifies is foreign to the teaching of the New Testament.

Application

Salvation is Christ plus nothing. Sanctification is Christ plus nothing. Anything else is a mongrel gospel or mongrel sanctification. God's truth is always unadulterated grace. We owe our salvation to Christ and we owe our sanctification to Him as well.

Good works do not save us nor sanctify us. They do not make us more secure in our salvation nor in our walk with the Lord. Many people feel that if they have a good batting average with the Ten Commandments then God will accept them into Heaven. Others believe that if they are good people in their Christian walk then that impresses God. Both of these groups fall short of realizing that they are poor, lost, helpless, hopeless sinners apart from the work of Christ. Only the finished work of the sovereign Son of God can save us or sanctify us.

Sin stands between God and us. Our only plea is the cross of Christ. Anything else is inadequate, insufficient and incomplete. Jesus died to remove the penalty triggered by sin. The law deepens and defines our need for the Savior but it cannot save. Human effort cannot save; only the Savior can save when we put our trust in His finished work on the cross.

Galatians 1:2

**"...and all the brethren who are with me,
To the churches of Galatia..."**

and all the brethren who are with me,

Paul's traveling companions joined with Paul in sending the book of Galatians (Acts 13:1). It was not only Paul who held to the message of grace.

To the churches

The word "church" means called out ones. The church consists of those called out from the world. The church is not a building or a denomination but an assembly of believers who meet together to worship.

of Galatia

Paul designates this epistle to the church in the southern region of the province of Galatia. He wanted this letter to circulate among all the churches in that area which included such cities as Derbe, Lystra, Iconium and Antioch of Pisidia. This is the only letter sent to a group of cities in the New Testament. The insidious corruption of legalism spread extensively into many cities.

Paul gives no word of commendation of praise or thanks to the churches in Galatia as he normally does. This is because they were gullible in swallowing false doctrine. Paul even gave praise

to the carnal Christians at Corinth but not to the Galatians.

Principle

Grace is the foundation for the gospel and the Christian life.

Application

Some people think that doctrine of grace is not important. If we abandon the grace principle, it destroys salvation by grace through faith and sanctification by grace through faith.

Galatians 1:3

**"Grace to you and peace from God the
Father and our Lord Jesus Christ..."**

Paul launches his normal greeting of "grace and peace." This salutation bestows blessing upon the Galatians.

Grace to you

Grace is God's good will and work toward us. Grace always precedes peace in these greetings. We do not work for grace because grace is what God does. It is all that He is free to do for us because of the cross of Christ (1:4).

and peace

There is an inner rest to our souls knowing that we have God's good will and work in our lives. We possess no peace without grace first blessing our souls. Because of the death of Christ for our sins, there is no alienation between us and God. More than that, we have an ongoing sense of God's sovereign work in our souls.

from God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ

Both grace and peace have their source in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul joins the Father and Son as one source for grace and peace. We do not strive for peace with God because God settled the sin issue by the death of Christ. We do not need to seek God's approval because we have it.

Principle

True peace comes from the grace of the Father and Son.

Application

We do not get God's peace by our own effort. It comes exclusively from God. We never get God's peace without first receiving God's grace. We obtain a full measure of peace with a full understanding and appropriation of God's grace. We cannot manufacture this peace because it comes solely from God. He dispenses it freely from His character. If we try to operate without God's grace, life will grate on our souls.

Galatians 1:4

"...who gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father..."

who gave Himself

Jesus "gave" Himself for our sins in the sense of grant, bestow, impart. His death on the cross was an act of grace. It is also the basis of our salvation. Jesus donated His earthly life so that we might have eternal life. No one extracted His life from Him; He donated it for us willingly. His death on the cross was no accident but within His purpose of salvation. "For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many" (Mark 10:45). "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep" (John 10:11). "...who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works" (Titus 2:14).

for our sins,

Jesus' death for our sins was substitutionary (Galatians 2:20; 3:13; 1 Timothy 2:6; Titus 2:14; 1 Peter 2:24; 3:18). He was our substitute. The righteousness and justice of God required payment for sin; otherwise, God would compromise His character. Jesus paid it all; all to Him I owe. "But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; The chastisement for our peace was upon Him, And by His stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; We have turned, every one, to his own way; And the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all" (Isaiah 53:5-6).

We have nothing with which to pay for our sins. We are totally bankrupt toward God. God's character is the standard for heaven so we can never measure up to that standard (Romans 3:10-23). We have nothing with which we can barter with God. There is nothing that we can give God that is acceptable to Him. There is no exchange on earth we can offer to the bank in heaven. All that we can do is rest in the finished work of Christ on the cross (Ephesians 2:8,9; Romans 4:5; Titus 3:5).

that He might deliver us

The word "deliver" means literally to take out. Here it means to take out for oneself. Jesus had a special interest in saving us from our sins. He took pleasure in setting us free from this present evil world. There is no deliverance apart from the work of Christ.

from this present evil age,

Sin enslaves us to this present evil age. Literally, the word "present" means to stand in, or set in. The idea is to be present or to be imminent. We need deliverance from time as well as eternity. Jesus delivered us not only from eternal suffering in hell, but also from evils of the present age. Galatians addresses Christians about their legalism. His point is not about the need for salvation for non-Christians (although He does clear up distortions about the principles of Christian living by clearing up distortions about the doctrine of salvation).

Jesus' death emancipates us "from" [out of] this present evil "age," from this current world system. Jesus went beyond saving us from eternal judgment; He saved us from the evil of our age. The culture in North America is full of customs and practices that powerfully influence our daily lives. The attraction of this age still snares Christians. Jesus' work on the cross spoils us for attraction to the world. Only the supernatural work of Christ can save us from the supernatural work of Satan.

according to the will of our God and Father

The "will" of God the Father here is His sovereign decree in sending Jesus Christ to die for our sins. Jesus did the will of God the Father from eternity by His death on the cross.

In this pithy verse, Paul draws the shape of the clash that will surface throughout this epistle. If we revert to legalism, we deny the work Christ did for us when we try to work for salvation. The good news of the gospel is that Jesus suffered all that needs to be suffered for our sins. The bad news of religion is that we need to suffer for our sins.

Principle

Jesus not only delivers us from the penalty of sin but from the power of sin.

Application

Jesus died for more than our sins; He died to help us cope with our age, the system that influences our daily lives. He does not save us to remove us from our world but to help us cope with our world. He does not keep us from the world but shows us how to live in it. "I wrote to you in my epistle not to keep company with sexually immoral people. Yet I certainly did not mean with the sexually immoral people of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or idolaters, since then you would need to go out of the world" (1 Corinthians 5:9-10).

There is a natural tendency for every Christian to revert into legalism, a do-it-yourself system of works, because we feel that somehow we gain God's approval by this. However, this false doctrine minimizes the work of Christ on the cross. We imply somehow that His work was insufficient and we have to help Him with our salvation. The Bible makes it abundantly clear that we cannot earn or deserve our salvation. We simply lean on the finished work of Christ.

Galatians 1:5

**"...to whom be glory forever and ever.
Amen"**

to whom be glory

The word "glory" primarily denotes an opinion, estimation or repute. The New Testament always uses this term in the good sense of commanding respect, excellence and magnificence. We honor God because we have a good estimation of His work in Christ (1:4; John 1:14; 2:11; 11:4,40; 17:5, 24; Romans 6:4; Ephesians 1:6,12,14; Hebrews 1:3).

The Greek has the definite article "the" before the word "glory." The glory for salvation by grace through faith is exclusively God's, not ours. This glory is peculiarly His. "Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, to Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen" (Ephesians 3:20-21).

Principle

Jesus Christ is the true celebrity of the universe because His work exclusively demands our respect from all others.

Application

The glory of Christ should catch our eye because of its splendor. He is truly a famous person. He deserves the credit for our salvation. All honor goes to Him. There is great glory and splendor in His person and work. To the Christian mind, Jesus exists in a state of wonderful greatness.

forever and ever.

The phrase "forever and ever" is an idiom for the eternal state, a state without end. The eternal age opposes the present evil age. God's glory deserves eternal praise.

Amen

"Amen" confirms God's exclusive magnificence in saving us. Paul says in effect, "I believe it!" Because Jesus did the will of God (1:4), by saving us from our sins when we could not save ourselves, He deserves eternal recognition.

Principle

God exclusively deserves the glory because He did the doing.

Application

The purpose of salvation is primarily to glorify God, not to profit man. We dare not rob God of His proper glory. When we give God the glory for our salvation, we exclude the glory of man. We cannot take credit for that which is God's exclusive responsibility. "...of whom are the fathers and from whom, according to the flesh, Christ came, who is over all, the eternally blessed God. Amen" (Romans 9:5). "For of Him and through Him and to Him are all things, to whom

be glory forever. Amen" (Romans 11:36). "Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, to God who alone is wise, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen" (1 Timothy 1:17).

Galatians 1:6

"I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel..."

The introduction to the book of Galatians covers the first 10 verses. The occasion [reason for the letter] of the epistle runs from verse 6 through verse 10. This section carries a denunciation of the Galatians for leaving the true gospel for a false gospel and is conspicuous by the lack of any expression of gratitude toward the readers. Doctrinal deviation deserves no thanks.

I marvel

Paul moves abruptly into the problem at the church in Galatia. What a transition from praising the glory of God in the previous verse to this statement of shock about the Galatians' defection from the gospel of grace!

"Marvel" means to wonder. Paul is astonished and surprised that the Galatians would abandon the gospel of grace. Paul says in effect, "I am shocked that you are so unstable that you would move away from the gospel of grace so quickly." This beginning of the body of the epistle makes it very clear that the Galatians deserve severe rebuke. Very few people today express shock about anything--even defection from the gospel. "And He marveled because of their unbelief. Then He went about the villages in a circuit, teaching" (Mark 6:6).

that you are turning away

"Turning away" carries the idea of to change places, put in another place, to remove a person or thing from one place to another, to transpose. This is a military term used for deserting from the army. The Galatians changed from the gospel of grace to the gospel of works. They became renegades from the true gospel and capitulated to another gospel.

The present tense indicates that the defection of the Galatians from the gospel of grace is not yet

complete. They are still in the process of shifting to another gospel. They are transposing the gospel from grace to legalism. They are altering the gospel itself and thus were deserting or turning apostate from the true gospel. This changes the nature of the gospel into a works gospel. Jude addresses the opposite of legalism; some people turned the grace of God into license. "For certain men have crept in unnoticed, who long ago were marked out for this condemnation, ungodly men, who turn the grace of our God into lewdness and deny the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ" (Jude 4).

People today change the gospel into something significantly different from its original design by God.

so soon

"Soon" means quickly. The Galatians moved away from the true gospel in a very brief interval between the time that Paul gave them the gospel and the time when the legalizers came to Galatia. It took only a brief time for them to abandon their earlier convictions. They were rash in embracing false doctrine and moving into legalism. They failed to give due study to the issue. False teachers can easily seduce ignorant Christians because of their instability.

Principle

Instability in the truth of the gospel makes one vulnerable to false doctrine.

Application

There is such a thing as a true gospel and a false gospel. In our day of the absolute doctrine of tolerance, we know little truth. If someone claims that he has the true gospel, he sounds like a bigot, or at the very least, a very narrow-minded person.

The gospel is as narrow as the multiplication table. Two times two equals four, and there are no exceptions. We cannot have two gospels. It is incomprehensible that evangelicals today would hold to the distortion of works in the gospel. This cancer threatens the essence of Christianity. Issues of heaven and hell are at stake.

from Him

The Galatians deserted God Himself. When we defect from the gospel of grace, we defect from more than a doctrine, we desert God.

who called you

God called the Galatians in the sphere of the grace of Christ but they deserted their call (Romans 8:28-30; 1 Corinthians 1:9,23,24; 1 Thessalonians 2:12; 4:7; Colossians 3:15; Philippians 3:13,14; Hebrews 3:1; 2 Timothy 1:9; 1 Peter 5:10). Paul says that they are not true to their calling. Their apostasy was from God and His grace, not simply from Paul.

in the grace of Christ,

God called them to a gospel that rested upon the finished work of Christ on the cross (1:4). Christ suffered all that needs to be suffered on the cross. We do not need to suffer for sins because He did the suffering. This is grace. It is a gospel of salvation by what Jesus did, not by what we do. There are no stings attached to this salvation for it is free because Jesus did all the work. He bore all of our sins in His own body on the cross.

This is the sphere of grace into which God called us. The Galatians did not clearly understand the truth of salvation by grace through faith. Grace is the means of our call. That is, God effectually summons us to salvation only as procured by Christ on the cross. God freely bestows this gift. It comes from the unadulterated generosity of God with no strings attached. Christians are the objects of God's eternal favor. To revert to law is to completely miss this truth. God saves and sustains us by the finished work of Christ on the cross.

Some Galatians believed that they came to Christ by grace but works sustained their salvation. This makes salvation dependent upon our works.

to a different gospel

There are two Greek words for "another." One means another of the same kind and the other means another of a different kind. The latter idea is our word "different" here. We get the English term "heretic" or "heterodoxy" from this Greek word. The gospel they were buying into was different in its very nature from the gospel of grace. Their new gospel was different by essence. The hazard is high here because the very nature of

the gospel is at stake. "For if he who comes preaches another Jesus whom we have not preached, or if you receive a different spirit which you have not received, or a different gospel which you have not accepted—you may well put up with it! [a facetious remark]" (2 Corinthians 11:4).

Counterfeiters try to make the fake look as much like the real thing as possible. A gospel with a touch of works seems reasonable to some folk. God views a touch of works as a "heretical" gospel. This is not an orthodox idea but a heterodox idea. It is the polar opposite to orthodoxy. A gospel of justification or sanctification by works is heterodoxy.

Principle

The test of the true gospel is the test of grace.

Application

We are under obligation to protect the purity of the gospel of grace. When we defect from the gospel of grace, we defect from God Himself. If we lose sight of the Word of God, we can become turncoats to the true gospel very quickly. This is a deadly issue because we cannot live the Christian life properly without a true understanding of the gospel. Doctrine affects how we live as Christians. We need to restore our capacity for shock at distortions of the gospel.

Have you embraced the gospel of grace and then somewhere along the line defected from it? Everything we have from God comes from pure, unadulterated grace.

Galatians 1:7

"...which is not another; but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ"

which is not another;

The word "another" refers to another of the same kind. If people change the essence of the gospel, it becomes no gospel at all. It is not another gospel of the same kind as Paul preached but a perversion of the true gospel. When they modify the gospel, it is not the gospel at all.

but there are some who trouble you

Legalists came to "trouble" the Galatians with their false doctrine (Acts 15:24; Galatians 1:7; 5:10).

Legalism always unsettles the soul and throws the church into confusion (5:10-12). "Trouble" carries the idea of to shake back and forth. Legalists are troublemakers.

and want to pervert the gospel of Christ

The idea of "pervert" is to transform something into an opposite character. The Judaizers transformed the gospel into something diametrically opposite to its true character. Thus, they perverted the gospel. They turned it around into the very opposite of its original design. They altered its message from a doctrine of grace to a doctrine of works. A distorted gospel is more dangerous than no gospel at all.

The gospel is Christ's gospel, not Paul's gospel. When people distort the gospel, they violate Christ.

Principle

There is no alternative to the gospel of Christ.

Application

A different gospel is no gospel at all for there is no alternative to the gospel of Christ. The gospel of Christ is mutually exclusive to any other gospel. Any gospel that finds the completed work of Christ on the cross as insufficient to pay the penalty for sin is a false gospel. Salvation is always by grace through faith apart from works.

We live in a day of such theological latitude that we can distort the gospel into something other than the New Testament gospel and no one blinks an eye. Some say, "We must be tolerant of people who don't believe the same as us." Fakers stand in fine affiliation with true believers as long as they are "sincere." Christianity is not 50% faith and 50% works. No, the true gospel excludes work as a way of salvation or sanctification. "Of how much worse punishment, do you suppose, will he be thought worthy who has trampled the Son of God underfoot, counted the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified a common thing, and insulted the Spirit of grace?" (Hebrews 10:29).

Christians today need to deal with those who distort the true gospel. Tolerance means that we judge no one. Truth demands that we judge those who pervert the gospel. Salvation by works is not good news. It is bad news because salvation would depend on us, not Christ.

Galatians 1:8

"But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed"

But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you

Just in case some might think that Paul's team is an exception, he includes his gospel team in this hypothesis. Paul draws the unlikely hypothesis that if even his gospel team or an angel from Heaven were to preach a different gospel than the gospel of grace, they should be cursed along with anyone else who distorts the gospel. It makes no difference who preaches the gospel; the gospel must be the gospel of grace. This is not a question of who preaches but what is preached.

than what we have preached to you,

If anyone preaches not only a markedly different gospel, but also any gospel other than what Paul preaches, then they should go under a curse. The Galatians probably assumed that the gospel of the legalizers were not very different from the gospel of grace.

let him be accursed

The translators take the Greek word anathema and carry it over as it sounds into the English. The metaphorical idea of "accursed" means something devoted to destruction, a curse. People who preach a different gospel than the gospel of grace stand under God's judgment. We deal in very serious matters when we distort the gospel.

Paul moves from shock to accusing the Galatians of deserting the One who called them and finally pronounces a curse on them. Clearly, he feels that the Galatians violated a core principle in Christianity. He does not mince his words when it comes to people who defect from the gospel of grace.

Principle

We have true unity when we are faithful to the truth of the gospel.

Application

How do Christians hold appropriate tension between the desire for unity in the body and the purity of truth? Core doctrine takes precedence over unity. Unity takes precedence over peripheral doctrine. A mistaken sense of unity leads many people today into false doctrine because they place warm feelings over truth.

On the one hand, we cannot desert the heart of Christian doctrine. Yet, on the other hand, if we agree on vital doctrine, we do everything in our power to walk together in unity.

The nature of the gospel of grace is core doctrine according to our passage. Many today do not like a mutually exclusive gospel for we live in a day of tolerance to any new idea that may come down the pike. Few call a spade a spade when it comes to false doctrine.

Many hate a gospel that claims that people are poor lost sinners, that they are helpless and hopeless without Jesus' death for them on the cross.

Galatians 1:9

"As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed"

As we have said before,

The phrase "said before" refers to Paul's previous warning about gospel counterfeits hurting his team's visit to Galatia. This attack on false teachers was no temper tantrum. He calmly and deliberately reiterates his point.

so now I say again,

Paul says in effect, "I told you before and now I am telling you again." He did not and will not change his mind on this crucial doctrine.

if anyone preaches any other gospel to you

Paul addresses the actual state of affairs in the churches in Galatia.

than what you have received,

The idea of "received" is welcome. The Galatians embraced the gospel warmly when Paul's team was in Galatia.

let him be accursed

It is not enough to reject the teaching of false teachers but we should hold them in abhorrence.

Principle

Christians should hold in abhorrence those who impugn the cross.

Application

Those who add works to salvation impugn the cross. The very nature of the gospel is at stake when people introduce works into salvation or sanctification. Because of this, we hold those who change the gospel in abhorrence. "If anyone comes to you and does not bring this doctrine, do not receive him into your house nor greet him; for he who greets him shares in his evil deeds" (2 John 10-11).

In grace, the curse falls on Christ (Galatians 3:13). Under legalism, the curse falls on man.

Galatians 1:10

"For do I now persuade men, or God? Or do I seek to please men? For if I still pleased men, I would not be a bondservant of Christ"

Verse 10 transitions from the introduction into the body of the epistle.

For

With the word "for" Paul justifies the tough words he used in verses eight and nine. By pronouncing a curse on those who do not remain true to the gospel of grace (vv. 8-9), he does not please people.

do I now persuade men, or God?

Paul now answers allegations that he trimmed his message to gain a following. The legalists were out to discredit the message behind his apostleship. If they could undermine his apostleship, they would undermine his message of grace. Paul defends the legitimacy of his apostleship throughout the first two chapters.

The word "persuade" means to bring about a change of mind by the influence of reason. The idea here is to gain someone's approval. Is Paul trying to win men's approval or God's approval? Paul is not a man of blind ambition. He would

never emasculate the gospel to attract a following. He is not trying to win people to himself but to his message. Expediency is never proper when it comes to truth.

The word "now" indicates that there was a time when Paul lived to please people. That was his primary motive when he was a Pharisee. Now that he is a Christian, he no longer pleases men by adapting his message.

The legalists implied that Paul toned down the legal requirements of the gospel to make the gospel more palatable to the Galatians. They implied that he altered the message in order to win them, "He is on a power trip and is in the business of kingdom building." They attacked his person hoping to undermine his message. "He is just someone who compromises his message in order to gain a following."

Accommodation sacrifices truth for the sake of conciliating people and winning their favor. Paul was not in the business of accommodating men [although he did use expediency (1 Corinthians 9:22)]. He was in the business of gaining the approval of God by his message of grace. Clearly, he is out to gain God's approval, not men's approval. He does not use gimmicks in reaching people for Christ. He does not flatter them by making them feel they can contribute to their salvation or sanctification.

Or do I seek to please men?

Paul's enemies accused him of using the corrupt method of adjusting his message to fit the circumstance. The legalists charged him with teaching grace in order to curry favor with the Galatians. Grace does not require working for one's salvation (Ephesians 2:8,9).

Principle

We gain God's approval when we are true to our message.

Application

There is always a tension in evangelism between using methods of accommodation and compromising the message. It is one thing to adapt your method to reach those without Christ but it another thing to adapt your message to win them.

Paul made cultural and stylistic changes in his methods for reaching people (1 Corinthians 9:19-23) for he did not want culture to confuse the message. However, he never bent his message to fit the people he wanted to reach.

In the seeker service approach today, there is a danger in diluting the message so that the unchurched cannot decipher the true gospel. The seeker service methodology is biblical to the extent it is an accommodation to the culture of people in the 21st century. The methodology of the seeker service is not biblical if it modifies the message. If we adapt the message to reach people, then we are in the business of currying favor with men. There is no biblical justification for flattering men to gain a following.

If we trim the edges off the gospel, we become religious shadow boxers. We are not in the business of winning a popularity contest when it comes to presenting the truth of the gospel. Truth is as rigid as the multiplication table and cannot be bent and adapted even to an unchurched culture.

When we perform a religious toe dance with a gospel of latitude, we dance the gospel right out of God's ballroom. The unadulterated gospel of grace is not popular for it is not easy to tell people that they are lost and need a Savior. People want to hear that they can do something about their salvation.

For if I still

Before Paul came to Christ, he was in the business of pleasing men. He now no longer seeks to be popular among men. He no longer courts popularity with people.

The "if" clause expects a negative answer: "I don't seek to pander to men. On the contrary, I curry God's favor in my message." Paul does not compromise his message to please men.

pleased men,

The legalists that dogged Paul's tracks to Galatia claimed that Paul twisted his message to please the Galatians. The implication is that a grace-oriented message pleases men because the onus is off people to perform and on Christ solely. They said, "Paul accommodates his message to the

opinions, desires and interests of others." Paul never appeased men by modifying his message.

Principle

Those who court popularity at the expense of truth will forfeit the message of Christ, the message of grace.

Application

The leader who accommodates his message to please his followers treads a very dangerous territory. Eventually he and his followers will lose the heart and soul of Christianity. The communicator of God's message carries the full integrity of the gospel of grace. "But as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, even so we speak, not as pleasing men, but God who tests our hearts" (1 Thessalonians 2:4). "But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ. Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith..." (Philippians 3:7-9).

To go around with a chip on our shoulder is not the point here either. We cannot preach the gospel by flagrantly "displeasing" men! We do not please people by adjusting our message but by adjusting our methods.

I would not be a bondservant of Christ

Paul's argument against pleasing people is that he is "a bondservant of Christ." Grace did not diminish his dedication to Christ. He operated with a slave mentality toward Jesus. He was willing to put himself on the line for Christ. He never trimmed the sails of the gospel of grace. It cost him to be true to the gospel of grace message. "Then Jews from Antioch and Iconium came there; and having persuaded the multitudes, they stoned Paul and dragged him out of the city, supposing him to be dead" (Acts 14:19). "From now on let no one trouble me, for I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus" (Galatians 6:17).

It is axiomatic that a slave can have only one master. A slave has no will of his own. He obeys

the one will of God alone. Paul cannot be a slave to both human opinions and God's estimation. He did not trim his message or twaddle some balderdash to men.

Principle

It is axiomatic that if Jesus is his Lord, then a Christian does not seek popularity from men but from the Lord.

Application

If we are true to the message of God, we lose popularity with people. We will gain the favor of those who hold to the true gospel but lose the favor of those who reject the gospel of grace. We never say, "I could avoid harassment if I hedged my message. If I appealed to their latent desire to gain salvation or sanctification by works, then I would be popular with people."

When we become Christians, we acknowledge Jesus as Lord. We yield our rights to the Lord Jesus. We accept without mental reservation that Jesus, the Lord of Glory, has absolute authority over us. We cannot go it on our own. As Christians, we do not play quarterback by running our own lives.

Galatians 1:11

"But I make known to you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man"

Paul begins the defense of his apostolic authority with this verse (1:11-2:21). In verses 11 to 24 he shows that he derives his authority not just from the twelve apostles but from God, who gave the gospel to him by direct revelation. Verses 11 and 12 show us that the gospel is not from human origin.

But I make known to you,

"Make known" carries the idea of "I assure you." This is an issue of grave consequence. Paul will now prove his gospel was completely from God.

brethren,

Although we do not seek to please men (v.10), we want to clarify our understanding with fellow believers. The legalists wanted to discredit Paul because if they could discredit the man, they could discredit his message.

that the gospel which was preached by me

There is a play on words in this phrase – "that the gospel which was preached [gospelled] by me..."

is not according to man

Paul did not derive his gospel from some human organization. The Greek says "according to the criteria of man." The Lord Jesus revealed the gospel of grace to him directly so he did not receive it by normal human criteria; he received the gospel by supernatural criteria. He shows this by his salvation experience (1:13-17), his connection to the apostles in Jerusalem (1:18-2:10) and in his altercation with Peter (2:11-21).

Paul's gospel was clearly of divine origin. No human means of any kind revealed the gospel to him.

Principle

We can count on the gospel as trustworthy because it came by revelation through the Lord Jesus Christ and not from men.

Application

Christians do not put their trust in a message manufactured by people but in a message revealed by God. False teachers spin their message out of their own human cocoons. They invent their message in their own thinking.

Galatians 1:12

"For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but it came through the revelation of Jesus Christ"

For I neither received it from man,

The source of Paul's gospel of grace is not from his associations with people. Paul did not receive the gospel from anyone other than the Lord Himself. His gospel was not a man-manufactured message. Paul did not invent the gospel nor did he spin it out of his own spiritual cocoon.

nor was I taught it,

The word "taught" means to teach didactically by a course of instruction (Matthew 4:23; 9:35; Romans 12:7; Romans 15:4; 1 Corinthians 4:17; 1 Timothy 2:12; 4:11). No one imparted the gospel of grace to Paul by instruction. Peter, John or James

did not teach him at the Jerusalem Theological Seminary.

Ananias taught Paul some basics shortly after he became a Christian. Paul's point in this passage is not that no one ever at any time taught him about things in general. His point is that he received the gospel of grace exclusively from the Lord Jesus Christ.

but it came through the revelation of Jesus Christ

Paul went to seminary at the feet of Jesus Christ. He could have no better seminary professor.

The word "revelation" means an uncovering, unveiling. Jesus took the scales off Paul's eyes about the gospel (Acts 26:4-19). The gospel came to Paul like a dramatic unveiling of a new statue in the football hall of fame. Jesus removed the veil of darkness over his eyes and made the gospel fully known to him independently by immediate revelation (1:17,18). When Paul connected to the apostles, his message was the same as their gospel.

Jesus Christ is both the revealed and the revelator (1:16; Acts 9:3-8). Paul, the erstwhile Saul of Tarsus, received the gospel of grace from the Lord Jesus personally. Human beings had nothing to do with it. There was no personal evangelism involved in his salvation. Paul was the head of a goon squad on his way to Damascus to slaughter Christians when the Lord revealed Himself to him. He did not anticipate this direct revelation from the Lord. It was not in his plan to become a Christian but the Lord turned him right about face (Acts 9:5,6).

Principle

The Bible is not man's message but God's.

Application

We are accustomed to thinking of the Holy Spirit as the revealer of truth but Jesus revealed truth to the apostles. Whether it is the Holy Spirit or the Lord Jesus, the gospel message is a supernatural message. Human rhetoric does not win people to Christ; the miracle of the gospel of Christ transforms lives. Oratory is of little consequence in the final analysis. No human being can win

anyone to Christ without the convicting work of the Holy Spirit.

The source of the Christian gospel is direct revelation. The Christian can be certain about truth because he deductively receives truth from God by the Bible. No one can find final truth by inductive methods-- such as science uses--because man is finite and cannot find infinite truth by his pint-sized brain. The Bible is the Supreme Court beyond which there is no appeal.

Galatians 1:13

"For you have heard of my former conduct in Judaism, how I persecuted the church of God beyond measure and tried to destroy it"

For you have heard of my former conduct in Judaism,

Paul speaks of his "conduct" before he became a Christian while he was still a leader in Jewish religion in verses 13 and 14. Paul was a religious leader of first rank (Philippians 3:5-6). His conduct shows that he did not receive the gospel from Christian men. He was a legalist to the core before he became a Christian; he did not think of grace at all.

how I persecuted the church of God beyond measure

Paul explained his furious persecution of Christians to Herod Agrippa in Acts 26:9-11. The Greek indicates that Paul persecuted the church on an unrelenting basis. He was the supreme Jewish militant of his time. He pursued the church on every occasion he could (Acts 9:4).

As a Pharisee, Paul was a stickler for rules as a way to live for God. He saw no exceptions to legalism. He was not open to a view of salvation by grace. Now, as a Christian, Paul has found grace and it is the single prevailing passion of his life.

and tried to destroy it

It was not enough for Paul to persecute the church, he wanted to "destroy" [waste] it. Secular Greek used this term for ravaging a city or sacking a city. As an arch-persecutor, Paul wanted to apply a scorched earth policy to the church. He made a career out of persistently destroying God's

church (Acts 9:21; 22:4; 26:10,11; 1 Timothy 1:12-15). "As for Saul, he made havoc of the church, entering every house, and dragging off men and women, committing them to prison" (Acts 8:3). "Then Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest and asked letters from him to the synagogues of Damascus, so that if he found any who were of the Way, whether men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem" (Acts 9:1-2).

Principle

Legalism is rooted in our ability to perform; grace rests in the performance of Christ.

Application

Legalism attempts to gain God's approval by works. Grace rests in the work of God. If God does the doing then God gets the glory. If we do the doing then we get the glory.

People who try to gain God's approval by works cannot perform enough. They never know whether they measure up enough to gain God's favor. Those who humbly accept God's provision for salvation or sanctification can rest in what He did for us, remembering that Jesus died for our sins and provided all that is needed for the Christian life.

The glory of Christianity is found by resting in what Christ did for us. Have you come to rest in what God did for you in Christ?

Galatians 1:14

"And I advanced in Judaism beyond many of my contemporaries in my own nation, being more exceedingly zealous for the traditions of my fathers"

And I advanced in Judaism

Before Paul became a Christian, he had a sterling religious career for he "advanced beyond many." The word "advance" means to strike forward, cut forward a way. Secular Greek used this word to refer to pioneer woodcutters who went ahead of the army blazing a new trail through the forest so the army could move forward quickly.

The idea here then, is that Paul was an innovator of systems for furthering his religion. Paul, the Pharisee, obtained breakthroughs in dealing with

this new religion called Christianity. "They knew me from the first, if they were willing to testify, that according to the strictest sect of our religion I lived a Pharisee" (Acts 26: 5).

beyond many of my contemporaries in my own nation,

Paul surpassed other leaders in Israel. He had a brilliant career in Judaism. He outstripped his contemporaries in pioneering new areas for Judaism. He was a very successful Pharisee. Paul was notorious in his persecution of the church. He was brutal and bloodthirsty with his religion—infamous for his opposition to Christianity. Religion has a tradition of brutality.

"I persecuted this Way to the death, binding and delivering into prisons both men and women, as also the high priest bears me witness, and all the council of the elders, from whom I also received letters to the brethren, and went to Damascus to bring in chains even those who were there to Jerusalem to be punished" (Acts 22:4-5).

"Indeed, I myself thought I must do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. This I also did in Jerusalem, and many of the saints I shut up in prison, having received authority from the chief priests; and when they were put to death, I cast my vote against them. And I punished them often in every synagogue and compelled them to blaspheme; and being exceedingly enraged against them, I persecuted them even to foreign cities" (Acts 26:9-11).

being more exceedingly zealous

Paul clearly excelled above his peers in his commitment to the annihilation of Christianity. He was an uncompromising adherent to legalism. He went to any extreme with passionate intensity for his cause. Paul says in effect, "I was a passionate professional persecutor of the church. In doing so, I was outstanding in my religion." Even in the face of all this, the supernatural power of the gospel of grace brought him to the Savior.

for the traditions of my fathers.

Paul lived for legalism. His tradition was one of religious rules that went beyond the Law of Moses. These rules defied compliance. There was not the slightest orientation to grace in his background. It was a performance and works mindset based on ancestral tradition. All his previous education and prejudices were the polar opposites to grace.

Principle

Some people use religion as a platform for self-advancement.

Application

Many people use religion to gain a standing among their peers. Their main goal is to impress people. They desire to be noticed. Self-promotion creates a sense of rivalry.

Religion has a history of brutality. Religious history is full of intolerance and prejudice. We should turn in our religion if it makes us bigoted toward others.

Galatians 1:15

"But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb and called me through His grace..."

But when it pleased God,

The word "but" is an about-face word. In stark contrast to his earlier position as a foe of grace, Paul now embraced it with all his being. Up to this point in his life, it was all of Paul and none of grace. The foremost opponent of Christianity became its outstanding proponent.

God did three things for Paul: 1) separated him from birth for a special purpose, 2) called him by grace and 3) revealed the Lord Jesus through him. God did all of this so that Paul would preach Christ among the Gentiles.

Paul ascribed his call to God's pleasure. This is God's motive for saving him. Paul's conversion put a smile on the face of God.

who separated me

The word "separated" denotes to mark off by boundaries or limits. It comes from two words: to

separate and from. God set Paul apart for a special purpose. He knew Paul's call from eternity and set prescribed limits around his destiny.

The last option in Paul's mind was to become a Christian, but God set him apart for that work. He was no longer what he was; he experienced a radical transformation. This is all because God put a limitation on him.

from my mother's womb

"From my mother's womb" does not refer to physical obstetrics but to spiritual obstetrics. "God knew from before I was born that I was going to be the apostle to the Gentiles." This is sheer grace (Jeremiah 1:5).

and called me through His grace

Paul's call came strictly through grace. God did not call him because he was better than other people were because grace opposites merit. Rather God chose Paul before he had a chance to show any merit.

Paul did not instigate his salvation; God took the initiative. God chose him out of unadulterated grace. No work by Paul added anything to his call. God's grace turned him around. God never faces a dilemma for He knows what He wants to do from eternity. Our call is never capricious; it is always premeditated. It is part of God's eternal plan.

Principle

God is in the business of turning antagonists into catalysts for the cause of Christ.

Application

When God touches our lives, He turns our lives around 180 degrees. If God can change a murderer like Paul, He can change us. God will do this in His own sovereign way. He saves us by sovereign grace.

None of us earns or deserves salvation. If we got what we deserve, then God would consign us to the Lake of Fire. Everything this side of Hell is undiluted grace. God can take His most bitter enemies and turn them into His greatest champions. Note Paul's description of his salvation. "And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord who has enabled me, because He counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry, although I was

formerly a blasphemer, a persecutor, and an insolent man; but I obtained mercy because I did it ignorantly in unbelief. And the grace of our Lord was exceedingly abundant, with faith and love which are in Christ Jesus. This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief. However, for this reason I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show all longsuffering, as a pattern to those who are going to believe on Him for everlasting life. Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, to God who alone is wise, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen" (1 Timothy 1:12-17).

Galatians 1:16

"...to reveal His Son in me, that I might preach Him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately confer with flesh and blood..."

Now Paul turns to events after his salvation to show his doctrine of grace is independent from other people's influence. Although he met with Christians after his salvation, he did not consult them about the doctrine of salvation.

to reveal His Son in me,

God revealed Christ not only to Paul but also in Paul. God wanted to get the gospel into Paul's innermost being. It seems that Paul would be the last person on earth that God would chose to reveal His Son. Of all people, he would be the last for he was guilty of executing Christians. Nevertheless, God unveiled His very own Son to Paul in grace.

that I might preach Him among the Gentiles,

The gospel must get into our innermost being before we can preach the gospel with conviction. The purpose of Paul's message was to commission him to take the gospel of grace to the Gentiles. "Gentiles" is a term for the nations foreign to the state of Israel. A Gentile is someone other than a Jew. Peter was the apostle to the Jews and Paul was the apostle to the Gentiles.

Notice how God couples salvation with service. God calls every person He saves to serve "Him," the Lord Jesus Christ. It is not enough to preach about Him; we must preach Him. And we cannot preach Him until we know Him.

I did not immediately confer with flesh and blood

The word "confer" means to take into counsel. Literally, "confer" comes from two words: to put and before. Paul did not take the counsel of any human being. He did not put his doctrine of grace before the leaders in Jerusalem to get their advice or opinions. Paul deliberately refrained from getting the counsel of human beings. He did not use a consulting firm to get an understanding of the gospel of grace.

With the word "immediately," Paul begins to expose a sequence of events that proves that he could not have received the gospel of grace from human beings. He went to Arabia so that God could clarify the gospel of grace to him (Galatians 1:17).

Principle

Nothing pleases God more than to reveal His Son through His saints.

Application

God not only wants to reveal His Son to us, but also in us. He wants us to conform to the image of Christ daily. "But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord" (2 Corinthians 3:18).

Even sinners can make great saints when they allow Christ to transform them. God can take foul sinners and make them just like the Lord Jesus in character.

God will also use those with awful backgrounds to serve Him in unique ways.

"But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; who once were not a people but are now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy" (1 Peter 2:9-10).

Galatians 1:17

"...nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me; but I went

to Arabia, and returned again to Damascus"

nor did I go up to Jerusalem

Paul did not need the approval of the apostles in Jerusalem for his gospel of grace. He did not check with Peter before he went out to preach.

to those who were apostles before me;

The apostles mentioned here were those apostles appointed earlier than Paul. They took up residence in Jerusalem. It would have been natural for them to teach him about the fundamentals of the faith. As Paul did not receive the gospel from human beings at his salvation, neither did he receive it from the apostles after his salvation. This shows his independence from the twelve apostles. But, by acknowledging them as apostles who came before him, he also gives them full recognition.

but I went to Arabia,

Instead of going to Jerusalem immediately after his salvation, he went to an area of Arabia known as Nabatea (in Transjordan to the south and east of Damascus of Syria). Arabia was a barren and thinly populated place. Paul needed to clarify the distinctions between law and grace. He spent decades steeped in legalism, so he needed time to orient himself to grace and think through the issues.

He went to Arabia to spend time with God in solitude. During this stay, God clarified the doctrine of grace to him. He did not get his message from human beings but from God. He wanted to get his message as clear as he could before he started preaching.

and returned again to Damascus

After the Lord clarified his message in Arabia, Paul returned to Damascus. He stayed there for a stretch of time and encountered persecution from the Jews. "But Saul increased all the more in strength, and confounded the Jews who dwelt in Damascus, proving that this Jesus is the Christ. Now after many days were past, the Jews plotted to kill him. But their plot became known to Saul. And they watched the gates day and night, to kill him. Then the disciples took him by night and let

him down through the wall in a large basket" (Acts 9: 22-25).

Principle

God schools his saints in solitude.

Application

God uses isolation and solitude to separate our souls from restless and busy lives. The Psalmists says, "Be still and know that I am God." We need time to think about God. Solitude is God's Wilderness Graduate School. It's the place where we develop deep convictions about our relationship with the Lord and our service for Him.

God took many of his ministers to His Wilderness Graduate School. He took Moses there before He would use him. He also allowed Elijah to go through a wilderness experience. David spent some time there, while Saul hunted him like an animal. The Lord Himself spent forty days in the desert.

God must speak to us and we to God before we speak to other people. Has God placed you in His Wilderness Graduate School in order to use you later?

Galatians 1:18

"Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter, and remained with him fifteen days"

Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter,

The word "then" means thereafter, referring to the time following Paul's three-year stay in Arabia and Damascus. After waiting three years, Paul finally went to Jerusalem to see Peter (Acts 9:26-30). When Paul first left Jerusalem, he had gone to Damascus to murder and imprison Christians. However, he came back as a Christian! He left as a beast but came back as a champion for Christ.

We get the English word history from the Greek word for to see. When Paul says he went to see Peter, the word carries the idea of making a social call on his fellow apostle. Paul wanted to get acquainted with Peter. They told each other their story. This must have been a great time of fellowship. In fifteen days, they told of God's grace and work in their life.

and remained with him fifteen days

Paul wanted to get to know Peter. He stayed in Jerusalem only a short time because his life was threatened (Acts 9:29). There was no time for Peter to train Paul theologically or certify his ministry, so Paul did not get his doctrine of grace from Peter.

After fifteen days, Paul fled for his life. It took some courage to go back to Jerusalem. He was not afraid to face the past. We cannot get away from our past by running away from it. We deal with it by facing it.

Principle

Iron sharpens iron.

Application

Christians do not keep to themselves.

Galatians 1:19-20

"But I saw none of the other apostles except James, the Lord's brother. (Now concerning the things which I write to you, indeed, before God, I do not lie.) Afterward I went into the regions of Syria and Cilicia"

But I saw none of the other apostles except James, the Lord's brother.

In passing, Paul met "James, the Lord's brother," who was also a key leader in the Jerusalem church (Acts 12:17). Jesus had more than one biological brother (Matthew 13:55; cf. Psalms 69:8,9). This verse violates the doctrine of the perpetual virginity of Mary (Mark 6:3; Galatians 2:9; 1 Corinthians 15:7; Acts 15:13; 21:18). James was Mary's biological son.

Now concerning the things which I write to you, indeed, before God, I do not lie.

The legalists who came to Galatia cast such a pall of suspicion on Paul that he pledged he wrote the truth in the preceding verses. He took this oath in God's presence making it solemn. He calls on God to witness his statements (Romans 9:1).

Principle

False teachers love to undermine God's messengers, since it also undercuts God's message.

Application

How strange that Paul's very own converts would think that he was not truthful! This shows the pall that false teaching can cast on the integrity of Christians. Satan loves to cast aspersions on God's people, so that he can undermine God's message.

Galatians 1:21

"Afterward I went into the regions of Syria and Cilicia"

Afterward I went into the regions of Syria and Cilicia

After his brief fifteen-day visit to Jerusalem, Paul went to the "regions of Syria and Cilicia." He left Jerusalem because of persecution (Acts 9:29-30). Sometimes discretion is the better part of valor. It always costs something to follow the Lord.

Tarsus, Paul's hometown, was in Cilicia. He stayed in Tarsus for at least six years until Barnabas asked him to come to Antioch in Syria (Acts 11:20-26). He may have needed experience in the local church in Tarsus.

Paul had now been a Christian for at least nine years. God waited nine years before He used him in Antioch. Paul needed to go through God's training time. Paul did not become a missionary until after an extended time in Syria, Cilicia and Antioch. Some people are in a hurry to minister, so they take shortcuts into ministry. God has a timetable for our ministry. We must wait on His time.

Antioch of Syria was the city from which they launched the first missionary expedition (Acts 13:1-3). Since Paul was far from Jerusalem, he did not have sustained contact with the leaders there.

Principle

God has His own timing for our ministry.

Application

Do you chafe at the bit wondering why God does not use you more? Are you waiting for God's timing? God is in the process of preparing you to serve Him. This takes time. He wants to reveal what you're made of, so you must go through certain tests to determine whether your character can stand up.

Galatians 1:22

"And I was unknown by face to the churches of Judea which were in Christ"

The churches of Judea, as distinguished from the church in Jerusalem, did not know Paul by sight, because he ministered elsewhere. Paul mentions this to answer the accusation of the legalists who say that the churches in Judea taught him the gospel. The point of recounting these events from his life is to show that He got his message from God and not from the apostles who preceded him. Paul was "unknown by face" to the churches of Judea. They only heard of his conversion from afar.

There is a temptation to thrust new Christians into the limelight, especially if they are celebrities. The churches of Judea did not carry out a media campaign about Paul's conversion: "Come hear a murderer turned Christian!" They did not capitalize on his conversion. Instead, they waited for his spiritual maturation. God takes years to build a great oak.

Principle

God takes time to develop leadership in the church.

Application

The Bible puts a premium on qualified leadership (1 Timothy 3:1f). One of a number of qualifications listed in this passage in Timothy is that a leader should not be a novice" (3:6). When we thrust new Christians into leadership, we stunt their spiritual growth. Although someone may have impeccable business qualifications and business leadership, the Christian maturity to lead may still be lacking.

We do not put novices in leadership lest they be lifted up with "pride." There is a special vulnerability toward pride in new Christians. "I must be important to this church since they put me on the board after being a Christian such a short time," they may think. Pride is one of the main reasons the Lord bypasses certain people.

New Christians need time for God to chisel, sand and polish them for ministry. Our society makes sure that we train our medical doctors. We send them to university for their academic training; then we put them into an internship program so

that they can practice. We want them to practice under the supervision of a competent doctor. New believers also need training and internship so that mature believers can nurture them along.

It is easy to get sidetracked while God prepares us for a mission. We must keep our eye on the vision. It is easy to fix our eyes on something lucrative or self-serving. But we must not let the Devil get us on a tangent.

Galatians 1:23-24

**"But they were hearing only, "He who formerly persecuted us now preaches the faith which he once tried to destroy."
And they glorified God in me"**

Churches in Judea kept hearing about Paul, but never met him personally. There is one thing they knew about him – his conversion to Christ. God radically transformed Paul's thinking from salvation by works to salvation by faith.

The Judean churches kept on giving God the glory, as the Greek word puts it, for the transformation that took place in Paul's life. Paul's testimony was an occasion for glorifying God. The persecutor became the preacher. These well-established churches approved of Paul's testimony. This was a powerful blow to the legalists' accusations against Paul.

Principle

We must remember that God does the transforming, not human beings.

Application

It is proper to glorify God for a person's testimony; however, we should not mix the praise of God with praises for our fellow humans. It is God who does the transforming, not us.

Galatians 2:1

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

Then

The word "then" is a sequential word meaning thereupon, thereafter, then. In chapter one, Paul defends his apostolic authority by recounting a sequence of events showing that he stands

independently from other apostles. In chapter two, he turns to another historical situation called the Jerusalem Council (Acts 15). In this chapter, he changes his focus from the source of his gospel to its content. He shows the unity existing between himself and the other apostles concerning the doctrines of salvation and sanctification by grace.

after fourteen years

It has been 14 years between Paul's first visit to Jerusalem (Galatians 1:18) and the Jerusalem Council meeting. God so employed Paul in preaching the gospel to the Gentiles that he did not have time to extensively confer with the apostles in Jerusalem about the nature of the gospel of grace.

I went up again to Jerusalem

The book of Acts declares that Paul made five visits to Jerusalem:

1. The visit from Damascus (Acts 9:26-30; Galatians 1:18-20)
2. The famine visit (Acts 11:27-30; 12:24-25)
3. The Jerusalem Council visit (Acts 15:1-30)
4. The visit at the end of the second missionary expedition (Acts 18:22)
5. Paul's final visit (Acts 21:15-23:35)

There is a debate as to whether Galatians 2 refers to the famine visit or to the Jerusalem Council visit. The word "again" does not necessarily imply that this trip to Jerusalem was the very next visit; it is simply a term of sequence without specificity. We can surmise that Paul did not refer to the famine visit because it did not affect his authority as an apostle.

The Jerusalem Council in Acts 15 resolves the church's first great doctrinal conflict—the issue of whether God justifies or sanctifies anyone by works. The Council concluded that the death of Christ suffices for salvation. They settled that issue once and for all.

"And certain men came down from Judea and taught the brethren, 'Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved' (Acts 15:1).

The issue at the Jerusalem Council was legalism. "Certain men" came to Antioch teaching that to trust the cross of Christ for salvation was not

enough. The first great doctrinal struggle of the church originated with a problem in the church at Antioch.

"Therefore, when Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and dispute with them, they determined that Paul and Barnabas and certain others of them should go up to Jerusalem, to the apostles and elders, about this question" (Acts 15:2).

Circumcision added to the doctrine of the cross landed like a bombshell on those who believed in grace, so a full-scale "dissension" and "dispute" broke out between the two groups in Antioch. According to Galatians, the church at Antioch sent Paul, Barnabas and Titus to Jerusalem to formalize the doctrine of salvation by grace.

"And when they had come to Jerusalem, they were received by the church and the apostles and the elders; and they reported all things that God had done with them. But some of the sect of the Pharisees who believed rose up, saying, 'It is necessary to circumcise them, and to command them to keep the law of Moses'" (Acts 15:4-5).

The source behind adding circumcision to the cross was the Pharisees of Judea. They dragged their pre-conversion doctrine into their Christianity.

"Now the apostles and elders came together to consider this matter. And when there had been much dispute, Peter rose up and said to them: 'Men and brethren, you know that a good while ago God chose among us, that by my mouth the Gentiles should hear the word of the gospel and believe. 'So God, who knows the heart, acknowledged them by giving them the Holy Spirit, just as He did to us, 'and made no distinction between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith. 'Now therefore, why do you test God by putting a yoke on the neck of the disciples which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear? 'But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus

Christ we shall be saved in the same manner as they" (Acts 15:6-11).

The Council clearly concluded that salvation is by faith through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ. Even the Pharisees themselves could not obtain salvation by keeping the law.

Principle

Faith in the death of Christ on the cross is sufficient for salvation.

Application

Christ's death on the cross with nothing added is God's way of salvation. We cannot become Christians by the cross plus good works, baptism, the Lord's Supper or repentance. Salvation is exclusively through the cross with nothing added. Biblical repentance is part and parcel of believing. When we change our minds to trusting the cross of Christ exclusively to forgive us, we receive eternal life. We cannot help Jesus save us for He does a complete job by His work on the cross.

We cannot earn or deserve anything from God. All we can do is lean upon His provision for salvation and for sanctification.

Galatians 2 refers to a visit by a delegation from the Antioch church to the leaders in Jerusalem to resolve the issue of salvation by faith.

The first half of Galatians 2 deals with salvation by faith (2:1-10), and the second half deals with sanctification by faith (2:11-21).

with Barnabas,

Luke mentions that Barnabas and "certain others" went to Jerusalem with Paul from Antioch. Barnabas was also with Paul when they founded the Galatian church on their first missionary expedition. The word "with" indicates Barnabas was a partner and colleague of Paul in the wonderful fellowship of ministry.

and also took Titus with me

"Took" comes from three Greek words: to take, with, alongside. Paul took Titus, a new convert, alongside with him in his travel to Jerusalem. The idea is that Paul made him an assistant to accompany him in ministry. Luke uses this same word of John Mark in the book of Acts (12:25; 15:37,38).

The reason Paul took Titus to the Jerusalem Council is that he was an uncircumcised Gentile Christian. He was living proof that a Gentile can be a child of God. Paul was the apostle to the Gentiles, so the issue of Gentiles coming to Christ was of utmost importance to him. The Jerusalem Council resolved the issue that Gentiles can enter the family of God by faith and that they do not have to be circumcised (the symbol of becoming a Jew) to become a Christian.

Titus later became a mature leader. He helped settle a dispute between Paul and the Corinthian church (2 Corinthians 3:13; 7:6, 13-14; 8:6, 16, 23; 12:18). At another time, Paul left Titus in Crete to organize the church there (Titus 1:4-5). He evidently was an outstanding mediator.

Titus' name occurs 13 times in four different books of the Bible two times in Galatians; nine times in 2 Corinthians; once in 2 Timothy; once in Titus. Dr. Luke does not mention Titus in the book of Acts, yet he obviously took part in many of the activities in Acts. Do you think he was miffed because of this? This would hurt the feelings of many people today, but not Titus'.

Principle

Mature Christians do not allow their feelings to get in the way of ministry.

Application

If we neglect to give people what they deem to be proper recognition for work they do in ministry, they feel rejected and neglected. They say, "The pastor didn't put my name in the bulletin after all the work I did for that church." Mature Christians can transcend hurt feelings. They will not allow their feelings to get in the way of ministry. The issues are too great and the need is too massive to blunt the ministry of Christ with feelings of rejection.

Galatians 2:2

"And I went up by revelation, and communicated to them that gospel which I preach among the Gentiles, but privately to those who were of reputation, lest by any means I might run, or had run, in vain"

And I went up by revelation,

Paul did not go to the Jerusalem Council because of pressure from the apostles in Jerusalem. He went there because God told him to go. Paul did not go to Jerusalem because the leaders had called him on the carpet. The church at Antioch had sent his delegation there.

Antioch was the third largest city in the Roman Empire and 500 kilometers from Jerusalem. Going up [even though Jerusalem was south, the New Testament refers to it as "up"] to Jerusalem by revelation does not contradict the Antioch church sending his delegation to Jerusalem for both can be true.

and communicated to them that gospel which I preach among the Gentiles,

The word "communicated" means to set forth, to lay before. Paul laid his case of the gospel of grace before the leaders in Jerusalem (15:2; Galatians 2:9).

but privately to those who were of reputation,

Paul took the precaution to deal with the issue privately because he did not want to surprise those in leadership in Jerusalem such as Peter, James and John by dealing with the issue in public first. If he came in like a bolt from the blue then his mission to the Jerusalem Council would have been in vain.

lest by any means I might run, or had run, in vain

Paul used discernment in the way he handled the doctrinal crisis at the Jerusalem Council. He took the precaution to present the facts to the apostles privately before the issue came to public debate. He did not want to offend the leaders there unnecessarily and stir up opposition against his position before he could objectively present it to the Council.

The word "run" stresses strenuous running. Paul ran strenuously in his cause at the Jerusalem Council. He viewed his presentation as a footrace in a stadium. If the Judaizers won, he would have lost a lot of territory in advancing the gospel.

"Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may obtain it" (1 Corinthians 9:24).

Principle

Discernment is important in successfully advancing the gospel.

Application

As Christians, we should use discernment in the way we fight for doctrinal position. If it requires going through private meetings, then so be it. It is not wise to embarrass publicly those we attempt to persuade.

A priority of Christian living is to keep our eye on what we want to accomplish. By using unwise approaches, we can undermine what we try to accomplish.

"...holding fast the word of life, so that I may rejoice in the day of Christ that I have not run in vain or labored in vain" (Philippians 2:16).

Galatians 2:3

"Yet not even Titus who was with me, being a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised"

Yet not even Titus who was with me,

The reason Paul brought Titus to Jerusalem was to present him to the Council as a test case. This was a bold step on Paul's part, an open confrontation to the legalists. The heart of the Judaizer's position was circumcision because that was the true sign of being a Jew. Titus was a living example of someone who became a Christian without circumcision. All the legalists had to do to win their case was to convince the Council to circumcise Titus. This they failed to do.

being a Greek,

The word "Greek" does not mean native people from Greece but a Gentile who participates in the Greek culture and speaks Greek, the common language of the Roman Empire. Greek and Gentile became interchangeable terms. A Gentile is anyone not a Jew.

was compelled to be circumcised

Certain people put pressure on Titus to become circumcised as a part of becoming a Christian but the Council concluded that it was not necessary for him to be circumcised. They affirmed Paul's

position on the gospel of grace. This decision was a crucial watershed of the Christian faith because the Council affirmed Gentile converts as truly Christian. This was also important for the church at Antioch for it was the centre for Gentile ministry throughout the world. Paul's success at the Jerusalem Council opened the gospel to the Gentiles.

Principle

A core value of Christianity is to stand for truth.

Application

It seems that very few people are willing to take a stand on the truth of the gospel these days. Christians have almost concluded that it is wrong to confront false teaching. Both Jesus and the apostles constantly confronted false teaching. Tolerance was not the norm for first-century Christianity.

Galatians 2:4

"And this occurred because of false brethren secretly brought in (who came in by stealth to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage)..."

And this occurred because of false brethren

The words "and this" refer to Paul's bringing Titus as a test case to the Jerusalem Council (2:3). The "false brethren" were fakers who claimed to be in the Christian family as "brothers." They came to the Council to persuade them to circumcise Titus (2:3; Acts 15:1).

secretly brought in

Some of the representatives of the Jerusalem Council surreptitiously brought false teachers into the Council. They came to the Council under false pretense. They came in as traitors to grace. The Greek historian Strabo used "secretly brought in" for enemies secretly introduced into a city by traitors within the city. False teachers are like stealth bombers that silently destroy the gospel of grace; they are underhanded in their methods. This created a full-scale dispute at the Jerusalem Council.

(who came in by stealth to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus,

Christians are free from the law when it comes to salvation [as were the Jews by the way]. Our position in Christ gives us liberty from the law and all its requirements to attain salvation. Christ bore the penalty of the law (3:13). No one else needs to bear that penalty because the cross paid for sin completely. Christians should look for those who do reconnaissance for the law because they will destroy the grace of our freedom in Christ Jesus.

that they might bring us into bondage)

The purpose of the infiltration of false teachers into the Jerusalem Council was to make slaves of Christians. They wanted Christians to revert to the Mosaic Law. They wanted to impose circumcision on Titus. The words "bring us into bondage" are a very strong phrase for bringing people into slavery.

Principle

Christ plus something else for salvation or sanctification is heresy.

Application

If we add a single work to salvation we undercut grace. We destabilize the very essence of what it means to become a Christian. We should not be surprised that people in the 20th century try to impose legalism on the church because it is a battle that goes back to the first century. If "false brethren" could get into the apostolic church, they certainly can get into the 20th century church.

The Christian life by definition is a life of liberty (John 8:36; Romans 7:6). Christian liberty is not license but freedom from sin and the penalty of sin (Galatians 5:13). Liberty frees the Christian soul from conditions to fellowship with God or acceptance by God. Any time a doctrine presents the idea of Christ and His cross plus something, it is heresy. Christ plus works or Christ plus religion is heresy.

Galatians 2:5

"...to whom we did not yield submission even for an hour, that the truth of the gospel might continue with you"

to whom we did not yield submission even for an hour,

Paul did not yield in submission to the doctrine of the legalists even for an hour. He did not cave in to legalism. "Yield" means to yield, give way, draw back, retire. When it came to defending the gospel, Paul did not shrink back from a fight. Peter did not yield to this crowd either (Acts 15:7). Paul would not yield to legalism and allow the trampling of the liberty of grace.

that the truth of the gospel might continue with you

The reason Paul did not yield an inch to the legalists is that "the gospel might continue with you." The word "continue" means to continue throughout, i.e., without interruption. Paul wanted the gospel of grace to be a permanent fixture in the church. Paul took a stand for the truth of the gospel of grace so that liberty in Christ might be there for the Galatians.

"Truth" implies genuineness and integrity. The issue of the integrity of the gospel was at stake. The false teachers did not totally deny the gospel; they mixed truth with false doctrine.

"But I fear, lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so your minds may be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ. For if he who comes preaches another Jesus whom we have not preached, or if you receive a different spirit which you have not received, or a different gospel which you have not accepted – you may well put up with it!" (2 Corinthians 11:3-4).

Principle

Christians need to take a stand on "the truth of the gospel."

Application

Christians today should have great concern for the unadulterated gospel of grace. We live in a day when very few care about the truth of the gospel. Take a stand for truth. There are some things worth fighting for. Have you moved from your initial belief in salvation by grace through faith alone? Many evangelicals are defecting from this truth. Those who hold to truth do so because they

commit themselves to what the Bible says and not to the current evangelical trend.

It is one thing to be flexible in method (1 Corinthians 9:22) but it is another thing to be flexible in message. We must be inflexible in message if we are going to maintain the integrity of Christianity in our day.

Does a person who fights for truth lack love? It is not love to allow your children to get away with bloody murder. We would not do our duty as a parent if we allowed our children to develop bad character traits. There are absolutes and principles where a parent should take a stand. Love does the best for our children even though the process may be painful. When it comes to "the truth of the gospel," we can accommodate method but we cannot compromise the truth.

It is not enough for us to simply retain the gross idea of some general gospel. We serve the specific gospel of the New Testament, a gospel of grace. There is a true gospel and there is a false gospel. When it comes to the essence of the gospel, Christians should take an inflexible stand on "the truth of the gospel." There is latitude in method but not in message. In the message, "we do not yield, no, not for an hour."

Galatians 2:6

"But from those who seemed to be something – whatever they were, it makes no difference to me; God shows personal favoritism to no man – for those who seemed to be something added nothing to me"

Paul now evaluates the debate of the Jerusalem Council beginning in verse 6.

But from those who seemed to be something –

The word "seemed" signifies to be of opinion, to suppose. The reputed leaders of the Jerusalem Council did not intimidate Paul. Paul recognized that James, Peter and John held high esteem in the church in Jerusalem (2:9) and that was also the general accepted opinion of Christians. This did not daunt Paul from setting forth his message at the Council.

whatever they were, it makes no difference to me;

"Difference" here means to excel. When it came to standing up for "the truth of the gospel," Paul does not recognize reputation or even excellence. The word "difference" comes from two words: to carry and through. The leadership in Jerusalem carried considerable estimation in the eyes of Christians there. This, however, did not impress Paul. He respected their position in the church but he did not put them in an exaggeratedly high place either.

God shows personal favoritism to no man –

The status of the Jerusalem apostles does not diminish Paul's status as an apostle. The Judaizers possibly claimed that Paul did not have as much status as the Jerusalem apostles because he came from the Gentile city of Antioch. They said, "Go to mother church in ancient Jerusalem. That is where you can find truth." God is not impressed with status or position so He does not show favoritism to the apostles in Jerusalem over the apostle Paul.

"I have become a fool in boasting; you have compelled me. For I ought to have been commended by you; for in nothing was I behind the most eminent apostles, though I am nothing. Truly the signs of an apostle were accomplished among you with all perseverance, in signs and wonders and mighty deeds" (2 Corinthians 12: 11-12).

for those who seemed to be something added nothing to me.

The leaders in Jerusalem did not contribute to Paul's doctrine of grace. He did not consult them because God gave the gospel to him by direct revelation. The apostles did not lay their case before him. The word "added" comes from two words: to lay and before. The apostles did not give out of their tank of truth to the apostle Paul. They did not communicate or impart anything to Paul. They did not correct his message in any way. They did not add to the truth of his message.

This is not arrogance on Paul's part; he just states the truth of the validity of his apostleship. This is not pride for Paul simply states a matter of fact. He has great confidence in the authenticity of his apostleship. If he had submitted to legalism, he

would have undermined his message. Paul does not undermine the apostles in Jerusalem by saying "they added nothing to me" but countervails the attacks of the Judaizers upon the authority of his apostleship. In another passage, he diminishes himself as the person who holds the gift of apostleship.

"For I am the least of the apostles, who am not worthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me was not in vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me. Therefore, whether it was I or they, so we preach and so you believed" (1 Corinthians 15:9-11).

Yet, Paul had more training and more understanding of truth than all the other apostles put together. As the most astute student of God's Word in the first century, he made a clean-cut break with Judaism. The Judaizers did not make a clean break. This is a lack of discernment of the principle of grace on their part. They followed him around the Roman Empire trying to undermine his message. They did everything they could to destroy him. Peter, however, held Paul in high esteem.

"...as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given to him, has written to you, as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which untaught and unstable people twist to their own destruction, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures" (2 Peter 3:15-16).

Principle

Status or position does not alter truth.

Application

Are you overly impressed with the "big names" in Christianity? They have feet of clay just as you do. Over idealization of our leaders will ultimately lead to disillusionment. Ultimately, status and fame mean little, especially in God's eyes.

Galatians 2:7

"But on the contrary, when they saw that the gospel for the uncircumcised had been committed to me, as the gospel for the circumcised was to Peter..."

But on the contrary,

In contrast to the idea that the apostles in Jerusalem "added" anything to Paul's message, they recognized his apostleship was at the same level as Peter's apostleship.

when they saw that the gospel for the uncircumcised had been committed to me,

When the Jerusalem Council recognized that God had committed the gospel for the Gentiles (the uncircumcised) to Paul, this dropped like a bombshell on the Judaizers.

The word "committed" means entrusted with, to make a deposit. The Council entrusted the ministry to the Gentiles to Paul. Paul did not invent the gospel of grace; God entrusted him with it.

as the gospel for the circumcised was to Peter

The word "as" indicates that Paul was on the same plane of authority as Peter. Not only did the apostles in Jerusalem vindicate his message but also they affirmed his ministry.

The gospel to the uncircumcised and the gospel to the circumcised are not two different gospels. It is one gospel to two different groups. There is only a difference in the recipients, not in the gospel.

Principle

God makes a different kind of deposit for ministry in each believer.

Application

It is important to realize that God uses different people in different ways. Many people try to pour others into their own mold of ministry. God is the God of diversity, not similarity (1 Corinthians 12). Christians ought to recognize the differences God designed for different people.

God has made a deposit of ministry in you. Can He trust you with His investment?

"For if I preach the gospel, I have nothing to boast of, for necessity is laid

upon me; yes, woe is me if I do not preach the gospel! For if I do this willingly, I have a reward; but if against my will, I have been entrusted with a stewardship" (1 Corinthians 9:16-17).

"But as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, even so we speak, not as pleasing men, but God who tests our hearts" (1 Thessalonians 2:4).

Galatians 2:8

"...(for He who worked effectively in Peter for the apostleship to the circumcised also worked effectively in me toward the Gentiles)..."

Note that this verse is a parenthesis that explains the nature of how God worked in both Peter's and Paul's ministries.

for He who worked effectively in Peter for the apostleship to the circumcised

The words "worked effectively" are one word in the Greek that carries the idea of producing supernatural results. The New Testament always uses this word of supernatural working. God does the working. He not only works but He works "in" people. He energizes people. Paul affirmed God's supernatural work in Peter's ministry.

"Now may the God of peace who brought up our Lord Jesus from the dead, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you complete in every good work to do His will, working in you what is well pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen" (Hebrews 13:20-21).

also worked effectively in me toward the Gentiles

Paul does not attack Peter but says that the same Holy Spirit who worked in Peter's ministry "also" worked in his own ministry. God tailors the method of how He delivers the gospel to every group. Whether it is Peter's or Paul's ministry, it is God that does the work.

"...for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure" (Philippians 2:13).

Principle

If God gives us a ministry, He will also give us the necessary power.

Application

Our experience in ministry verifies our call. If God gives us a ministry, He will do something with it.

Instead of competing with other churches and ministries, we should follow the model of Paul who affirmed Peter's ministry. Have you affirmed the church down the street lately? Why attack a ministry of Christ if it truly preaches the Word?

Galatians 2:9

"...and when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that had been given to me, they gave me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship, that we should go to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised"

and when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars,

A "pillar" was a column that supported the weight of a building. Pillars usually stay put; James, Cephas [Peter] and John are symbols of stability in leadership. These three leaders bore the responsibility of maintaining doctrine and practice in the local church (1 Timothy 3:15). They were the outstanding leaders in and around Jerusalem.

Paul lists James first because he was the leader over the church in Jerusalem. This James was Jesus' half brother.

perceived the grace that had been given to me,

The leaders in Jerusalem now see the significance of the grace given to Paul's apostleship. Paul himself did not have such a great ministry; it was the grace of God working in him. God gave Paul his apostleship by "grace." It was a gift; he did not earn or deserve it.

they gave me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship,

This is the only place in the Bible where we have the phrase "the right hand of fellowship." The

"right hand of fellowship" is a symbol of mutual agreement and trust. The apostles in Jerusalem endorsed the ministry of Paul and Barnabas to the Gentiles by extending their right hand of fellowship. James, Peter and John were in synch with Paul doctrinally and personally. They gave Paul the right hand in recognition of his apostolic authority.

that we should go to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised

Different fields of service do not mean different doctrinal positions for they preached the same gospel. The first-century church clearly targeted it's mission fields. James, Peter and John pushed to the Jews. Paul and Barnabas went to the Gentiles. They clearly organized their evangelism approach. By dividing the job, they made a better endeavor.

Principle

The church needs pillar leaders to uphold the truth.

Application

We have either pillars or caterpillars for leaders in the church! The church always stands in need of outstanding leaders. It is one of the greatest needs of our day. Many churches can be more than they are if their leaders would establish a big vision and greater goals. Risk-taking leadership takes unusual faith and confidence in what God can do.

When your pastor or leaders in your church decide to take faith steps, do you support them? Are you behind your leaders? If James, Peter and John can recognize leadership, can you recognize the leadership in your church?

Leadership in truth and doctrine is the most difficult leadership task of all. Stand behind your leaders when they take a stand for doctrine and truth.

Galatians 2:10

"They desired only that we should remember the poor, the very thing which I also was eager to do"

They desired only that we should remember the poor,

The apostles agreed with Paul's gospel of grace to the Gentiles at the Jerusalem Council but they had one request that he should "remember the poor." They did not demand that he do this; it was simply a request. The Gentile church was in a financial position to meet the needs of the Jews under persecution in Judea. This request was not doctrinal but practical, therefore, the Judaizers could not use this as leverage against Paul. Only one stipulation came out of the Jerusalem Council ["only"] and that stipulation had nothing to do with doctrine.

the very thing which I also was eager to do

The word "eager" carries the ideas of to hasten to do a thing, to exert oneself, endeavor, give diligence. The idea is that Paul was zealous in remembering the poor. He took this task with forceful motivation. Paul previously brought financial relief to Jerusalem (Acts 11:29-30) so giving to the poor was in his heart already. He raised funds on his third missionary enterprise to alleviate those destitute due to persecution (1 Corinthians 16:1-3; 2 Corinthians 8:1-9,15; 9:1-5, 12; Romans 15:25-28).

Principle

God expects us to help those who cannot help themselves.

Application

God expects Christians to care for those who cannot help themselves. Those who can help themselves have the responsibility to feed themselves (2 Thessalonians 3:10).

Are you "eager" to do something for destitute believers? It is not enough to be willing; we must be enthusiastic about giving to those in destitution.

"If a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food, and one of you says to them, 'Depart in peace, be warmed and filled,' but you do not give them the things which are needed for the body, what does it profit?" (James 2:15-16).

"But whoever has this world's goods, and sees his brother in need, and shuts up his heart from him, how does the love of God abide in him?" (1 John 3:17).

Galatians 2:11

"Now when Peter had come to Antioch, I withstood him to his face, because he was to be blamed..."

With this verse, the location changes from Jerusalem to Antioch of Syria. Paul continues in this section to prove the validity and independence of his apostleship by telling how he rebuked Peter in Antioch. Paul's message of grace is independent from the church in general and the apostles in particular.

Now when Peter had come to Antioch,

Antioch was the capital of Syria situated on the river Orontes and founded by Seleucus Nicanor in 300 BC. Seleucus named the city after his father Antiochus. Many Jews lived in this city. The followers of Christ were first called Christians there. Antioch was the largest city in Syria. Paul ministered there (Acts 13:1; 14:26; 15:22ff; 18:22). Peter came to Paul's stomping grounds.

I withstood him to his face,

Paul "withstood" Peter to the "face." The word "withstood" means to set against. Peter made an attack on the grace principle by withdrawing from grace believers and aligning himself with legalistic believers (2:12-21). Paul opposed Peter's legalism. Peter's concession to legalism endangered the essence of the gospel so Paul confronted him face to face. The two apostles came to a head-on collision.

Principle

It is not enough to believe in the principle of grace; but we must also practice the principle of grace.

Application

Legalism stifles the dynamics of any church. Many Christians grow up in legalistic homes. From early childhood, they learn certain things are taboo and they have difficulty separating these beliefs from true Christianity. As a result, they never learn how to walk in the Spirit or serve the Lord with grace. As Paul stood against legalism, so must we. Are you willing to take a stand for grace?

because he was to be blamed

Literally, "was to be blamed" is to know something against someone, to condemn him. When Peter first arrived in Antioch, he partook of meals without regard to Mosaic food regulations. When representatives of James came to Antioch, Peter withdrew from the Gentiles because he was afraid of the Judaizers. Others soon followed Peter's example. They were "carried away" by his model. Peter was blatantly wrong in this.

Paul called Peter on this compromise, for he had taken the cowardly way out of the conflict which existed between believers. For expediency reasons, Peter became a faker. He denied God's grace by an act of compromise. The church at Antioch was on the move. Paul and Barnabas catapulted the service of this church by their grace teaching. Because of this, most of the missionary movements launched from Antioch and not from Jerusalem.

Principle

A mature person can take rebuke objectively.

Application

Sin can overtake even the finest of men when they leave their guard down. When fine men fall, they leave a bad example for many others.

Samson, David, Elijah and Jonah all had their problems. None of them sunk so low that they were beyond recovery. None of them was so secure that he was beyond the pale of temptation. Although Peter was one of the greatest leaders of the first century, he was not infallible. No great leader is infallible.

Peter took his rebuke from Paul with maturity. Sometimes the greatness of our walk with the Lord depends on how we handle rebuke. Pride might cause us to defend ourselves in the face of the facts. It may cause us to resent the person who calls us on our problem. There is no justification in saying, "You are no better than I am." No, a mature Christian evaluates rebuke and accepts objectively if it applies to him. We lose out if we resent those who try to correct us.

Galatians 2:12

"...for before certain men came from James, he would eat with the Gentiles;

but when they came, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing those who were of the circumcision"

for before certain men came from James,

This phase does not necessarily imply that these "certain men" came with James' blessing. James declared himself clearly on the principle of Gentiles coming to Christ in Acts 15:19.

"Therefore I judge that we should not trouble those from among the Gentiles who are turning to God..." (Acts 15:19).

he would eat with the Gentiles;

Before these men came from James, Peter had been in Antioch for a period. Peter established a pattern of regularly eating with the Gentiles (imperfect tense). The Lord taught Peter that what a man eats does not defile him (Mark 7:18,19). He also received direct revelation about Gentile acceptance in the plan of God (Acts 10:34). He was present at the Jerusalem Council that declared itself on this issue (Acts 15:8-11).

It was clear that Peter believed in grace for salvation and living the Christian life. He sat down with grace believers to eat fried chicken on paper plates. He developed a real liking for pork and chicken. Everything was lovely [except for the ants] until Peter sees a deputation coming from Jerusalem. He then separated himself from grace Christians unobtrusively as possible.

but when they came, he withdrew

Peter did two things when the legalists came from Jerusalem: 1) withdrew and 2) separated himself. Peter rolled up his sail of grace. The presence of the legalists made him so timid that he concealed his belief in grace. He held himself back from fully walking in grace.

Secular Greek used the term "withdrew" for a strategic military retreat. Peter refused to take an essential stand for truth so he strategically withdrew from the grace principle.

Principle

Truth always takes precedence over practicality.

Application

Whenever a Christian ceases to operate on the principle of grace because of some supposed fear,

he ceases to operate on truth and gives into the pressure of all-encompassing practicality. This would mean that the practical is more important than the truth.

and separated himself,

The word "separated" means to mark off by boundaries or limits. "Separated" comes from two words: to separate and from. Peter excluded himself from grace believers suggesting that they were somehow dishonorable in operating under the grace principle. He marked himself off as separate from grace believers.

fearing those who were of the circumcision

Fear was the motivation behind Peter's retreat from grace believers. He feared those "of the circumcision." His fear was not that of physical pain; it was a fear of rejection. He was afraid of losing acceptance with people he deemed had status in Jerusalem. Peter was a leader whether he lead in the right direction or the wrong direction.

Principle

When we sacrifice truth for expediency, we violate biblical principles.

Application

When we cease to do the right thing because we fear we might lose popularity, we sacrifice truth for expediency. Expediency as an absolute governing principle will cause hypocrisy and deceit.

Fidelity to truth must transcend personal acceptance. Many Christians find it difficult to put truth over the practical. Christians who withdraw from their convictions render themselves inoperative to God.

Some people are so afraid of what people may say about them that they bend their truth to fit the situation. God, however, calls us to be people of conviction.

"For I have not shunned to declare to you the whole counsel of God" (Acts 20:27).

Galatians 2:13

"And the rest of the Jews also played the hypocrite with him, so that even Barnabas was carried away with their hypocrisy"

And the rest of the Jews also played the hypocrite with him,

The "rest of the Jews" are Jewish believers. When Peter went astray, other Jewish believers went with him.

The English words "played the hypocrite" are from three Greek words: with, under, to judge. The idea is to join in acting the hypocrite, to pretend to act from one motive when in fact you are acting from an entirely different motive. The ancient Greeks used this word in the theater for pretending or playing a part. The idea is that they played a part along with others. They helped each other in presenting a false front.

Principle

When leaders fall, they bring many with them.

Application

The greatest of leaders have feet of clay. When great leaders fall, others fall with them into their failure. The greatest of Christian leaders can go bad. Any good man can go bad when he pushes the panic button.

When an outstanding leader falls, it is usually a great collapse to the Christian community. The greatest of Christian leaders can fall. A sin capacity resides within until they die or go to be with the Lord Jesus.

We need to understand that leaders can lead others astray. Do we as leaders give a second thought as to how we might hurt people who follow us?

so that even Barnabas was carried away with their hypocrisy

The hypocrisy of Peter and his friends lead Barnabas away from the truth. "Hypocrisy" is to act behind a mask. A stage player pretends to be someone he is not. Hypocrisy is pretense. An outward show of something is not true inwardly. This is to be two-faced.

In the ancient Greek play, the play actor would wear an enlarged wax mask that covered their entire head. They had a smiling mask for a happy part and a frowning mask when they played a tragedy part. When they acted, they judged from behind a mask. In either case, neither was the real

person. Peter, Barnabas and others put on the mask of legalism.

Their hypocrisy led others to defect from grace. People disowned the truth of grace by the behavior of their leaders. They took their cue from leaders. No Christian should allow himself to become disillusioned over leaders who fall. It should surprise no Christian who understands the sin capacity. Our sin capacity never improves or gets better.

Barnabas was a colleague in ministry and close friend of Paul. Barnabas was there for Paul when few others would trust him (Acts 9:27). Paul left as a murderer and came back as a missionary. Who would believe this? Barnabas believed Paul even though everyone around did not believe him. Everyone was skeptical but Barnabas took him in (Acts 11:19f). Barnabas was a good man, a man of faith (Acts 15:25). He introduced Paul into the ministry of teaching the Word at Antioch.

Both Paul and Barnabas preached the gospel of grace together. Now Barnabas put on a mask that did not show his true belief in grace. Of all people, it was very unlikely that Barnabas would fall into fakery. This was a cruel blow to Paul. This was a real shocker. Even a senior and veteran missionary can go bad. Barnabas put too much confidence in Peter. However, he was a man and as a man, he had all the potential of failure residing within him because he had a sin capacity.

Principle

Expediency never justifies deception.

Application

True Christianity must operate on truth, not deceit. Truth is more important than unity. When Christians present themselves as something they are not, there can be no integrity in the relationship.

Expediency never justifies deception. Many leaders today fall into the trap of caring about what other people think when it comes to doctrine. Leaders should not succumb to public opinion about truth. We cannot allow the pressure of the mob to get to us.

Galatians 2:14

"But when I saw that they were not straightforward about the truth of the gospel, I said to Peter before them all, "If you, being a Jew, live in the manner of Gentiles and not as the Jews, why do you compel Gentiles to live as Jews?"

But when I saw

When Paul realized that Peter and the crowd that followed him defected from the gospel, he took decisive action. Since no one but him kept his eyes open to the grace principle, he did something about it.

that they were not straightforward about the truth of the gospel,

The word "straightforward" means to walk in a straight course. "Straightforward" comes from two words: straight and foot. Metaphorically, it means to act uprightly. Here, the idea is to walk in a straight path in the truth of grace.

I said to Peter before them all,

Paul rebuked Peter publicly before the whole church. This must have stung Peter's pride. Peter did not walk in conformity to gospel truth. Paul took the situation seriously. Many churches today do not take stands for truth. They have little biblical backbone. Public injury deserves public rebuke.

"Those who are sinning rebuke in the presence of all, that the rest also may fear" (1 Timothy 5:20).

Public sin requires public rebuke. Paul's rebuke of Peter was not personal. Paul had no desire to humiliate Peter publicly. The overwhelming issue to Paul was the integrity of the gospel of grace. So Paul stood nose to nose to Peter.

If you, being a Jew, live in the manner of Gentiles and not as the Jews,

Paul says that Peter is a Jew. This is his current condition under the appearance of legalism. Peter lived as a Jew before his conversion. Peter's life as a Gentile means that he believed and lived the grace principle. If Peter accepted grace, how can he go back to legalism? It is impossible to have both. If he was right under grace, he is wrong to

go back to the law. He cannot live under both law and grace at the same time.

why do you compel Gentiles to live as Jews?

Peter compelled Gentiles to live as Jews. The word "compel" denotes put constraint upon. He forced Gentiles into Jewish theology. Peter's capitulation to the legalists tore apart the church at Antioch. Peter was especially blameworthy because of his station as an apostle. A leader's error always causes more consternation than anyone else's.

Principle

Our walk must be consistent with our talk.

Application

We can deny what we believe not only by what we affirm, but by how we act. Our talk can be right, but our walk wrong. When we live legalistically, we deny God the glory of His grace and we deny believers their liberty in Christ.

Galatians 2:15

"We who are Jews by nature, and not sinners of the Gentiles..."

The remainder of the chapter expands the idea of Peter's inconsistency in reverting to legalism (2:15-21).

We who are Jews by nature,

Paul includes himself in the word "we." Paul uses "we" four times in verses 15-17. Paul and Peter were born Jews. That is their condition by nature. The Jews tended to hold themselves above Gentiles in self-righteous arrogance.

"By nature" does not mean that Jews were free from sinning. It just means that they are God's chosen people, God's people by covenant.

and not sinners of the Gentiles

The Jews viewed Gentiles as "sinners." The implication is that their religion was superior to that of the Gentiles, as if religion somehow gained God's approbation.

The Jews received the Old Testament by revelation. They were God's chosen people. They inferred from this that they were somehow superior morally to the Gentiles because God gave them the law. By siding with the Jews, Peter inferred that religion and not grace is the principle

of salvation and of the Christian life. But the law is not the way of salvation even in the Old Testament (Genesis 12:15). Paul will develop this in the next chapter.

Principle

Christians stand in Christ's perfect righteousness before God eternally.

Application

The gap between God and people is one of infinite degree. When people go to Heaven, they go there on God's terms, not their own. Only Jesus could bridge the gap between the absolute and perfect righteousness of God and the relative righteousness of humankind.

People cannot keep the law by human means (Romans 3:20,28; 6:14; Galatians 2:16, 19-21; 3:2,5,10, 21; Philippians 3:9). It is too perfect and too huge. Jesus fulfilled the law in every respect. When we believe in His death on the cross to forgive our sins, we fulfill the law as well.

"For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh, that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit" (Romans 8:2-4).

Christ abrogated our responsibility to live up to the law, because he fulfilled it for us.

"For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes" (Romans 10:4).

There is no salvation outside Jesus Christ and the work He did on the cross.

Galatians 2:16

"...knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we might be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified"

In this verse, we have an affirmation and a denial. We have an affirmation of how God declares a person justified – He justifies him by faith in Christ's death to forgive sin. We also have a denial: God does not justify a person by "the works of the law."

Paul is in the process of dressing down Peter for his reversion into legalism. Upon the arrival of legalists from Jerusalem, the situation projected Peter into a predicament. He left fellowship with Gentiles and relapsed back into legalism. He tried to accommodate both law and grace at the same time. That never works.

knowing

The tense of the word "knowing" shows that Paul and Peter knew that the law cannot justify a sinner or sanctify a saint in the past and that they continued to know it [perfect tense]. Peter failed to apply what he knew about the principle of grace. Paul appeals to common knowledge about the principle of grace.

Principle

Christians and non-Christians must grasp the principle of grace very clearly.

Application

Do you have a clear understanding of justification by grace alone and faith alone? No matter how cultured, religious, well-behaved, gracious, philanthropic, cultured or well-educated we might be, if we do not accept the fact that only faith in the death of Jesus Christ forgives sin, God will not justify us.

We may have good standing with people, but we have no standing with God. A good standing in our community will not impress God when we meet Him in Heaven. That will get us a big funeral, but not eternal life.

that a man is not justified

The word "justified" primarily sets forth the idea of to deem, declare or cause to be right. The standard for relating to God is God Himself. God cannot compromise His integrity. As an absolute being, He cannot do anything outside His character, nor can He live with anyone that is outside His character. Every person on earth, save

one, has committed sin (Romans 3:10,23). We all fall short of who God is in His righteousness.

Paul uses the word "justified" four times in verses 16 and 17. When we stand in God's court, our lawyer must defend us according to the laws of God, the laws that govern God Himself.

The word "justified" connotes the idea of receiving justification [passive voice]. Justification is something that God does, not people. We do not earn or deserve justification.

by the works of the law

God declares people who believe Jesus died for their sins as right as He Himself is right, exclusively by faith, not works. God renders them as right as Himself the moment they place faith in Christ's death as payment for their sin. God henceforth treats them as judicially right in His eyes. They are right, because God resolved His justice at the cross.

but by faith in Jesus Christ,

Paul uses a similar phrase later in this verse. Faith is the instrument of salvation. There is no inherent merit in faith. The merit is in the object of faith.

even we have believed in Christ Jesus,

"Believed" means to be persuaded of, and hence, to place confidence in. When we believe in Christ, we place confidence in or gives credit to Jesus as the only one who can save us from our sins. We entrust our entire eternal future to Christ Jesus. He is worthy of our trust.

that we might be justified

The word "justified" is a causative verb in the Greek. When we trust the death of Christ to forgive our sins, God declares or causes us to be as right as He is right forever. Justification is more than a declaration of "not guilty." It is a declaration of being as right as God is right.

by faith in Christ

When we place our trust in Christ, we come to the place of full persuasion that we can trust Him for our eternal future. We rely on His character. Faith in Christ as our object makes our faith valid. There is no validity in faith itself. Jesus is completely believable because of His person and work.

and not by the works of the law;

Even noble keeping of the law cannot make a person measure up to God's standard because every person has fallen short of God's righteousness (Romans 3:19-24,28).

for by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified

No quantity of keeping the law can bring a person to the point of justification. Three times Paul declares that God justifies people by faith and three times he affirms that God does not justify a person by the works of the law.

Principle

God's own standard of absolute righteousness is the standard for us going to Heaven.

Application

Any claim that God causes a person to be as right as He is right by works profanes God's character. Some people think that if they keep the 10 commandments, they are on good footing with God. The purpose of the law is not to justify us, but to show us our need for justification (Galatians 3). God never justified an Old Testament person by offering an animal sacrifice. God justifies no one by keeping the laws of the Old Testament. The law teaches us about the knowledge of sin and how it separates us from God.

We cannot go to a dying person and say, "Now you have to do more good works than bad to go to Heaven. You have to keep the 10 commandments. Keep the golden rule." There would be no hope for that person. "I do not have time to keep the golden rule. I only have a few hours of life left." The good news is that Jesus will save poor lost sinners. The only way God accepts us is through undiluted grace.

Salvation is free of charge. God, who is undiminished righteousness, will declare a person who embraces the cross for forgiveness to be as righteous as He is righteous. This is not something humans can manufacture (Romans 3:10, 23). The split second we place our faith in the finished work of the Son of God on the cross, God causes us to be right in His eyes. God declares us to be more than innocent, acquitted, or pardoned. He

declares us to be as right as He is. Only God can do that.

Galatians 2:17

"But if, while we seek to be justified by Christ, we ourselves also are found sinners, is Christ therefore a minister of sin? Certainly not!"

But if, while we seek to be justified by Christ,

Paul's antagonists contended that justification by faith eradicates the moral law. If grace does away with law, then people can live as they please. They argued that eliminating the law would mean that a person could do as he or she pleases. Peter and his crowd argued by implication that a person has to work for justification. The cross of Christ is not enough for salvation.

we ourselves also are found sinners,

It was an admission on the part of Jewish Christians that justification by works proves that they are sinners. Their failure in keeping the law forces them to admit their sinful condition. They did not find righteousness in keeping the law.

is Christ therefore a minister of sin?

If God declares a person right in His eyes by faith, does this make Christians lawless? Legalists argued in this way, "If Christ does away with the law for salvation and sanctification then that would make Christ lawless." Christ would endorse sin. This conclusion is false because Christ dealt with the sin issue on the cross.

To believe that God justifies and sanctifies a person by faith does not imply lawlessness. Liberty is not liberty from God's righteous standards. Neither is it lawlessness to fellowship with Gentiles. Going back to the law as a system of salvation and sanctification abandons the grace principle. We imply what Christ did on the cross was not sufficient.

If Peter is right in going back to the Mosaic Law, then he was wrong in eating with the Gentiles. If he is right in eating with the Gentiles, then he was wrong in going back to the Mosaic Law. If he is right in one place, he is wrong in the other. He cannot hold the two at the same time. They are mutually exclusive. If he starts out by grace, then goes back to the law, he then abandons grace. He

would say in effect that what Christ did on the cross was not enough. Peter's return to legalism was an attack on grace.

Certainly not!

The conclusion that Christ is the minister of sin is the right inference if Peter's reversion to legalism is right. The thought that Christ is the minister of sin is a revolting thought to Paul. The law cannot add anything to the death of Christ for our sins. If we carefully investigate justification in Christ and find ourselves to still be sinners, that doesn't make Christ the minister of sin. This is an abhorrent thought. Paul adamantly denied the accusation that Christ promotes sin by offering the principle of grace.

Principle

The principle of grace does not endorse licentiousness.

Application

The principle of grace never encourages sinful living. People who believe in Christ no longer do as they please because they are under the lordship of Christ.

When Christians abandon grace and revert to legalism as a way to gain God's approbation, then they vilify Christ's work on the cross. They imply that His work is not sufficient for salvation or sanctification. They say in effect that, after they accept Christ as Savior, they are still not sure of salvation.

Christ's finished work on the cross flies in the face of all that. He is sufficient for salvation and sanctification.

Galatians 2:18

"For if I build again those things which I destroyed, I make myself a transgressor"

Paul "destroyed" legalism when he put his trust in the cross as the way of salvation. Hypothetically, if Paul tore down the house of legalism as the way of salvation and sanctification, then rebuilding it would be inconsistent with grace. Self-righteousness would replace Christ-provided righteousness.

The word "destroyed" means completely razed to the ground. Paul completely destroyed the law as

a system of salvation and sanctification. Paul was in the business of destroying false doctrine. He will show in chapters 3 and 4 that the law never did save or sanctify. Biblical consistency is a core value of Christianity.

I make myself a transgressor

A "transgressor" is someone who crosses over a line or standard. Paul would violate the standard of grace if he reverted to law. Paul in that case constitutes or establishes himself a "transgressor." Righteousness based on merit will show how extensively we violate the law.

Principle

Law and grace are mutually exclusive. They cannot be co-extended for one contradicts the other.

Application

When we believe in the death of Jesus Christ to forgive our sins, we in effect destroy the law as a system of salvation. If we revert to the law, we rebuild as a system of salvation. If we choose both the law and grace as systems of salvation, we restrict both of them.

A foundational truth of Christianity is that we are sinful in comparison to a holy God. We have a heart of mutiny against God. The only cure for that rebellion is the cross. We cannot engender righteousness from within because we are corrupt within. This only points to our desperate need for Christ and His work on the cross.

It is not the doctor's fault when we have heart disease. Our clogged arteries are killing us. Doctors merely report test results. They simply tell us the truth. Christianity tells us the truth about how God views us as totally depraved [not totally depraved to man but to a holy God].

It does me no good to keep patching my house if the structure is fundamentally flawed. I have a primary problem in my spiritual house that no patchwork will fix. It has to do with the foundation of my being. God condemned our moral house. That is why we must tear down any attempt at self-righteousness as a way of gaining God's approval. We must acknowledge that the only approval we can have before Him is our acceptance in Christ. It is a shameful thing to face the fact that we have nothing to offer God. In

humility, we must throw ourselves on the work of Christ for salvation and sanctification.

Galatians 2:19

"For I through the law died to the law that I might live to God"

For I

Paul uses himself as an illustration again. He contrasts himself who operates in grace to Peter who reverted to legalism.

through the law

The law shows the standard for entering heaven – perfection. The standard for going to heaven is God's righteousness. None of us is that righteous so we need Christ to deal with our sin.

"Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin" (Romans 3:20).

"For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes" (Romans 10:4).

Paul died to the law through the law. The law itself put him to death. The law asks no more than death. Once the law puts the condemned to death, he or she is free from the law. The person is legally dead. God's legal system closes the case. We died to the law through Christ's death. It was the law that demanded Christ's death for our sin because God cannot tolerate sin of any kind.

"Christ has 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")..." (Galatians 3:13).

Principle

The Christian is legally free from the law through Christ's death on the cross.

Application

Jesus took the eternal death we richly deserved. Jesus took that death I deserved on the cross. God paid the legal penalty through Christ's death on the cross. Our death in Christ freed us from the penalty that the law demanded. The law convicts every person as a transgressor of God's righteousness. Christians stand dead to the law in

God's eyes (2:20). The law lost its claim on us at the cross. It is only then that we begin to live to God.

As soon as Christians put themselves under the law, they are dead to God. The law condemns us to death and kills us. The law was not dead to us but us to the law. The best thing that the law did to us was kill us. Until we come to Christ, the law kills us. The standards of the law killed Christ. There was no way we could have a proper standing in God's eyes until God settled the sin issue by Christ's death.

Some of us suspect that we can keep some sizable percentage of the law. This is because we are unaware of what is involved in keeping the law. We must keep the law 100% to be acceptable to God.

"For whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one point, he is guilty of all" (James 2:10).

Because we cannot keep the standard of the law, it becomes a sledgehammer against us. We think that the law saves us but it only condemns us. Only trust in Christ's death on the cross can save us.

died to the law

Not only are we dead through the law, we are dead to the law. We legally died to the law when we embraced the cross to obtain forgiveness for our sins. The law has no claim beyond death. Jesus paid our debt to the law by His death. He substituted His death for our death.

The law demands a penalty for those who break it. Through the law, Paul died to the law. The law killed any hope of his living for God. Paul's status of having been crucified with Christ (2:20) freed him from sin and its consequences (3:13). The law curses us but Christ killed the judgment of the law. The law has no further claim on the Christian.

The law itself kills any hope of merit before God. It precludes any hope of justification or sanctification by works because it places the standard too high for any sinner to achieve. However, the law has no authority over people executed for crimes. They have paid their penalty by death. Society has no further claim on them

(Romans 6:1-14; 7:1-4). Jesus died for our sin so the penalty of the law has no further claim on us.

Paul does not say that the law is dead. Far from it. He says that he is dead to the law. In the eyes of the law, I do not exist any more. The law has no authority over me, even though it is very much alive. It still curses and condemns the sinner. It still demands the death of the transgressor but we are no longer transgressors because Christ forgave us when we came to trust His work on the cross.

"For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace" (Romans 6:14).

Paul does not claim that he is a lawless person. He is no law unto himself. His point is that law has no claim on him. The law declared him a sinner and punished him for his sin through Christ. Now he is free from the law because Christ fulfilled the law.

Principle

The law has no authority over the Christian because Christ fulfilled the demands of the law by His death on the cross.

Application

The law has no more authority over us now that we have died to it by Christ's death. When a woman's husband dies, her legal relationship to her husband dissolves. When Christ died for our sins, we died to the law. The law can no longer condemn us.

"Therefore, my brethren, you also have become dead to the law through the body of Christ, that you may be married to another— to Him who was raised from the dead, that we should bear fruit to God. For when we were in the flesh, the sinful passions which were aroused by the law were at work in our members to bear fruit to death. But now we have been delivered from the law, having died to what we were held by, so that we should serve in the newness of the Spirit and not in the oldness of the letter" (Romans 7:4-6).

"But God forbid that I should boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world has been

crucified to me, and I to the world"
(Galatians 6:14).

"...who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness – by whose stripes you were healed" (1 Peter 2:24).

We do not try to die; we are dead already. We cannot crucify ourselves; we stand crucified with Christ already. When Jesus died on the cross, I died there on that cross (2:20). This is the way God looks at us if we have been born again.

"Therefore, if you died with Christ from the basic principles of the world, why, as though living in the world, do you subject yourselves to regulations –"
(Corinthians 2:20).

The law brings us to the realization of sin (Romans 3:20). The law makes us give up all hope in self and human merit. It drives us to place our hope in Christ alone. The Christian is like a corpse at which the law can thunder with all its might but get no response. The law does not get the stir of a finger or the flicker of an eyelash. No master can give orders to a dead slave.

"Therefore let it be known to you, brethren, that through this Man is preached to you the forgiveness of sins; "and by Him everyone who believes is justified from all things from which you could not be justified by the law of Moses" (Acts 13:38-39).

"There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit" (Romans 8:1).

The law has no remedy for sin. It has a double power: 1) it declares us sinners and 2) states our penalty for being sinners. Suppose a person committed the terrible crime of murder. He deserves the death penalty or life in prison. The authorities arrest him, bring him before a judge, and arraign him for murder. They call the witnesses one by one. They all testify with one accord to the man's guilt. There seems to be no defense for him at all. The jury finds him guilty. He is guilty according to the law and the authorities should put him to death.

Before the judge pronounces the sentence something suddenly happens to the accused. While he is on the stand, the man suddenly slumps down and dies. A physician pronounces him officially and legally dead. What does the judge do now? Does he continue with the penalty? He cannot carry out any penalty. The law cannot try, convict nor carry out a penalty on a dead man. He is beyond the reach of the law. All that the judge can do is rap his gavel and solemnly dismiss the case and adjourn the court. The man is dead in the eyes of the law.

In the case of this illustration, the man cheated the law. The law had the right to put him to death but could not do so because he was already dead. In our case, Christ fulfilled all the requirements of the law (Romans 8:2-4).

that I might live to God

The law did not permit Paul to live a life of unqualified devotion to God because the law could not satisfy the absolute requirements of God as a means of salvation and sanctification.

"Therefore, my brethren, you also have become dead to the law through the body of Christ, that you may be married to another – to Him who was raised from the dead, that we should bear fruit to God. For when we were in the flesh, the sinful passions which were aroused by the law were at work in our members to bear fruit to death. But now we have been delivered from the law, having died to what we were held by, so that we should serve in the newness of the Spirit and not in the oldness of the letter [the law]" (Romans 7:4-6).

The believer's union with Christ is with His death and resurrection. The law cannot bring life because no one ever lived up to the law except Jesus Christ. The law prohibited Paul from living to God. When Paul died to the law through the death of Christ, law lost all its claims on him. You cannot arrest a dead man for loitering in the cemetery. Now we can live to God because we have new life in Christ. He has given us a new resurrection life.

Jesus did not put us to death to the law that we might live for self. He put us to death to the law that we "might live to God."

"Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 6:11).

"...and He died for all, that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again" (2 Corinthians 5:15).

"Therefore, since Christ suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same mind, for he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin, 2 that he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh for the lusts of men, but for the will of God" (1 Peter 4:1-2).

Principle

Our identity in the death and resurrection of Christ allows us to live for God in a way we could not live under the law.

Application

We can live an unfettered, unhampered, unhindered life before God now that Christ died for our sins and gave us a new resurrected life (Romans 6:11; 2 Corinthians 5:14,15).

Who are you living for – your wife, your husband? How many of us could say, "I am living for God without any strings attached. Nothing else counts."

"For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain" (Philippians 1:21).

"If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God" (Corinthians 3:1-3).

Galatians 2:20

"I have been crucified with Christ; 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 for me"

Verse 20 expands on verse 19. Paul deals with the same point, but in more detail. Paul died to the

law at the cross. Paul details how he died to the law. His co-crucifixion with Christ killed the law's demands on him.

I have been crucified with Christ;

The word "crucified" is a compound term, coming from two words: with and crucified -- co-crucified. When they crucified Christ on the cross, God crucified Paul there as well. What occurred to Christ physically occurred to Paul legally. His was a positional or legal crucifixion. This is more than Christ being crucified for Paul but that Paul himself participated in the crucifixion itself. That is how he died to the law. Death was his one chance of escape from the penalty of the law.

The word "crucified" occurs five times in the New Testament: here, Romans 6:6 and three times in the gospels. All three times in the gospels have to do with Christ being crucified with thieves (Matthew 27:44; Mark 15:32; John 19:32).

The Greek tense for "have been crucified" means that Paul's crucifixion had a permanent effect. God crucified Paul on the cross and he stands crucified to the moment of writing. His crucifixion has present finished results. Our identification with Christ is forever. This is how we died to the law. Christ released us from every duty to the law so that we might "live to God." Paul came to a point of crucifixion in God's eyes.

The words "have been" mean that Paul received crucifixion [passive voice]. This is not something he did; it was something that God did to him. Paul cannot take credit for his crucifixion. The glory goes to Jesus Christ for that. He did not do anything to earn nor deserve crucifixion with Christ.

Principle

God does not command us to crucify ourselves for sanctification. We stand in the total efficacy of the work of Christ before God.

Application

Our crucifixion with Christ completely frees us from obligation to the law. We have perfect and permanent standing in God's eyes. God looks upon us as participating in Christ's crucifixion so that we do not have to merit salvation or sanctification. We receive it as a gift from God.

God released us from a performance orientation and gave us a privileged position in Christ.

When Jesus engrafts us into new status with God, we gain new power for living the Christian life. As a flower gets its energy from its roots, so we get our dynamic from Christ.

Most people misunderstand the point of 2:20 even though it is a very popular verse. We cannot crucify ourselves. We died to the law in Christ's crucifixion. The law cannot save or sanctify. We live out our new life in Christ by faith. We live by faith, not works.

When we believe in Christ, we acknowledge our inability to be saved or sanctified by works. Only by our identification with Christ in His death and resurrection can we live the kind of life God expects. The disgrace of the cross lies not in Him who died on it but in us who made the cross indispensable.

it is no longer I who live,

By his crucifixion with Christ, Paul now lives in another sphere, another dimension, because of his new life in Christ. He no longer lives in reference to the law; he lives in reference to Christ.

The "I" is emphatic in the Greek. His death in Christ is so complete that another power lives in him.

"I thank God – through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, with the mind I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin" (Romans 7:25).

Principle

Christ freed us from the law so that we walk with God in a relationship, not a legal system.

Application

A person who tries to draw near to God by his own futile efforts will forever fail to walk with God. Our own righteousness never impresses God because the only righteousness that ever impresses God is Christ's righteousness.

Our totally depraved nature annihilates any attempt to find God's acceptance by keeping the law. We can only live the Christian life by yielding ourselves to the Holy Spirit. That is, we acknowledge that we can only please God with His power. Our new life in Christ energizes us to live beyond what our depraved nature would

allow us to do. The residence of His life in us affects everything we do and say.

There is such thing as a bastard crucifixion. This is a progeny of the flesh, a fleshly imitation of co-crucifixion. It is the crucifixion of self, not our co-crucifixion with Christ. A person who crucifies himself appears to crucify sin in his life. This person is in a worse condition than if he never crucified himself (Corinthians 2:23) because he operates in the pride of self-righteousness.

True crucifixion with Christ is positional truth. Christ did the work on the cross for us, making us legally perfect in God's eyes. We benefit from what He did. True Christian living is the appropriation of positional truth to experience. This is not crucifixion for Christ but a participation in Christ's crucifixion. Death is the only escape from self-righteousness. Our legal death in Christ frees us to fellowship with God any time, any place.

but Christ lives in me;

The clause "Christ lives in me" explains the phrase in verse 19 "that I might live to God." We do not live the Christian life on our own. Our new life in Christ animates our day-to-day living for God..

Christ lives in the believer. When we become a Christian, we have new life in Him. Our old life in Adam died and now Christ lives in us. This does not mean that our personality no longer exists. It does mean that the presence of Christ lives in us. Paul is not afraid of the personal pronoun "me."

This phrase may refer to the character of Christ produced in us rather than Christ Himself living in us. Paul is not lawless but lives under a higher law than the Mosaic Law. By his association with Christ, Christ forms a new dimension of character in Paul. The Christian cannot produce the Christian life by conjuring up overt behaviour patterns from the self. The problem is that the sin capacity cannot produce the character of Christ. However, Christ can produce His character in us by giving us new life.

Principle

The Christian life centers on the Lawgiver rather than the law.

Application

The Christian life is a relationship, not a set of rules. The fruit reveals the nature of a tree. The same tree does not produce apples and oranges. An apple tree branch does not produce pears, oranges and apples. That is impossible. The tree establishes the character of the branches. Our life in Christ reveals the character of Christ.

"Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me" (John 15:4).

The Christian life is not a course of accumulating a big list of prohibitions. That would put us into a religious straitjacket. Many people reject the Christian life because they see it as too restricting. How would you like to be married to a man who put you in a straitjacket? "Here is what you do every hour on the hour, Monday through Friday." He has every hour of the day planned for you. That is not living; that is dying. This is not the Christian life.

We do not have to have a set of religious regulations and laws because we have the life of Christ in us. The person of Christ is a mighty power against living in carnality. He influences every aspect of our life and sways every decision we make. If we break our fellowship with Him then we violate Him and His standards. If we live under the influence of His person, we live a spiritual life. That is when we live a powerful Christian life: when we take our hands off the throttle of our lives and permit the Lord Jesus to live His life through us.

and the life which I now live in the flesh

Paul now has a new life in Christ in contrast to his pre-salvation life. The "flesh" here is not the sin capacity but simply life in his human body.

The action of the two words "loved" and "gave" in Greek grammar precede the phrase "I now live." Christ first loved me and gave Himself for me before I could "now live." It is crucial to understand this point. Christ does not live His life through us but we live His life when we allow the Holy Spirit to fill us. At the point we reject our ability to live up to the law and yield to the power of the Holy Spirit, we live by faith.

Principle

It takes the power of the Holy Spirit to live the Christian life.

Application

We did not find the power to live before we became Christians because we did not have His life to live. We cannot live the Christian life until we have the empowering Christ to enable us to live it. We may try to copy other Christians but is mightily irksome to do so because we cannot live the Christian life in our own power.

Now that Christians stand crucified eternally before God, we have a new life. This implies we should live our Christian life in appreciation for what Christ did for us ["love" and "gave himself" for us]. We should be willing to waive all rights because of what Christ did for us. "I relinquish all my rights. I am dead positionally to my sin." This is as hard for a believer to accept as it is for a non-Christian to believe John 3:16, yet this is something we must believe.

"For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection, knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin. For he who has died has been freed from sin. Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him, knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, dies no more. Death no longer has dominion over Him. For the death that He died, He died to sin once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God. Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord. Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts. And do not present your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God. For sin shall not have dominion over you,

for you are not under law but under grace" (Romans 6:5-14).

It is not that I reckon myself dead so that I am dead. The reckoning process does not kill our sin capacity. However, I am dead positionally--that is, dead to the legal consequences of my sin-- so I must believe that I'm dead to sin. Biblically, we always base faith on fact.

We cannot crucify ourselves. Dying to self will not free us from sin in itself. We do not have to "feel dead" because we are dead to sin as far as God is concerned.

I live by faith in the Son of God,

Paul placed his faith in the Son of God, that is, His divine Sonship. Paul's new life is faith-based, not flesh-based. Faith is the link that binds Paul to Christ. Instead of attempting to measure up to the law, Paul lives his new life in Christ by faith.

Our depraved nature cannot measure up to a holy God. We have the indwelling Holy Spirit to help us live the Christian life. The faith life is an entirely different life than a life that seeks to please God by works. The soundness of our faith lies in the solidity of the content of what we believe. Our faith comes from trust in the second person of the Trinity.

The word "faith" takes us back to verse 16 [two times]. We live the Christian life by faith in the Son of God. God saves us by faith (Ephesians 2:8). We live day-by-day by faith (2 Corinthians 5:7). As we were saved, so we live (Colossians 2:6,7). The principle for salvation and sanctification is the same - we live by faith.

Principle

Salvation and sanctification rest on the same principle - faith.

Application

The Christian life always rests on faith in God's facts. The death of Christ included me. He represented me on the cross. In His death, I died to the requirements of the law and to the penalty of the law. These are the facts; I believe them.

How did we become Christians? We accepted the fact that Jesus died for our sins. We did not plead for forgiveness. We claimed the forgiveness provided in Christ. We came to acknowledge we

already had forgiveness by His death on the cross. The same is true in walking with the Lord. We claim the work of Christ to walk with the Lord moment by moment. We do not pray, "Lord, please crucify me." We pray, "Thank you Lord that Jesus took the penalty for my sin. I thank you that this is an accomplished fact." There is nothing inherently in us that can gain victory over sin.

Positionally, Jesus has already won the victory. The practical appropriation of our positional privilege comes later. Jesus put in our hands the victory over sin and the sin capacity. Satan will try to convince us that the power lies elsewhere. If we believe that lie, then we will fail to live the Christian life.

who loved me

The Lord's love and sacrifice motivate us to live for Him. They are why we place our faith in Him.

and gave Himself

Jesus' giving Himself on the cross is the greatest evidence of His love for us. Jesus' love and sacrifice are a unit. His person and His work unite as one. Who He was prompted what He did. His willingness to die on the cross came from His love for us.

for me

The word "for" means in my place. Jesus substituted Himself for me. He took my Hell that I might have His heaven. He died in my place, instead of me. I should have gone to hell and I should have gone to the cross.

Notice the double "me...me." Jesus loved me and gave Himself for me. The Christian life is intensely personal.

"The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want" (Psalm 23:1).

"Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?" (Romans 8:35).

Principle

Our relationship to Christ is very personal.

Application

Our relationship to Christ is very personal. If we do not accept His substitute for our sins, then we will pay for our sins for all eternity.

Before we embraced Christ as our Savior, we lived for self. Now that we own Him as Savior, we have Someone for whom we can live. Life takes on new meaning. We now have purpose and dignity in our lives. Otherwise, this life is a rat race. We work all day, play in the evening and sleep all night. That is all there is to life without Christ.

Galatians 2:21

"I do not set aside the grace of God; for if righteousness comes through the law, then Christ died in vain"

We now conclude Paul's address to Peter. This verse is the knockout punch of chapter 2. This is Paul's final stroke to those who claim salvation or sanctification by law.

I do not set aside the grace of God;

The words "set aside" mean make void, cancel God's grace. If we go back to the law, we cancel out the work of the cross. The grace of God is put as of no value, set aside, nullified, annulled. Self-righteousness declares invalid God's provision in Christ. We annul God's grace when we inject our righteousness. If we nullify grace, then Christ died without an adequate cause ["vain"]. Christians must recognize the validity of grace.

We do nothing to attain God's grace. We do not go through religious motions or righteous works. We do not have to climb any mountain, swim any sea, or cross any deserts. God gave us salvation and the Christian way of life free of charge.

Principle

Legalism voids God's grace; grace and law are mutually exclusive.

Application

If we maintain that we gain God's approval by works then we abolish grace. Then there is no reason for the death of Christ. His death would be unwarranted and superfluous. It is a serious thing to negate grace.

The essence of God's grace is to give us something we do not deserve. Salvation is a gift (Romans 4:4). Grace and merit are mutually exclusive. If God gives salvation by grace, then it is not I who do the work. If I do the work, then it is not God who gives salvation. If I do the work, then I get the glory. If God does the work then He gets the glory.

"And if by grace, then it is no longer of works; otherwise grace is no longer grace. But if it is of works, it is no longer grace; otherwise work is no longer work" (Romans 11:6).

When we inject our righteousness into salvation or sanctification, we thwart the efficacy of Christ's work for us. God's grace and our work are contradictory. We must choose one or the other. They cannot both be true at the same time.

for if righteousness comes through the law,

If we say that we should keep the law for salvation or sanctification, then we negate the death of Christ for us.

then Christ died in vain

Christ can save us by Himself. He needs no help. He does not need the "righteousness" that "comes through the law."

If we can operate by self-righteousness, then Christ died in vain. We say in effect that we have to help ourselves. Legalism and grace are mutually exclusive. Self-righteousness and Christ righteousness cannot coexist. Christ died so that we can have salvation apart from the law, apart from human merit.

The word "vain" means without cause. There is no point or purpose to Christ's death if we can work for salvation. There is no reason for the death of Christ. Righteousness through faith in Christ's cross is not one of the reasons but the only reason for salvation. This is exactly what Peter did by entering into legalism. We cannot unite grace and law because they are mutually exclusive ways to please God. If we do, then we imply that Christ died on the cross needlessly. It invalidates grace.

"...being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus" (Romans 3:24).

Principle

Human merit invalidates the cross of Christ as a way of salvation or sanctification.

Application

We do not have to climb any mountains to achieve God's grace. God gives His grace freely and fully without requiring merit.

If we try to obtain righteousness by the works of the law, then we make the cross a frightful tragedy. If righteousness comes by the law, if we are justified by the law, then Christ died in vain. What point is there of Christ's death? If we can get to heaven by keeping the 10 commandments, then why did God bother to send Jesus to Calvary?

No one ever goes to heaven by good works. All of us have failed to live up to the law. If we could keep the law for salvation then we would have to live up to the law in its entirety.

"For whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one point, he is guilty of all" (James 2:10).

God cannot wink at sin. If you have but one sin, then God must deal with it. Once you commit a sin, there is no way for you to make it up to God except by accepting His forgiveness through Christ's death on the cross.

You say, "Oh, God is not that strict." If He were not, then God would not be consistent with Himself. If God gave slack to Himself, the whole idea of an absolute God would crash to the ground. The reason we have the kind of the salvation we do is that we have the kind of God we do. That is why sin always drives us into the outstretched arms of Jesus where we receive salvation free of charge. God cannot see me for Jesus. God cannot see my sin because I have perfect standing before Him. Christ paid for all my sins.

No law can give life. The law can only bring death. Grace brings life. Salvation is free to the admittedly broken sinner (Ephesians 1:6; Romans 3:25). Man always tries to manufacture his own righteousness while God stands tapping His foot ready to donate the perfect righteousness of Christ. A perfectly holy God can find no imperfection in Jesus' righteousness. This righteousness is free to the sinner. If we trust in

the cross for forgiveness of our sins, God reckons to us the wonderful merit and glory of Jesus.

Galatians 3:1

"O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you that you should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed among you as crucified?"

Chapter 3 marks a shift in emphasis in the book of Galatians to the doctrinal section (chapters 3-4). The first two chapters defend Paul's apostleship and, therefore, his gospel of grace. The last two chapters (5-6) are practical, terse, pithy, pertinent exhortations. The first five verses of chapter 3 prove from the experience of the Galatians themselves that grace is the true doctrine.

Galatians 3 falls into two segments: 1) the curse of the law (3:1-14), and 2) the purpose of the law (3:15-29).

In the first five verses, Paul fires a series of six questions about the personal experience of the Galatians with grace. Verse 1 is the first question.

O foolish Galatians!

The word "foolish" signifies no understanding, senseless. This is someone who does not apply his mind to a situation. It does not imply that they were stupid but that they were unwilling to understand. The Galatians did not use their capacity for understanding when it came to grasping the idea of grace. They had the intelligence but they did not have the heart to appropriate what they knew. They were gullible about false doctrine and did not have the wisdom to reject it.

Paul does not mince any words in his opening salvo against the doctrinal aspects of legalism. His last comment was that to deny grace is to negate the finished work of Christ on the cross (2:21).

What the Galatians thought was new enlightenment, Paul calls "foolish."

Who has bewitched you

"Bewitched" originally meant to slander then it came to mean to bring evil upon someone by feigned praise. The legalists charmed the Galatians into legalism. They deceived the Galatians by devious and crafty religious means.

The Judaizers put the Galatians under a spell of hypnotic malignant control. The legalists seduced them because of their fascination with legalism (1:6-8). The legalists could put on the charm.

"...lest Satan should take advantage of us; for we are not ignorant of his devices" (2 Corinthians 2:11).

"But I fear, lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so your minds may be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ" (2 Corinthians 11:3).

"Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil" (Ephesians 6:11).

"So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him" (Revelation 12:9).

The word "you" is emphatic. "You are the very people to whom I clearly presented the grace concept." We can see Paul's indignation surging out.

Principle

If we supplement grace, we supplant it.

Application

Many people labor under the delusion that they can keep the law and thereby God will accept them into Heaven. The law cannot justify a sinner or sanctify a saint. That is not the purpose of the law.

God does not save us by faith plus the law. That is error. It is staggering how many people today cannot recognize error. We live in a "foolish" generation. The Scriptures clearly put up a poster announcing that salvation and sanctification are by grace alone, not works, yet Christians buy into legalism on a regular basis.

Once people recognize that the law cannot save a sinner or sanctify a saint, they come to grips with grace. God never designed the law to do these things. The Christian life is not rule or regulations but eternal life provided by God alone. If we adopt any other position, we fall under the bewitching powers of Satan. Does Satan's charm

subtly instill into you the thought that you have something to offer God? Legalism always fascinates our pride.

The principle of faith without works from the very beginning of our salvation goes hand in hand with grace. Legalists love to mesmerize us into believing that we have something to offer God for salvation or sanctification. Many people have become victims of this. Do you try to supplant what Christ did on the cross?

that you should not obey the truth,

This phrase does not occur in older manuscripts.

before whose eyes

Legalism clouded the judgment of the Galatians. Paul presented grace in very clear terms but legalists came along and clouded the issue.

Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed among you as crucified?

The words "clearly portrayed" literally mean to write before, depict, portray, placard. The idea is to post an important public notice. Paul placarded a painting of God's grace before the eyes of the Galatians. He put them on public notice of God's grace. He summoned them by public notice by clearly describe grace in verbal terms.

The cross of Christ is unadulterated grace. We can add nothing to it. The cross is sufficient in itself to gain God's approval. When we defect from the grace principle, we betray the cross of Christ. It is spiritual adultery to revert to legalism.

To receive the grace of God and return to legalism is to fall prey to self-righteousness. Self-righteousness flies in the face of faith in the cross plus nothing. Man cannot make himself right with God. Only God can declare us as right as He is right through the cross of Christ. Paul made them understand without doubt that the cross was the only access to God. The cross is an affront to the pride of self-righteousness.

Paul placarded a public notice but the legalists subtly and sneakily slipped in their false doctrine. One used forthright presentation and the others used cunning. Paul unmistakably, clearly presented the claims of the cross. Paul designated grace very clearly. The Galatians could read it in big, bold letters as on a billboard.

"Crucified" is the core of grace. Jesus did all the suffering necessary to pay for the penalty of our sins. We do not pay for our sins because He took the full penalty for our sins. The law condemns us.

"...but we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness..." (1 Corinthians 1:23).

"For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified" (1 Corinthians 2:2).

Principle

We appropriate grace by faith; we earn merit by work.

Application

God crucified Jesus for us out of unadulterated grace. This stands permanently as the essence of our relationship to God.

We are asinine if we think otherwise for we operate under the hypnotic spell of our pride. There is something very appealing about my offering God my works. Little do we realize how puny they are in God's eyes.

The law can never bring us into favor with God. The law makes demands that we can never fulfill. Grace sets aside the law by fulfilling it through Christ. Grace freely gives us what we cannot earn or deserve. Grace gives us a relationship with God in time and in eternity. We appropriate grace by faith, not works. We cannot work for salvation and we cannot work for spirituality. They are both gifts from God received by faith.

Galatians 3:2

"This only I want to learn from you: Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?"

Paul now asks three questions that point to faith as God's principle for dealing with people. The first question has to do with how we received the Spirit, by works or by faith.

This only I want to learn from you:

Paul concedes only two possibilities whereby the Galatians received the Spirit. He extends to the Galatians the option of teaching him by answering his question. These two options are mutually

exclusive. They received the Spirit either by works or by faith. Paul draws a line in the sand. This question in itself is decisive in establishing faith as the way of receiving God's grace. Paul can rest his case on this point alone.

Did you receive the Spirit

Paul presumes that the Galatians are Christians because at some point they received the Spirit. The argument of the book of Galatians is from the standpoint of the Christian who reverts into legalism. He allows no other option.

"Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God" (1 Corinthians 2:12).

To receive the Spirit is to receive the presence of the living Christ. The word "receive" is a grace word. We cannot earn salvation or sanctification.

"...he said to them, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?" So they said to him, "We have not so much as heard whether there is a Holy Spirit" (Acts 19:2).

by the works of the law,

The word "of" in the phrase "of the law" refers to source. "Did you get the Holy Spirit from the works of the law?" The Galatians were Gentiles and did not know the law. They obviously did not become Christians through the law. They heard of the law as a way of sanctification after Paul left the region.

or by the hearing of faith?

The Galatians' own experience flew in the face of salvation or sanctification by works. Clearly, they received the Spirit by faith. God saves us because of who and what Jesus is and what He did, not who we are and what we've done.

"By the hearing" here means the act of hearing or the willingness to listen by faith. We must have a desire to listen to grace. People love to listen to what makes them feel good: a message of salvation by works. Faith is the absence of works. The merit is God's because God did the work through Christ.

"So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Romans 10:17).

The answer is patently clear, as we will see in chapters 3 and 4 that they received the Spirit by the "hearing of faith." The Christian receives the Holy Spirit at the moment of salvation by faith. We cannot separate the indwelling Holy Spirit from our new birth in Christ.

"In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory" (Ephesians 1:13-14).

The Holy Spirit is the "guarantee" of our salvation. He is our down payment of earnest money to pledge the purchase of our salvation.

The word "of" precedes works and faith and means source in the Greek. Paul's great concern is the source of salvation and sanctification.

Principle

We receive the Holy Spirit by faith at the point of salvation.

Application

There are no special conditions for receiving the Spirit. We receive Him by faith at the moment of salvation. The Holy Spirit is not the end for the Christian life but the source for living that life. We do not receive the Spirit as the result of living the Christian life; we receive Him when we accept the finished work of Christ on the cross by faith. He is not the product of the Christian life but the power behind it. When we yield to Him, we engage supernatural power to walk with God.

There is no split between salvation by faith and sanctification by faith. Some teach that God saves us by faith but sanctifies us by works. The Bible argues that a person becomes a Christian by faith and lives the Christian life by faith. Faith is sufficient to save and sanctify.

There is one condition for receiving the Holy Spirit and one only - faith. Law stipulates that we live by works but grace insists on living by faith.

We do not receive the Spirit on the installment plan. We received Jesus as Savior and the Holy Spirit as the one who indwells us at the moment of salvation (1 Corinthians 12:13; Ephesians 1:21,22; 2 Timothy 1:14). We do not receive the Spirit by tears of repentance, keeping the golden rule or the Mosaic Law but by believing in Jesus Christ. No experience, keeping taboos or crucifying self can help us receive the Spirit.

Galatians 3:3

"Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now being made perfect by the flesh?"

Verse 3 contains the second rhetorical question dealing with faith versus works in the process of maturity.

Are you so foolish?

It is foolish to think that living the Christian life and becoming a Christian operate under different principles. It is incredible to Paul that the Galatians could separate justification by faith and sanctification by works. Works cannot sanctify us any more than they can justify us.

Having begun in the Spirit,

The word "begun" is literally to begin in. This refers to the time of conversion when the Christian received the Spirit. The "in" refers to our operating in the realm of the Spirit.

are you now being made perfect by the flesh?

The words "being made perfect" are an intensive word in the Greek composed of two words: in and to accomplish, fulfill. The idea is to accomplish something fully. The issue here is spiritual maturity. It is not viable to begin the Christian life by faith and move to spiritual maturity by works. The works of the flesh cannot complete the process of maturity. The Greek indicates that the Galatians thought that they were maturing themselves.

The words "the flesh" correspond to "the works of the law." God does not use the flesh to save a soul or sanctify the saint. God always bypasses the flesh to mature a believer. The flesh is the product of natural generation, not regeneration.

"It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing. The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life" (John 6:63).

"For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells; for to will is present with me, but how to perform what is good I do not find" (Romans 7:18).

"For we are the circumcision, who worship God in the Spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh, though I also might have confidence in the flesh. If anyone else thinks he may have confidence in the flesh, I more so..." (Philippians 3:3-4).

Principle

The Bible defines a fool as a person who departs from the principle of grace in seeking spiritual maturity.

Application

We started the Christian life in the Spirit (Romans 8:9) but maturity in Christ also comes through trust in the ministry of the Holy Spirit. If the law cannot justify us, it cannot sanctify us. Grace is above the law for salvation and sanctification. We cannot mature in Christ by the law but only by the Spirit.

Some Christians begin the Christian life well but end poorly. They suffer from the flesh. They try to accomplish by the flesh what they began by the power of the Spirit. Maturity does not come by self-effort.

People will always present non-biblical panaceas for the Christian life. There is a danger of latching on to doctrines not rooted in the Word -- "This new idea will solve all my problems." Hundreds of Christians have gone through one panacea pipe or another whether it is a type of spiritual life, pleasure, friends or a love affair. None of these can be "the" answer to life for no panacea of sex, career, or politics can meet all your needs. You will never get on your mature spiritual feet with these things.

There is no utopia in this life. As long as we live, there will always be the "same old, same old". The same old sixes and sevens keep coming up all

over again. These panaceas are causes without ultimate hope.

No one should have any doubt we all deserve God's wrath. None of us deserves God's grace yet He gives grace out of His matchless mercy. We cannot become Christians by works and we cannot become mature by works. We mature by understanding God's grace and appropriating that grace to our experience by faith.

Galatians 3:4

"Have you suffered so many things in vain – if indeed it was in vain?"

The third question looks at the persecution the new believers endured in Galatia because of their stand on grace.

Have you suffered so many things in vain –

By regressing to law, Galatian believers stamped their previous position of grace as false. The "many things" are the truths of the grace position. Legalism always persecutes grace (Acts 14:2,5,19,22). There was no need to previously suffer for grace if they reverted to legalism in the beginning but they suffered for holding to the grace position. Suffering for grace is unavoidable because it flies in the face of legalism.

if indeed it was in vain?

Paul refuses to believe that they will continue to turn their backs on grace. This softens his position to some degree leaving open the possibility that they would return to grace.

Principle

There is a natural tendency to revert to legalism and away from grace.

Application

Satan loves to get Christians to turn their backs on grace. He draws us into legalism by appealing to our pride.

Do you remember your past victories in grace? There was a time when we recognized that we stood totally depraved in God's eyes. We threw ourselves on the grace of God. Now that we have been Christians for some time, we forget that it took amazing grace to save us.

Galatians 3:5

"Therefore He who supplies the Spirit to you and works miracles among you, does He do it by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? —"

Paul's fourth appeal to the Galatians is about God's provision of rich resources and wonders among them. This is an argument from God's point of view.

Therefore He who supplies the Spirit to you

The word "supplies" means to supply fully, abundantly. Secular Greek literature used this term for a wealthy sponsor who supplied enormous funds to operate Greek plays. The Holy Spirit is a grant from God. God, in His great generosity, gave the Galatians more than they deserved. God is a Provider.

and works miracles among you,

God worked apostolic miracles among the Galatians (Acts 14:3,8-11). Galatians was an early book of the New Testament. God used apostolic miracles to give credibility to the New Testament. His ability to give us whatever we need humbles us.

does He do it by the works of the law,

Christians do not have to earn God's favor or grace. Legalism implies that God begrudges what He gives us. God is more than willing to give us what we need.

or by the hearing of faith?

God is no miser, as the legalists would have it. We do not have to bribe Him for blessings. We appropriate by faith what He has provided to help us live the Christian life.

Principle

God is a generous provider.

Application

The reason we operate by faith is that we believe God is a generous provider. The Christian can confidently appeal to God's grace to provide what he needs for Christian living. Faith sustains our spirituality. We can forgive others as Christ forgave us. We do not bribe God for blessings; He

gives blessings by His free will. By faith we accept what He gives.

**Galatians 3:6 "...just as Abraham
"believed God, and it was accounted to
him for righteousness"**

Paul now turns to arguments for grace through faith from Scripture. He takes up the case of how God justified Abraham, the first Jew. Abraham lived before the Mosaic Law. There were no Ten Commandments in his day. God did not give those commandments until 500 years later. God justified Abraham by faith before He gave the law. Until Abraham believed God, he was a Gentile. When he believed, he became the first Jew.

just as

Paul now gives an illustration of the points he made in verses 1-5. This is an analogy linking Abraham's belief and the principle of grace. God justified the Galatians just as He justified Abraham by faith. It is not enough to be a natural descendant for salvation.

Abraham "believed God,

This verse quotes Genesis 15:6. God promised Abraham that he would have many descendants (Genesis 12:3). Abraham was the first Jew. If God justified the father of Judaism by faith, God certainly will justify his followers by faith as well.

Note that Abraham did not believe "on" or "in" God; He simply believed God. He believed what God said. Abraham believed God provided salvation; he did not work for salvation. He believed God's Word.

The Greek indicates Abraham came to believe at a point in time. We come into this world physically once. We come into eternal life once. As we are not born physically over and over so we are not born spiritually over and over. Christians are not born again repeatedly.

and it was accounted to him for righteousness

"Accounted" signifies to calculate, reckon, impute, deliberate. After evaluating Abraham's faith, God put His own righteousness to Abraham's account when he believed. God did not justify Abraham by his self-effort. God keeps an eternal record of Abraham's righteousness (Romans 4:7-12).

God did not circumcise Abraham to save him because God saved him before He required him to be circumcised. He credited Abraham with God's very own righteousness. We cannot stand before God on our works.

Principle

God always saves people the same way – by faith through grace.

Application

God set up a system whereby we appropriate grace by faith. Faith is always the sole condition for salvation (Acts 16:31; Ephesians 2:8-9). Has anyone given you the party line of legalism – that you have to do something for your salvation?

God saves people A.D. 2000 the same way he saved people 2000 B.C. God never changes His plan of salvation. He always saves people by faith through grace. There are not two plans of salvation – one by works and another by grace. God does not give a plan of salvation for Jews and another for Gentiles.

The moment we believe what God said about the death of Jesus Christ paying for our sins, God counts us as righteous as He is.

Galatians 3:7

"Therefore know that only those who are of faith are sons of Abraham"

Therefore

Paul draws a conclusion from the quotation from Genesis 15:6. Paul whacks a great wallop against the Judaizers by relating Abraham to the principle of grace. The legalists taught that a person became a Jew by circumcision but Abraham became a Jew by faith.

know that only those who are of faith

God justified Abraham by faith and he justifies us by faith. Faith in the finished work of Christ is the starting point of being a Christian. We can only know this from the experience of personal faith in Christ.

God bases our relationship with Himself on the foundation of a spiritual birth, not natural birth. He saves us by spiritual regeneration, not natural generation.

are sons of Abraham

Only those who exercise faith, have the right to identify with Abraham. We follow Abraham's principle of salvation by grace through faith when we accept God's grace.

The Judaizers reversed the sequence of salvation and circumcision. They taught that circumcision was prerequisite to salvation (Romans 2:28-29). Physical relation to Abraham is not the heart of salvation. Abraham became a Jew by faith. All those who follow his faith are his spiritual sons. Faith, not family lineage, establishes a person as a true believer.

Note that Paul uses the word "sons," not "children" here. The idea is that those who exercise faith carry official privilege and position with God.

As Abraham exercised faith in Jesus Christ (Jehovah of the Old Testament), he became an adult son with adult spiritual privileges. In Jewish tradition, a son could not marry, enter the army or do business on his own until he turned 14. On his fourteenth birthday, his father gave him a toga of adulthood.

Principle

Faith is the sole means of salvation whether it is in the Old Testament or the New Testament.

Application

True born again people are those who place mutually exclusive trust in the person and work of Christ for their salvation. Whether they place their hope in the coming of the Messiah in the Old Testament or of Christ in the New Testament, it is always by faith.

Do you take God at His naked unsupported Word? God will regenerate you by faith, not because you come from a fine family.

Galatians 3:8

"And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel to Abraham beforehand, saying, 'In you all the nations shall be blessed'"

And the Scripture,

Paul says that Scripture foresaw the Gentiles coming to faith in the Abrahamic covenant (Genesis 12:3). When the legalists argue against "faith" salvation, they argue against Scripture.

Principle

Scriptures are the very voice of God to the person who wants to do God's will.

Application

God puts His thoughts down on paper so that we can clearly understand His will. When Scripture speaks, God speaks. God puts His thoughts down in writing – God "scribes" his thoughts. Despite the charge of bibliolatry, we can never revere the Scriptures too highly. To the person who has an ear for God, Scriptures are the very voice of God.

foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith,

Paul personifies Scripture as foreseeing the Gentiles coming to salvation by faith.

preached the gospel to Abraham beforehand,

God preached the gospel of grace through faith in Abraham's day. Abraham was a Gentile before God justified him. When he believed the Abrahamic covenant (Genesis 12-15), God declared him righteous.

saying, 'In you all the nations shall be blessed

This phrase is a quotation from the Abrahamic covenant showing that Gentiles are involved in God's salvation. Both Jews and Gentiles find the identical ground in salvation by grace through faith. God is free to act kindly toward Gentiles because He provided a "faith" salvation for them. Salvation is an act of grace not earned by our efforts.

The phrase "in you" refers to Abraham. The Messiah would come through Abraham. In this way, Abraham would bless the Gentiles.

Principle

God does not have two plans of salvation, one for Jews and one for Gentiles.

Application

God always saves people by their personal faith in the finished work of Christ. God's method of salvation is the same for all people of all time. God does not save people because of their ethnic status. Rites such as circumcision or baptism have nothing to do with salvation.

Galatians 3:9

"So then those who are of faith are blessed with believing Abraham"

So then

Paul draws the inference from his preceding argument that those who place their faith in Christ receive justification just as Abraham did.

those who are of faith

A person must appropriate salvation by faith. The emphasis is upon belief in this verse in contrast to who try to keep the law like the legalists. The phrase "of faith" means faith is the source of their relationship with God.

are blessed with believing Abraham

God blesses those who trust in His promises. God always blesses those who respond to His grace.

There is a definite article [the] before "believing Abraham" in the Greek. We can best translate the phrase "believing Abraham" as "Abraham, the believer." Belief was the essential character of Abraham. Abraham chose faith rather than works as his method for receiving God's blessing.

Principle

God always roots our blessedness in grace.

Application

God always blesses us, and those of all time, by faith. God wholly roots our blessedness in grace. It is a joy to know that we do not have to measure up to be acceptable to God. Jesus did all of the measuring up needed. God always blesses those who operate by faith.

Galatians 3:10

"For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse; for it is written, 'Cursed is everyone who does not

continue in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them"

Paul now turns to an argument that shows how inconsistent it is to think that we can keep the law for salvation or sanctification. Having shown what faith in the finished work of Christ can do, Paul now turns to what the law cannot do.

Not only does keeping the law fail to give salvation but it brings God's curse upon the person who attempts to keep it.

For as many as are of the works of the law

Legalists in Paul's day insisted that a person must keep the law to be saved or sanctified. Paul now takes their thesis and shows how untenable it is.

The word "of" in the phrase "works of the law" means origin or source. Legalists were under the delusion that they could measure up to the law.

are under the curse;

The word "curse" comes from two words: down and curse. God pronounces a "curse" on those who try to establish a relationship with Him by works. He does this because Christ already took our "curse" for us. When we try to add to His suffering for sins by suffering for sins ourselves, we doom ourselves to God's judgment. We cannot pay for that which Christ already paid. If we do, we live under a curse from God.

The law of God has teeth in it – the law pronounces a "curse" on those who try to keep it for salvation and sanctification. There is a penalty to pay for the slightest infraction. No one is exempt from this penalty.

Dishonest people think they are an exception to the rule. There are many ways to get around human law but there is no way to circumvent God's law. God's law is God's standard. It sets forth what God will and will not accept. He will not accept 99.9% of the law. He demands perfection.

Principle

Keeping the law for salvation puts a curse on us.

Application

If we try to keep a good batting average with the Ten Commandments, God places us under the

curse. This is an awful shock to religious do-gooders.

If we need a delicate operation, we do not go to our local butcher. We go to a skilled surgeon. If we need salvation, we do not go to the law because it will pronounce a curse on us. We go to the cross that frees us from our sins.

for it is written,

Paul quotes Deuteronomy 27:26 to demonstrate the law requires perfection for salvation and sanctification.

'Cursed is everyone

This second word for curse [cursed] is more intense than the first word in this verse. This is a curse from God, a curse more serious than a curse from man. God includes "everyone" in this curse. There are no exceptions. A "cursed" person is an outcast from God and His Heaven.

who does not continue

The literal idea of "continue" is to remain in. It carries the thought of persevering in something over a period with uninterrupted consistency. No one, except Jesus Himself, has ever lived an uninterrupted life free from sin.

Principle

The law drives us into the arms of Jesus.

Application

It is incongruous to insinuate such ideas as, "I'm not a sinner. I'm good enough for Heaven. My batting average with the Ten Commandments is not that bad." No one can claim to be free from coveting or selfishness. We have not loved the Lord our God will "all" our soul, mind and heart. The law drives everyone into the outstretched arms of Jesus, who will save poor, lost sinners.

in all things

The law demands perfection. If we break one point of the law, we break it all. Since God is perfect, His law is perfect. If a person sets out to keep the law for salvation, he must do it "in all things," without exception.

"For whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one point, he is guilty of all" (James 2:10).

Principle

Because God is perfect so He demands perfection from us.

Application

The person who tries to keep the law never knows when he has done enough. "Do I have enough quantity for salvation?" "Do I have enough quality?"

God labels us sinners because we have not complied with all of the law all of the time, all of our lives. All of us come short of the glory of God. That is why the Savior came – to save us from sin.

Imagine a person hauled into court for grand larceny. He says to the judge, "But judge, I don't beat my wife." That is incidental and irrelevant to the case at hand. By breaking one law, we become a law-breaker. This shows the impossibility of keeping the law. God does not accept 99.9%. He expects perfection. We cannot find perfection in ourselves. However, we can have perfection in Christ.

God did not give the law to save sinners; He gave the law to prove we are sinners. If we try to use the law to get to heaven, we abuse the law. We cannot make up for the sins we have already committed. That fact that we do not commit a given sin anymore does not erase the fact that we have already committed it in God's eyes. There is no way we can get out from under God's verdict – God's curse--by our own means. Unless we come to the cross, God will not wipe away our sins. No one can look back over his life and say, "I kept the law every second of my existence."

which are written in the book of the law,

This phrase refers to the entire Pentateuch (the five books of Moses, the first five books of the Bible). If a person chooses salvation by the law, he must keep all 600 laws of the Pentateuch. It comes as a shock to many people that there are more than 10 laws in the Bible.

to do them.

If we place ourselves under the law, we place ourselves in an untenable situation. If we do not obey the law, then it hangs over us like the sword of Damocles. If we chose the law as the way of salvation, we must keep it 100% because God is

absolutely perfect. The law describes the nature of God.

Unless we recognize ourselves as bankrupt toward God, we will not fall at the feet of the cross for forgiveness.

Principle

God's standard for keeping the law is perfection.

Application

Those who insist on keeping the law for salvation or sanctification place themselves under God's curse. No one can keep the law. Look at your life; you are living proof.

There are four things in this verse that discourages any legalist:

1. The person who begins keeping the law as a way of salvation must "continue" to keep it without a single slip.
2. He must keep the law in its entirety – "in all things."
3. He must keep all five books of Moses (Pentateuch) – "the book of the law."
4. He must completely and actually accomplish this task – "to do them."

Galatians 3:11

"But that no one is justified by the law in the sight of God is evident, for 'the just shall live by faith'"

Paul argues from another Scripture in this verse (Habakkuk 2:4). Hypothetically, if a man in his own estimation should "continue in all things to do them" (3:10), he would not escape God's curse on that account.

But that no one is justified by the law

God puts "no one" right in His eyes by the law. The law cannot make the guilty guiltless because the individual has committed sin already. The law cannot undo what is done.

God does not show any leniency toward those who try to justify themselves by keeping the law – "no one." There are no exceptions. The exclusive way people come to God is by faith. The law can reveal sin but it cannot relieve it. The law exposes sin but it does not save us from its penalty.

in the sight of God is evident,

The word "evident" conveys the idea of clear or manifest. It is plain to everyone who reads the Bible that no one can go to heaven by works. We must look at salvation how God looks at it. We must view it from His viewpoint.

Paul does not care about the critical opinion of man but the estimation of God on this matter. Only God's judgment counts here. Paul states God's judgment in a quotation from Habakkuk 2:4 – the just live eternally by faith. What people think of themselves or others in such matters is of no moment; it is the judgment of God that counts.

The place of justification is in the sight of God. The judgment of our neighbors is incidental when it comes to salvation. God is the only one who can let us into His presence.

for "the just shall live by faith"

This phrase is a quote from Habakkuk 2:4. The previous quote from Deuteronomy proved God does not justify people by the law (3:10); the quote of this verse shows how God does justify – by faith. Faith is the single condition for justification. The New Testament also quotes Habakkuk 2:4 in Romans 1:17 and Hebrews 10:38.

The "just" here are those who stand legally right in God's eyes. "Shall live" is eternal life. "By" means out of -- we receive eternal life out of the source of faith.

Principle

Law and faith as means of salvation are mutually exclusive.

Application

Keeping the law is an attempt at gaining God's approval by good works. Exercising faith in the finished work of Christ on the cross is a response to God's provision in grace. There is no middle ground. We must choose one method of salvation or the other.

Galatians 3:12

"Yet the law is not of faith, but 'the man who does them shall live by them'"

Yet the law is not of faith,

Law does not find its origin in faith but in works because the very nature of law is the opposite of faith. Law and faith are mutually exclusive ways to salvation. They are contradictory systems.

but "the man who does them shall live by them."

Paul quotes Leviticus 18:5 to prove that only perfect obedience of the law is acceptable to God. The law demands that we live up to its directions perfectly. God's standards are perfect. Any failure collects a curse.

If we choose to live under the law, then we must live by their perfect norms. That is why we cannot combine the two systems. If we cannot comply with the law, then we must go to grace and completely rely on the cross of Christ. God does not care whether I believe the law is right when it comes to salvation. He wants to know whether I comply with it.

"For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and seeking to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted to the righteousness of God. For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes. For Moses writes about the righteousness which is of the law, 'The man who does those things shall live by them'" (Romans 10:3-5).

Since no one can keep the law perfectly, God puts all those who try under the curse, based on their own premise. If they fail on any point, they fall under condemnation.

Principle

Law and faith are diametrically opposed ways of salvation.

Application

The law cannot save a sinner or set up the standard for the Christian life. The law is a works system for salvation. We cannot work at the law enough because it would not be of sufficient quality or quantity to satisfy the absolute standard of God. God cannot tolerate sin in the slightest degree. It is a religious fairy tale to think that a person can measure up to God's standards. God does not hold out this expectation for us.

If we commit one sin, that precludes us from fellowship with God. He must be consistent with His own standards. If we follow the law but do not keep it, how can it save or sanctify us?

We may get off to a good start in keeping the law but somewhere along the line, we incur an infraction. The person with a score of 40% is no worse off in God's eyes than a person who gets 99.9% [which is impossible]. If you miss the plane by one minute or one hour, it makes no difference, you missed the plane. All of us come short of the absolute standard of God (Romans 3:10,23).

If we choose the law as a system of salvation, then we will stand before an absolutely perfect God on the basis of the law. The law will curse us before an absolute Being. After trying to keep the law all your life, what do you have in the end? A curse.

Note the logic of verses 10 through 12.

Major premise--The just shall live by faith.

Minor premise--The law is not of faith but works

Conclusion--No justification by law.

Galatians 3:13

"Christ has 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')..."

Paul now turns to our hope. Our hope is in the death of Christ to take our curse for us. Our hope is not in keeping the law.

Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law,

The word "redeem" means to buy up. The Greek word here means to buy a slave out of the marketplace. Roman citizens bought slaves out of the slave market by paying a ransom. It cost them something. The price they paid liberated the slave. Jesus' death liberated us from the curse that the law put on us by paying a sufficient price for our sin--His death on the cross.

The word "redeemed" is an intense word in the Greek. It means to purchase out of the slave market never to be put up for sale again. "Redeem" comes from two words: to buy and out. Jesus bought us out of the slave market permanently.

having become a curse

Christ became something He was not before--a curse. God placed our curse on Him. He took our hell that we might have His heaven. Jesus stood as a curse between us and the law. If Jesus could not escape the curse of God, how can we expect to escape God's curse by our works?

When Jesus cried on the cross, "My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?" God was making Him a curse.

for us

Jesus stood as a curse in our place. The word "for" is a substitutionary word. Jesus became the substitute for taking us, the penalty for our sin.

(for it is written, 'Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree'),

This is a quotation from Deuteronomy 21:23. In the Old Testament, they had the custom of taking the dead body of a criminal stoned to death and hanging it on a tree. This is a picture of a cursed individual. Jesus' death on the cross represents a public death of a cursed person. What a picture of the spotless Son of God!

"...who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness – by whose stripes you were healed" (1 Peter 2:24).

Christ did not remain a curse in God's eyes. He was a curse only while He died on the cross.

Principle

Jesus took our hell that we might have His heaven.

Application

Our way out from the curse of the law is through accepting God's curse on Jesus Christ through the cross. God demands righteousness from us that is equivalent to His own righteousness. None of us can live up to that standard. Jesus paid for every sin that we ever committed on the cross and gave us His righteousness. That is why we love Him.

"...being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus..." (Romans 3:24).

"...knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot" (1 Peter 1:18-19).

And they sang a new song, saying: "You are worthy to take the scroll, And to open its seals; For You were slain, And have redeemed us to God by Your blood Out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation, And have made us kings and priests to our God; And we shall reign on the earth" (Revelation 5:9-10).

Galatians 3:14

"...that the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles in Christ Jesus, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith"

This verse presents two purposes for Christ's work on the cross as a curse for us (3:13): 1) the blessing of Abraham comes on the Gentiles by faith, and 2) we receive the Holy Spirit through faith.

that the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles in Christ Jesus,

God extended His blessing of faith that He gave to Abraham to the Gentiles as well. People who operate on faith like Abraham receive the blessing of Abraham. That blessing is justification by faith. The principle of justification by faith is the center of the Abrahamic Covenant (Genesis 15:6). The Gentiles do not receive eternal salvation by Jewish circumcision. They receive it the same way the first Jew [Abraham] received it—by faith.

that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith

"Promise" comes from two words: upon and to announce. God makes announcements of His grace based on His character. We cannot accumulate merit before God because we cannot gain enough quality or quantity to match the standard of God's righteousness. Only God's grace can give us that. This is true with receiving the Holy Spirit as well. The moment a person believes in Christ he receives the Holy Spirit. This is

simultaneous with salvation, not consequent to salvation.

Principle

God always operates according to the standard of Himself.

Application

Nothing less than perfection is the standard for one's acceptance with God. No one can attain to that perfection. Therefore, we must throw ourselves on the forgiveness of the grace of the cross.

Galatians 3:15

"Brethren, I speak in the manner of men: Though it is only a man's covenant, yet if it is confirmed, no one annuls or adds to it"

Paul now takes up an argument from the way humans make contracts with one another. This is an argument from human illustration.

Brethren,

Paul reaches out to the Galatians by the term "brethren." Although Paul rebuked the Galatians, he still has them in his heart.

I speak in the manner of men:

Using a human argument, Paul assumes for the moment that when God gave the law to Moses, it ended His covenant with Abraham. This would mean the people could be saved by the law.

Paul knew this was a false assumption because even under the Mosaic law, God saved people by faith, just as He does today. The Mosaic law could not save; it could only curse. For God to break His covenant with Abraham would be inconsistent with His character. He did not destroy salvation by faith when He gave Moses the law.

It was the Mosaic law that was temporary, not the Abrahamic covenant. The Mosaic law came after the Abrahamic covenant and ended immediately after the resurrection of Christ.

Though it is only a man's covenant,

A "covenant" is a voluntary disposition of property. This is another way of saying "promise" although a covenant is a more solemn agreement. It is a verbal agreement.

yet if it is confirmed,

The word "confirmed" means to make valid, ratify, impart authority or influence. If God unilaterally ratifies His contract, then certain obligations follow for Him. He cannot set aside a validated covenant. His character demands He not change it. He will not change or revoke salvation by grace.

no one annuls

There are two ways you can change a contract: 1) annul it and 2) add to it. The word "annuls" means to put to no value, the idea is to render it void. If we unilaterally cancel a contract as human beings, we are not true to our word. Even human contracts, once we confirm them, cannot change until they run out.

or adds to it

"Adds to" means to ordain besides, to add something to what has been ordained. It is not right to add a codicil to God's covenant. Once God ratifies an unconditional covenant, we cannot change it and even He cannot change it. A contract is a contract.

If we agree with a contractor to build a house for so many dollars, we cannot demand that the contractor add another room without changing the price. Neither can the contractor charge you more than what's set out in the contract. The Contractor would never do this.

Although the Mosaic law is newer than the Abrahamic covenant, that does not make the Mosaic law better. The newer Mosaic law does not abrogate the older Abrahamic contract that God made for salvation. God does not breach faith with His promises.

God's contract with Abraham was unconditional. It did not depend on Abraham's belief; it depended entirely on God's promise in grace. God made a no-strings attached contract. If Abraham believed, God would justify him. It was all about grace.

Principle

God will never change justification by faith because His character never changes.

Application

People market new ideas today as if their ideas are the latest and greatest. Newer is not necessarily better. God is always consistent with His promises made many years ago. He will never go back on His Word.

Man may change a contract but God will always be true to His promises. God made a promise that we will have eternal life by grace through faith. He will never go back on that. To claim that God goes back on His Word would charge Him with a breach of faith. God's commitment to us is still in force because He is always true to Himself.

If the business world does not alter a contract without permission, then a righteous God surely would not do it. He is immutable. God will never add anything to faith for salvation. He will never go back on His Word.

Galatians 3:16

"Now to Abraham and his Seed were the promises made. He does not say, "And to seeds," as of many, but as of one, "And to your Seed," who is Christ"

Paul gives another reason why the Mosaic law cannot abrogate the Abrahamic covenant. After giving the law, God fulfilled the promises of the Abrahamic covenant in the person and work of Christ. This shows the ongoing validity and permanence of grace in the Abrahamic covenant. This strikes at the core of legalism.

Now to Abraham and his Seed were the promises made.

God made the "promises" of the Abrahamic covenant to Abraham and his lineage (Genesis 12:3,7; 13:16; 15:5; 17:7). When God makes a covenant, it amounts to a promise. No one can abrogate the Abrahamic covenant, even if Abraham or any of his seed fails, because it is an unconditional covenant. An unconditional covenant depends entirely on God's promise in grace.

He does not say, "And to seeds," as of many, but as of one,

Fulfillment of the Abrahamic covenant does not depend on the nation of Israel but on the person of Christ.

"And to your Seed," who is Christ

The blessing of the Abrahamic covenant comes through the Messiah. God blesses through one seed only, Jesus Christ. Paul alludes to Genesis 12:7 and 22:16-18. The law did not abrogate the Abrahamic covenant because Jesus Christ fulfilled the Abrahamic covenant after the Mosaic law.

The blessing of Abraham did not come to the Jews of the first century because they were Abraham's seed. It came because Jesus Christ was the promised Messiah. This demolishes the argument that God justifies people by anything other than by grace. The law cannot save sinners for grace is as old as the Abrahamic covenant. God never intended the Mosaic law to save sinners. It never abrogated the Abrahamic covenant.

Salvation is always a gift from God (3:18). God's gift of grace is His par excellence Seed, Jesus Christ, the Savior. This was God's design from eternity. The Mosaic law did not change that plan.

Principle

Salvation is always a gift originating in God's grace.

Application

God's salvation is always through the finished work of Christ on the cross. Legalism is lethal because it undermines that finished work, making it unfinished. Legalism implies we must finish the work by pleasing God through what we do. It is an attempt to gain God's favor by works, undermining the fact Jesus already won God's favor.

God's promise of salvation stands eternally ours if we claim it by faith. It is not an issue of measuring up to God for that is impossible. That is why we need the Lord Jesus Christ as our Savior, God's gift of grace.

Galatians 3:17

"And this I say, that the law, which was four hundred and thirty years later, cannot annul the covenant that was confirmed before by God in Christ, that it should make the promise of no effect"

And this I say,

Paul now explains verse fifteen [verse 16 was a parenthesis].

that the law, which was four hundred and thirty years later,

Moses received the law 430 years after the ratification of the Abrahamic covenant, when Israel (Jacob) went to Egypt (Genesis 46:1-4); (Exodus 12:40). The law came 645 years after the initial promise to Abraham.

cannot annul the covenant that was confirmed before by God in Christ,

The words "confirmed before" means ratified before. God ratified His promise to Abraham on a number of occasions (to Abraham, Genesis 15; by vision, Genesis 15; by birth of Isaac, Genesis 21; by oath, Genesis 22). God confirmed this 430 years before He gave the law. He did this permanently (perfect tense).

that it should make the promise of no effect

God ratified the Abrahamic covenant before he gave the law to Moses, so the law could not annul the Abrahamic covenant. The coming of the law did not invalidate God's promise of grace to Abraham because God gave him a unilateral promise [unconditional contract or covenant].

Principle

Law cannot abrogate grace.

Application

God ratified grace permanently before He gave the law. The law was not an addition to grace. Once God signed the contract of grace, He would not go back on it.

Many people today throw out grace for law despite God's promise to bless us no matter what. There are no conditions to His blessing, no strings attached.

Galatians 3:18

"For if the inheritance is of the law, it is no longer of promise; but God gave it to Abraham by promise"

For if the inheritance is of the law, it is no longer of promise;

The promise would no longer be unilateral but bilateral if it depended on us in some way. If God's blessing depends on us as well as Him, it negates God's grace. This would wipe out the very nature of a promise. The two ideas of law and grace are mutually exclusive. There is no intermediate position between them.

but God gave it to Abraham by promise

The word "gave" is a term of grace. The root for "gave" is the same as the word for "grace" meaning to give graciously and generously, with the implication of good will on the part of the giver--to grant, to bestow. The Greek tense shows that God's grace stands permanent (perfect).

Grace is free. God gives with no strings attached. His character is at stake. We cannot measure up to God's perfection.

Principle

Grace and law exclude each other.

Application

Man cannot improve on God's promise. We do not earn or deserve the right to receive God's grace. We cannot combine grace and law because there is no middle ground. If law changes grace at all, it renders it void.

"I do not set aside the grace of God; for if righteousness comes through the law, then Christ died in vain" (Galatians 2:21).

Salvation and sanctification must rest on grace or law but not both. They are two opposing principles. God glorifies Himself by what He does. His glory does not depend on us. God glorifies Himself by giving something.

Galatians 3:19 "What purpose then does the law serve? It was added because of transgressions, till the Seed should come to whom the promise was made; and it was appointed through angels by the hand of a mediator"

What purpose then does the law serve?

Paul now turns to the purpose of the law (3:19-25).

It was added because of transgressions,

God gave the law to identify when man crosses the line of God's standards. The law shows God's character. A "transgression" is stepping across a line, disobeying a clear command. The purpose of the law is to show us that we more than simply missed the mark of God's holiness but that we stepped across a very clear line in doing so. We crossed a line into prohibited territory.

Sin was always sin but a law made it a transgression. Murder was always sin but it did not become a transgression until God put it into the Ten Commandments. It would be impossible to play a football game without lines marking certain boundaries.

God never designed the law to annul His promise. God annexed the law to serve grace. It never added anything to grace. It serves grace by showing us that we cannot earn or deserve any merit before God for we have already crossed God's standards.

"Moreover the law entered that the offense might abound. But where sin abounded, grace abounded much more..." (Romans 5:20).

till the Seed should come to whom the promise was made;

The law temporarily served the purpose of showing our transgressions until the Messiah came [the Seed]. Our failure to keep the law shows our need for a Savior.

and it was appointed through angels

The word "appointed" denotes the ideas of to arrange, set in order, prescribe. The law has two mediators: angels and Moses. First, the angels gave Moses the law; then Moses gave Israel the law. Both brought precise descriptions of sin to Israel.

by the hand of a mediator

The mediator is "Moses." God gave the Abrahamic covenant without a mediator because that covenant was a unilateral contract. God was the only person establishing the provisions of grace. The Mosaic law required mediators because it is bilateral (Deuteronomy 5:33)--mankind had a part and God had a part. Mankind's part was to obey

and God's part was to bless. The kink in the armor was mankind couldn't keep it's part of the bargain.

Principle

The purpose of the law is to show us our desperate need for the Savior.

Application

The purpose of the law is to show us our desperate need for a Savior, our need for grace. The law cannot give us what grace can give us. The law cannot save our soul.

God gave the law to show sin in its true light. It shows violation of God's laws and thus of God's character. The law does not make people sinners but transgressors.

It is important to know why God gave the law so that we do not misuse or abuse it. If you know the purpose of iodine, you will not drink it! The law will curse us if we misuse it. If we use the law to get ourselves to heaven, it will land us in hell. If we depend on ourselves for salvation, God will prosecute us to the full extent of the law. The law puts the skull and crossbones on the bottle of poison.

The law is like a mirror that reveals our dirty face so that we can wash it in the blood of Christ. We do not wash our face with the mirror. That is not the purpose of a mirror. The purpose of the law is to show us that we are bankrupt morally; therefore, we need a Savior.

Galatians 3:20

"Now a mediator does not mediate for one only, but God is one"

Paul now closely connects verse 20 to the end of verse 19.

Now a mediator does not mediate for one only,

A "mediator" is one who stands in the middle to intervene between two parties. A "mediator" stands between them and tries to work out a solution. The mediator does not simply represent one party but both parties. A mediator involves a contract between two parties as in the Mosaic law. The law needs a mediator because it involves two parties.

but God is one

In the Abrahamic covenant, only one party signed the contract. God unilaterally signed it in grace. Grace does not operate by a mediator between two parties. Grace acts alone because it is unconditional and unilateral. There are no strings attached to God's provision of grace.

Principle

God gives His grace unilaterally and unconditionally without strings attached.

Application

God's grace to us is unconditional. He puts no strings on His offer of salvation or sanctification. He performs all the requirements to fulfill His side of the bargain. Salvation is all from God.

"Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation, that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation" (2 Corinthians 5:18-19).

Galatians 3:21

"Is the law then against the promises of God? Certainly not! For if there had been a law given which could have given life, truly righteousness would have been by the law"

Paul raises yet another question about the law. If the preceding verses are true, does this imply that the law and promise are in conflict?

Is the law then against the promises of God?

Did God give the law to frustrate grace? Paul makes explicit what the Galatians were thinking. They thought that Paul disparaged the law in his previous arguments.

Certainly not!

It is inconceivable to think that the promise and the law are in conflict. God gave both the law and the promise but for different purposes. God is not at war with Himself!

For if there had been a law given which could have given life,

The purpose of the law is not to give life, but to can show the conditions for salvation. The purpose of the law is to show us our sin and the purpose of grace is to save us from sin.

No external rule can internally impart eternal life. The words "could have given life" mean to make alive, cause to live. This is a causative term. The law cannot cause life. It cannot produce eternal life.

"For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh, that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit" (Romans 8:2-4).

truly righteousness would have been by the law

The word "truly" expresses what is actual as opposed to apparent. Hypothetically, if law could give eternal life, then it can give us the righteousness of God. The Greek "if" in the first phrase ["if there had been a law..."] answers this hypothesis- it is not true.

The difference between grace and law is not apparent to the legalists. There is a fundamental difference between the two. The law does not pretend to give eternal life so there is no conflict between grace and law.

Grace and law are not in conflict with one another because they serve two different purposes. It is not the purpose of law to produce eternal life. Grace is no more opposed to law any more than the surgeon's scalpel opposes healing.

Principle

The law cannot give eternal life, only grace can do that.

Application

The law demands perfect righteousness but it cannot give eternal life. It did not have the wherewithal to give that life. Some people look in

a mirror but they do not profit by what they see because they do not wash their face! Law simply proves to us that we are sinful. It cannot make us accept the grace of God.

We obtain eternal life not by the law, but through the righteousness of Christ.

"Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin. But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, even the righteousness of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, to all and on all who believe" (Romans 3:20-22).

God gives eternal life to those who trust in Christ's death to obtain forgiveness for sin.

Galatians 3:22

"But the Scripture has confined all under sin, that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe"

But

Verse 22 is a contrast to verse 21. Salvation by faith is the polar opposite to righteousness by law.

the Scripture has confined all

The Scripture shuts everyone under the confines of sin so it is impossible to be justified by keeping the law. The word "confined" means shut in on all sides like fish in a net so that there is no way to keep the law for salvation (Luke 5:6). God shut the door so completely that there is no hope of salvation by works. Everyone is a prisoner of sin and cannot get out of that prison. Sin keeps you in prison under lock and key.

"O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? I thank God – through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, with the mind I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin" (Romans 7: 24-25).

Scripture is the court beyond which there is no appeal. It is the infallible, inspired, inerrant, eternal, unalterable Word of God. You either take it or leave it but whatever you do, you never alter

it. The Bible will still be here when we are dead and gone. There will always be a Bible.

"Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away" (Matthew 24:35).

under sin,

Every person is under the dominion of sin. From this conclusion, there is no escape, and to this rule, there is no exception. The law is like a massive rock crushing eternal life out of us.

"For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace" (Romans 6:14).

that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe

Since the law is insufficient to save our souls, our only hope is the finished work of Christ. The legalists admitted justification by faith but the catch was by faith alone. The legalists wanted to add works to faith. God gives salvation; we do not work for it.

Principle

The law locks us up so securely that there is no hope of salvation by works.

Application

Every person is bankrupt before God. The law put us into a prison from which there is no escape by self-effort. The law nails our casket shut. Our only hope is trust in the finished work of Christ. Otherwise, we do not have leg to stand on.

Law sees to it you do not lose consciousness of your sin. It allows no justification of our sin. It will keep us in the prison of conviction. Jesus opens the doors of this prison when we place our faith in His work on the cross.

"Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God" (Romans 3:19).

Immediately upon trust in that work, God reckons the merit of Jesus to our account. He views us as having the same righteousness that Jesus has. We possess all the magnificent merit of the incomparable Son of God. He places on Jesus your

demerit and reckons to us His merit. Jesus takes our hell; we receive His heaven.

"...for the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke 19:10).

"This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief" (1 Timothy 1:15).

Galatians 3:23

"But before faith came, we were kept under guard by the law, kept for the faith which would afterward be revealed"

Verse 23 bears a strong semblance to verse 22. Verse 22 showed us that there are no supporting arguments to keep the law for salvation.

But before faith came,

The "faith" here is faith in Christ (3:22). The Greek says "the faith" indicating a special faith, faith in the promise of Jesus Christ (3:22). Old Testament saints did not have the opportunity to believe in the person of Jesus Christ. They believed in the coming Messiah.

"For the law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ" (John 1:17).

we

Paul now turns to the first person "we" referring to saved Jews. The law kept Jews in the prison of legalism during God's dealings with Israel. The idea is that when Christ came, the object of faith changed from the idea of a coming Messiah to the person of Jesus. We came to understand who the Messiah was in His person and work.

Paul uses the second person plural "you" in the preceding context until this verse. Now he switches to the first person plural through verse 25. At verse 26, he reverts to the second person "you." The whole argument of this section revolves around the first person plural "we." Paul very carefully switched these pronouns for a purpose. The "we" are Jewish Christians in Galatia and "you" are Christian Gentile Galatians.

were kept under guard by the law,

The word "kept" is a military term for keeping guard as with a garrison. The law guards against every way of escape from the conclusion we are sinners. The phrase in verse 22 "confined all under sin" and this phrase "kept under guard by the law" is the same thing. The law will not allow us to justify our sin. Therefore, we cannot justify ourselves by works. All the law does to us is curse us. It proves we are sinners.

kept for the faith which would afterward be revealed

The second word for "kept" in this verse means to shut together, shut in on all sides. The law kept people in a state of exclusively depending on faith in the Messiah for salvation. This does not mean that God justified people by law before Christ, because God justified Old Testament believers by faith just as He justified Abraham by faith (Genesis 15:6).

The Greek tense [perfect] indicates the law permanently shuts us up to sin until the faith "afterward" revealed. The word "revealed" means uncovered. The faith of this dispensation was unknown under the law; it was covered until Christ came. The law covered New Testament faith for 1500 years. God locked the Jews under the law until Christ came to fulfill all the requirements of the law (Romans 8:2-4). God frees both Jews and Gentiles through personal faith in Christ. The Jews anticipated the coming of the Messiah and Gentiles know the Messiah by name.

Principle

The law is a prison to those who try to keep it.

Application

The law can diagnose our sin but it cannot prescribe a remedy. If this is so, why would you revert to legalism to be saved or sanctified? The law precludes any attempt to secure justification before God other than by faith in the finished work of Christ. God does not want us to lose consciousness of our sin and it's ability to punish us. If we keep the law to be saved, it will forever imprison us. However, if we trust the work of Christ, it will forever free us.

"Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith; that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, if, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead" (Philippians 3:8-11).

Galatians 3:24

"Therefore the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith"

Therefore

Paul now brings us to another conclusion, just as he did in verse 19. He again shows the purpose of the law.

the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ,

The law as a "tutor" brings us to Christ. The word "tutor" means a guardian or guide for boys. This person was a slave whom a landlord charged with supervising his son from age six until puberty. He kept the child from the evils of society. This slave, as his custodian and disciplinarian, attended the son wherever he went. The law was our custodian to bring us to Christ.

God uses the law as a guardian to both Jews and Gentiles. It strictly disciplines those who violate its laws. The role of the "tutor" was not permanent. When a boy reached puberty, his father released him from his slave "tutor." He was then an adult with rights and privileges of adulthood.

that we might be justified by faith

The role of the law is to lead us to the point where we recognize God justifies and sanctifies us by faith, not works.

Principle

The law does not justify a sinner nor is it the rule of life for the believer.

Application

The purpose of the law is to convict us of our sin (Romans 7:7-9). Why would we embrace Jesus Christ if we sensed no need for a Savior? Why would we want forgiveness if we discern no reason for forgiveness? Grace becomes valuable to us when we realize our need.

If we refuse the finished work of Christ for our salvation then we remain forever in custody to God's unalterable law. This irreversible law keeps every person under the burden of its custody. However, Christ redeemed us from the law by paying the price for our sins.

"There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit" (Romans 8:1).

If we reject the warnings of the law, we pay an eternal consequence – eternity in hell. The law clearly warns us against some illusion that God might accept us because of our works. By ourselves, we are utterly unable to keep the law. That is why we need the Savior.

Galatians 3:25

"But after faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor"

But after faith has come,

There is a definite article [the] before the word "faith" referring to the historic Christ [as in verse 22, 23]. Paul will describe the nature of this faith later in the book (4:6; 5:18; cf. Romans 8:14).

we are no longer under a tutor

Jesus fulfilled the righteousness of the law for us so we no longer need the law to govern our relationship with God. We turn from the law to Calvary for salvation and sanctification. Jesus kept the law perfectly and paid the penalty for the law by taking it upon Himself at the cross.

"Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life" (John 5:24).

Now that the reality of faith has come, there is no need to continue under a temporary arrangement.

The law no longer governs our relationship with God (Romans 6:14). Faith in Christ lifts the guilt of the law off our shoulders.

"Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage [the law]" (Galatians 5:1).

Principle

The law is the servant of faith, not a substitute for it.

Application

The flaw in the idea of salvation by works is not in the law itself but in our understanding of the purpose of the law. We cannot add the law to trust in Christ. That distorts the very nature of what Christ did to free us from the demands of the law. We need the law to understand our sinfulness and thus our inability to keep God's standards.

God never designed the law to be anything more than a means of showing us our sins and leading us to the Savior. Now that we have embraced Christ as Savior, we do not need the law as our tutor.

"For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace" (Romans 6:14).

Galatians 3:26

"For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus"

Paul now contrasts living under law and grace. The believer under grace has three benefits. We see the first benefit in this verse.

For you

Note that Paul switches back to the second person "you." He now includes both Jewish and Gentile Christians in his statements here.

are all sons of God

The first benefit of living under grace is believers become "sons" of God. The word "sons" here mean full-grown sons. This is a much stronger term than "children" of God. When a child reached the age of adulthood, his father would give him a toga virilis [a coat of manhood]. Now his son could operate

with all the privileges of adulthood. The "son" was no longer bound by the slave tutor [the law].

Note the word "all." This means every person who becomes a child of God becomes a full-grown son (4:6).

through faith in Christ Jesus

Now that Christ has come, believers hold special privileges before God "through faith." We receive the privilege of adult status with God by faith, not works.

This verse does not put a period after the words "sons of God". The Bible does not say everyone in the world is a son of God. True, we are all creatures of God. That does not mean we are God's children. No one is a child of God without placing exclusive faith in Christ Jesus. Those who do not exercise faith in Christ are mere creatures of God just like a bird or donkey. They do not have a personal relationship with God.

Principle

The New Testament believer has adult privileges with God.

Application

In New Testament salvation, Christians hold adult privileges. Our status with God rests on faith in Christ, not on our works. We do not gain God's approbation by what we do. We have it by what Christ did. We have it by faith.

Galatians 3:27

"For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ"

Verse 27 shows how our sonship [adult privilege] came about.

For

The word "for" explains how we received the same identity that Jesus has before God forever.

as many of you

The words "as many" are equivalent to the "all" of the previous verse. God baptizes every Christian without exception into Christ and puts "Christ" on him.

as were baptized into Christ

This phrase does not refer to water baptism but spiritual baptism at the instant we place our faith in Christ. We enter living union with Christ at salvation. The word "baptized" means to identify. God identifies us with Christ at salvation.

"Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? 4 Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life" (Romans 6:3-4).

"For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body – whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free – and have all been made to drink into one Spirit" (1 Corinthians 12:13).

have put on Christ

At the moment of salvation, we enter into an eternal and actual relationship with Christ. The words "put on" allude to the act of putting on the toga of manhood, the toga virilis. Christians wear the garment of adulthood. We have freedom and privilege with God forever from the moment of salvation.

The words "put on" signify enter into or get into, as into clothes. The indwelling Holy Spirit envelops the believer at salvation. God clothes every Christian with Christ without exception. This is more than being clothed with the ethics of Christianity. This is being clothed with Christ Himself.

Principle

God gives us the status that Christ has in God's eyes by identifying us with Christ at salvation.

Application

This verse does not mean God saves us by water baptism. It means God views us as having the same status Jesus has. All of our resources before God are because we are in Christ. Our status with God lasts forever because we carry the same status Jesus Christ has with the Father.

Galatians 3:28

"There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus"

The second privilege that Christians have at the point of salvation is that they are one with all believers in Christ regardless of distinctions in society.

There is neither Jew nor Greek,

There are no racial distinctions in Christ. God says that the very distinction the Judaizers made between Jew and Greek was not valid. Judaizers cannot compel Christians to become Jews.

there is neither slave nor free,

There are no social distinctions in Christ.

there is neither male nor female;

There are no gender distinctions in Christ. Women have full spiritual status with men.

Christian feminists make this phrase the crux of their interpretation to support their view of Christian feminism. Some claim that Paul swallowed his culture to such an extent that he even wrote Scripture based on this bias. Christian feminists claim that passages such as 1 Timothy 2 and 1 Corinthians 11 hold fallacious teaching on roles of men and women.

Christian feminists argue that this phrase means that there are no meaningful distinctions between men and women. However, Paul does not make distinction between all possible differences in culture. The context deals with justification and sanctification. A woman receives justification exactly the same way a man receives justification.

Gay activists also use this passage to argue that homosexual practice is valid because God obscured the distinction between men and women. Some Christian feminists concede this argument because it follows the logic of their interpretation.

Principle

God does not recognize human distinctions in those who are in Christ.

Application

Human role distinctions (1 Corinthians 14:34; 1 Timothy 2:11-15; Ephesians 5:22-24; 6:1-8) have nothing to do with our spiritual significance before God. Christian feminists completely miss the point of this passage which says the male has no spiritual privilege over the female. Every person, male or female, rich or poor, have the same spiritual status before God.

When we make distinctions in people, we form a basis for prejudice against them making some superior and other inferior. Christians should not make race, economic status, or gender a measuring stick of acceptance.

However, God maintains differences in roles within society. God designed differences in sexual role so there are functional differences between men and women. He did not create unisex; He created gender difference. If so, where is the distinction? Spiritually, men and women are the same. Physically and functionally, they are different. Spiritual blessing is one thing but human function is another thing.

Christian feminists today fail to accept that God's truth is transcendent. They want to pour it into the mold of current philosophy and trends. They cut themselves off from unity of truth as it is found in the Bible. All that is left is plurality. That is why we have pluralism: everyone has an equal view of life, plurality is all that there is, and there is no unity of truth.

Coming to a conclusion about truth is arrogant to our society. The reason for this belief is the assumption that everyone has different reference points; there is no singular reference point. Everything is relative so there is no ultimate location of truth. We can trust nothing that fixes truth. This is where the ultimate flaw of the feminists lies. They have bought into egalitarianism, which has no biblical basis whatsoever. Egalitarianism is a form of pluralism. They use this philosophical bias to interpret Scripture. It is a greater value to them than Scripture itself for if Scripture contradicts this assumption, then Scripture itself is wrong!

Christian feminists who do not believe in biblical inerrancy, claim that Paul violated God's principles by continuing the dissemination of

sexual roles. However, they praise Paul for Galatians 3:28.

What forms the biblical basis for the rights of Christian feminism? There is none. The classical view of tolerance was that openness to different views was a virtue. However, it is one thing to open oneself to different views of the world and to claim that all views are equally valid. Pluralism says more than that all views should have equal expression, it claims that all views are equally valid!

This contradicts the very idea that the Bible claims for itself mutual exclusive truth. As Christianity and Hinduism cannot both be equally valid, neither can modern Christian feminism and biblical roles. The only groups that Christian feminists will not tolerate are those who claim that tolerance is not an ultimate virtue! They cannot tolerate those who have the temerity to teach what the Bible actually says.

for you are all one in Christ Jesus

A believing slave does not rank lower than a free person does. God cuts across all cultural distinctions in saving us. All human categories lose their differences in the way God views us spiritually. Yet, God maintains distinctions in role (1 Corinthians 11:3f; 1 Timothy 2:12).

The word "all" is emphatic. There are no exceptions to this. Everyone is "one" in Christ Jesus who trusts Christ's work on the cross.

Principle

The only true liberty is in Christ.

Application

God spiritually sees no distinction between people who trust in the cross for salvation. He washed all the same in the blood of Christ. All go to heaven the same way.

Galatians 3:29

"And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise"

The third privilege Christians have is that they are special "heirs" of God.

And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed,

Christians belong to Abraham's seed. The running battle in Galatians had to do with whether Gentiles must become Jews in order to be saved. Paul says that Christians are Abraham's seed at the point they placed their faith in Christ. This flew in the face of the Judaizers who demanded a Christian must become a Jew as well as a Christian in order to be accepted by God.

and heirs

The Christian receives eternal life, not temporal life, at the point of salvation (John 6:47; 10:27, 28; Romans 6:23; Hebrews 5:8, 9; 9:12).

according to the promise

The words "according to the promise" are the emphatic words of this verse. Just as Abraham received eternal life by faith, so we receive eternal life by claiming God's promise of salvation. We are one with Old Testament believers.

The promise of grace made to Abraham (3:16,17) comes alike to anyone who trusts Christ's cross for salvation. No one can work his way to heaven. All must come the same way - by the pure, unadulterated, sovereign grace of God.

Principle

God gives us eternal security at the point of our salvation.

Application

God gives us eternal security because salvation depends on the power of God (John 10:29; Romans 8:31-32, 38,39) and on the promises of God (John 3:16-36; 5:24). God's love (Romans 5:6-10) and immutability (2 Timothy 2:12,13) guarantee our eternal security. He has the power to deliver salvation for us (John 10:29; Romans 8:31-39). He preserves it for us (1 Peter 1:4,5; Jude 1, 24). He will never condemn the Christian (Romans 8:1; Ephesians 1:3; 2:6) because our Defense Attorney defends our case (Hebrews 9:24; 7:25; 1 John 2:1,2). The indwelling Holy Spirit seals our salvation (Ephesians 1:13,14; 4:30).

Our verse says that it is impossible to become unborn once we are born spiritually (Galatians 3:26). God will complete His work of salvation in

us (Philippians 1:6; Hebrews 12:2). It does not depend on us but upon Him.

Galatians 4:1

"Now I say that the heir, as long as he is a child, does not differ at all from a slave, though he is master of all..."

In 4:1-7, Paul illustrates the believer's privileges because of his status in Christ as compared to those who live under the law. This section further develops 3:23-26.

Now I say that the heir,

Paul gives an illustration of an heir of an entire estate who lives under a slave guardian.

as long as he is a child,

The word "child" here means small child. This person is obviously too young to take responsibilities of adulthood. A slave/guardian told this child when to get up, when to go to school and disciplined him.

Roman custom did not specify an age when a person became ready for adulthood. When the father deemed the heir ready, he celebrated this time by a festival known as Liberalia held on March 17. At this time, the heir received his toga virilis (coat of adulthood). The boy burned his childhood toys at this festival. This person now has authority over the slave that governed him as a child.

does not differ at all from a slave, though he is master of all

A person who operates under the law is no different than a child who is heir to an entire estate and placed under guardianship. He was a legal heir but he did not have the privilege of utilizing his legal rights to his estate. The law was the guardian (3:24-26) that watched over believers in the Old Testament. A Christian who reverts to the law puts himself back under slavery.

Principle

Believers under grace have certain rights with God.

Application

As long as we operate under the law, we live like a slave. God will hold our rights in abeyance until

we claim them. It is possible to have a million dollars in liquid assets and never use those assets.

A child is as happy with a quarter as with the promise of hundreds of dollars because he cannot grasp the value of wealth. Christians have great assets but do not use them because they do not acknowledge their privileges in Christ. They do not realize that they can utilize their assets because they are now adult sons positionally in Christ. They seek to gain God's approbation by what they do. They do not realize that they have God's favor because of the death of Christ.

The Christians should take possession of their possessions in Christ like the owner of an estate. What a day of liberation that would be! Under grace, we can claim our possessions in Christ like a person who claims his millions at age 18.

None of us can escape the condemnation of the law by what we do. The purpose of the law was to show us our sin, not to save us from sin. That is why we forsake self-effort in an attempt to appease God. We throw ourselves on the finished work of Christ who appeased God fully. Our rights with God come from Him alone.

Galatians 4:2

"...but is under guardians and stewards until the time appointed by the father"

but is under guardians

Paul uses two terms that both carry the idea of entrusting someone with something of value: 1) guardians and 2) stewards. Both of these terms indicate that others have authority over the heir.

A "guardian" was one to whose care something is committed. The word comes from two Greek words: upon and to turn, direct. This individual has delegated authority over the person of the child. He was a guardian of his daily life. He made sure that he combed his hair and that he washed behind his ears. He was both an attendant and a bodyguard. The Mosaic law is an attendant and bodyguard to teach us how to conduct ourselves.

and stewards

A "steward" literally is one who rules a house. This person managed the estate of the heir until he

came of age. He had authority over the property of the heir.

until the time appointed by the father

The word "appointed" means set beforehand, prearranged. The father of the heir prearranged a time when the child would become an adult. This was an Athenian legal term for the termination of childhood set by the father of the child.

God the "father" is the originator of the decision as to when the ceremony would take place. He gives us positional rights at the moment of salvation in the dispensation of grace.

Principle

In the dispensation of grace, we have special rights with God.

Application

In God's eternal timing, He appointed a time when the believer would operate under grace. The fact that the law had to rule over believers shows its insufficiency. A child must be subject to rules and regulations. The law was incapable to bestow full liberty of Christian living. There came a time when God appointed the grace concept to fully engage the life of believers. This was the point when the Son of God step foot on earth.

"And of His fullness we have all received, and grace for grace. For the law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ" (John 1:16-17).

When Christians revert to the law, they put themselves back under the guardianship of rules and regulations. When we accept the work of Christ, we live under grace.

Galatians 4:3

"Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world"

Even so we,

Paul now applies the illustration of the first two verses to Christians.

when we were children,

The Galatians were bound in legalism when they operated by rules. People subject to rules function like children.

were in bondage

The law enslaved those under it from Sinai to Christ. The Greek indicates that they were in a permanent state of bondage to the law.

under the elements of the world

The word "elements" refers to any first thing, from which others in a series take their cue. An element is a basic principle. "Element" was used for letters of an alphabet, the building blocks for writing. The book of Colossians uses this term for those who revert into legalism (Colossians 2:8; 2:20). In Galatians 4:3,9, Paul uses this term for legalism as constituting a yoke of bondage.

We see the span of slavery by the term "elements of the world." The Mosaic law is elementary compared to life under grace. The Mosaic law tied people to rules and regulations that kept them in slavery to external as compared to internal dynamics. People are always enamored with the external system of works. The externals of Israel's laws had similarities to rules among Gentiles.

Principle

Life under grace has internal dynamic.

Application

When we place ourselves under the law as a way of life, this puts us into a state of bondage. It is like a PhD candidate who goes back to grade school. He reverts to learning his ABCs while he knows many languages. To revert to the law after learning our rights in Christ, is to revert from liberty to legalism. This is the same as going back to our childhood, spiritually speaking. This is like taking an adult and putting diapers on him. We spoon feed people if we encourage legalism.

Galatians 4:4

"But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law..."

But when the fullness of the time had come,

The word "fullness" means something that fills up anything. God allotted a certain amount of time for sending His Son. The phrase "the fullness of time" marks God's intrusion into time with His answer for people. God gave the Son at the momentous time, the propitious time. God timed the redemption of people precisely.

The word "time" indicates duration or length of time. After the elapse of a certain succession of time, God sent His Son. God had a precise time for Christ to be born (Daniel 9:24-27). Christ came at a climatic moment in prophecy, the time when the period of the Mosaic law would elapse.

The Roman Empire brought the Pax Romana [the peace of Rome] throughout the world. There was great political stability throughout the Roman world. Freedom to trade and travel throughout the world was at the greatest level in history. The Greek language was the language of the empire making it an opportune time for spreading the gospel. Jesus did not come at some random time; He came precisely at the moment God designed from eternity. This is the time when God put to an end the dispensation of the law by sending His Son to fulfill all the demands of the law.

A human father in the Roman Empire marked a specific time when his child became an adult son. God the Father also marked a time when He sent His Son into the world. This was a momentous moment for all people.

God sent forth

The Father dispatched the Son for a purpose. Literally, "sent forth" means to send out or away from for some purpose with authority. Jesus proceeded out from God Himself. God sent Jesus with full authority on the mission of redemption. God intervened into time by sending His Son so that we might become joint-heirs with Him.

His Son,

Jesus existed eternally with the Father then the Father sent him to earth. "Son" indicates the deity of Christ. God sent forth a "Son," not a child. Jesus was already a Son when He came into the world.

"For unto us a Child is born, Unto us a Son is given; And the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name

will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace" (Isaiah 9:6).

born of a woman,

The phrase "born of a woman" is an implied reference to the Virgin Birth. Having eternally existed as God, Jesus took on human flesh by being born to a woman. This refers to the true humanity of Christ. The Greek term for "born" means "became." Jesus came into a new state of being. He lived in the state of being as God but now He takes on the state of being as man. The birth of Christ is not a beginning but a becoming.

born under the law

Jesus came to keep the law perfectly. It was God's timetable that He was born under the law to fulfill the law. Jesus took His place as a Jew born under the law. He perfectly obeyed the law in God's perfect timing.

"For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh, that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit" (Romans 8:2-4).

"For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him" (2 Corinthians 5:21).

"And you know that He was manifested to take away our sins, and in Him there is no sin" (1 John 3:5).

Principle

The most auspicious time of history was when the eternal pre-existent Son of God stepped foot into a human body.

Application

The virgin birth of Christ is vital teaching of the Bible. Jesus was born of a Jewish mother without human father. He was born in an Israeli town. His parents circumcised Him just like any other

Jewish boy when He was 8 days old. He grew up in the Jewish town of Nazareth attending a local synagogue. Jesus' birth was under the law so that He would fulfill the law. Since He fulfilled the law that qualified Him to die for those under the law.

"Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill" (Matthew 5: 17).

Jesus came at zero hour, the climatic moment God wanted the eternally pre-existent Son of God to step foot on earth. He fulfilled God's set time. That was the critical point of history. God does nothing prematurely. The first coming of Christ was not by chance. The full allotment of time designed for the law elapsed to prepare the world for His coming, a momentous event of pivotal importance in the salvation of man. The most critical point of history was the moment when the eternal Son of God stepped foot on earth. Previously Jesus was the God; now He is the God-man.

The birth of Christ was God incognito; God disguised Himself as the Lord Jesus. Jesus proceeded from the very presence of the Trinity. Jesus Christ is God made man.

"This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief" (1 Timothy 1:15).

"And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifested in the flesh, Justified in the Spirit, Seen by angels, Preached among the Gentiles, Believed on in the world, Received up in glory" (1 Timothy 3:16).

"In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins" (1 John 4:9-10).

Galatians 4:5

"...to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons"

There are two reasons Jesus came: 1) to redeem those under the law, and 2) to fix the full rights of privilege with God for the believer.

to redeem those who were under the law,

Everyone falls under the judgment of the law. That is why Jesus came "to redeem" those under the law. The word "redeem" means to buy back, to pay full. Jesus purchased us out of the slave market of sin. He fully paid the price sin incurred through penalty of the law. We were in bondage to sin but Jesus delivered us from sin by paying the price for sin (3:13). Jesus redeemed us from the entire Mosaic system of life, from bondage to the ceremonial law.

Principle

Jesus paid the full price for the penalty of our sin.

Application

If the law bosses us around, we are under the authority of the law. Christ freed us from the law as a rule of life by His death on the cross. If we revert to the law, we revert to childhood spiritually.

Jesus paid the full price for the penalty of our sin. We incur no debt with God. Jesus left no bill unpaid. He paid the price once for all. He killed hell eternally for the believer. The Son of God became the Son of Man that the sons of men might become the sons of God. That is what it cost the Son of God to make me a son of God.

that we might receive the adoption as sons

God adopts us "as sons" as a gift [receive]. God gives us sonship by redeeming us by His Son. God sent His Son so that

we might freely become sons with privilege.

The word "adoption" in the Greek is a compound of two words: son and placing. God places us as sons into His family.

This is a technical word referring to the time when a teenage son received his toga of manhood [toga virilis]. The idea of "son" here then is adult sons, not children. This does not refer to adoption of the 21st century that takes a child, who's not our own, and makes her legally one of the family. Biblical adoption takes someone already in the family and places them into the status of adult privilege.

The Christian is already in the family but receives privileges as a family heir at his son-placing. Jesus put us in place of privilege with God. God inducts us into the rights of spiritual adulthood because of Christ's work on the cross. This is a privilege that we do not receive by natural descent.

"Adoption" is a term of status quo, a term of legal position with God. When God adopts us into sonship, we have all the privileges that come with that. He admits us into the rights of a son. He places us into privilege. Legalists continue to live under guardians and stewards but God accredits the full status quo of Christ to believers in grace. He gives full sonship without any strings attached to everyone who receives Christ.

Principle

God places us into the same status as Christ because of His death on the cross.

Application

Why should a Christian revert to the law as a way of life? Why live on a low plane of dos and don'ts when we have superior supernatural privilege? We do not have to earn God's favor because Jesus already earned that for us. We have the same status that He has before the Father--His rights are our rights. We have legal title to the rights of the Son of God. We do not merit these rights. Jesus obtained them by the judicial proceeding of the cross. This is why we have the right to prayer and to exercise a spiritual life before God.

The spiritual adult son becomes an independent executor of his spiritual estate. He goes beyond legal regulations in his relation to God because of the indwelling Holy Spirit. There is no reason that we should have a slavish attitude of fear before God. We serve Him with freedom.

"Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage [the law]" (Galatians 5:1).

Assurance and conviction are characteristics of those who know their standing before God. We cannot establish merit before God but we do have responsibility to "walk worthy" of our calling [positional before God] (Ephesians 4:1-3; Colossians 3:1-3).

Our fundamental basis of appeal before God is not our spirituality; it is our position in Christ. God hears us not because we are spiritual but because we legally, forensically right before Him in Christ.

Many walk before God with apprehension, thinking they are not acceptable to Him. They walk in subjective guilt rather than accepting the fact that Christ died for their sin. They do indeed need to accept the reality that they are objectively guilty by the sin they commit, but they should not subjectively pay for that sin by feelings of guilt. Instead of identifying sin as something for which Christ paid, they pay for it themselves by guilt. They say in effect, "Move over Jesus, I am going to climb up on that cross and feel bad for my sin." That is a rejection of the finished work of Christ on the cross. Those people do not recognize their rights before God. They suffer for sin for which Christ already suffered.

Galatians 4:6

"And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying out, 'Abba, Father!'"

This verse divinely attests that we are sons of God because the Holy Spirit cries out in our hearts.

And because you are sons,

God gives us proof that we are His sons because we have the indwelling Holy Spirit crying out in our hearts. This is the evident reality of sonship. God does not give the Holy Spirit to those who are not sons because the proof of son-placing is the provision of the Holy Spirit. This is more than a theoretical making us "sons"--for God implants the very life of His Son into our hearts.

God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son

God the Father not only "sent His Son," He also sent the "Spirit of His Son," that is, the Holy Spirit. He is the third person of the Trinity. Thus the full Trinity works on our salvation. The Holy Spirit is a gift of God to every believer because of sonship. No son or daughter of God lacks the Holy Spirit.

God "sent forth" His Son and then He "sent forth the Spirit of His Son." The word "send" means to send officially. The Holy Spirit is the official representative of God to take the place of stewards and guardians of the law.

into your hearts,

God sends the Spirit "into your hearts." The law could only affect and govern external relations but the Holy Spirit controls the internal nature of man.

crying out, 'Abba, Father'

The Holy Spirit moves the Christian to cry out "Abba, Father." "Abba" is an Aramaic word for "father," a term of endearment. The Christian could not make this cry without the Holy Spirit. This is evidence that the Spirit indwells us. We know subjectively that He indwells us because genuine sons and daughters cry out to their Father.

"But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His" (Romans 8:9).

"For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, 'Abba, Father.' The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs – heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together" (Romans 8:14-17).

Principle

God gives the Christian assurance of salvation by the presence of the Holy Spirit in his life.

Application

The Holy Spirit is present within each believer's heart to give evidence of our position in God's family.

When we become a child of God, God not only adopts you as a child of God but as a son. Childhood speaks of our relationship with God; sonship speaks of our privileges as adults in the family of God. The bestowal of the Holy Spirit gives Christians confidence of our acceptance with God. God does not base our acceptance on what we are or do; but because of what Jesus is and did. We do no longer look upon God as a judge but as

a Father. Our possession of the Holy demonstrates the Father-son relationship of God's grace.

When Jesus left His place in the world the Holy Spirit came to replace Him. We live in the age of the Holy Spirit. God speaks today through the Holy Spirit by the Word of God. We do not have to go through gyrations to when we hunger. We do not have to crawl on our knees to get God's attention. All we have to say is "Father, I'm hungry; I need clothing." We do not have to beat ourselves on the chest or cut our arms to get His attention. He knows and understands because the Holy Spirit indwells us.

Our right of prayer is not how long we pray. It is not our sincerity. Nor does it depend upon anything in the believer's life. Our right to pray is founded on what Jesus Christ did in the incarnation – He gave us equal status with Himself before God forever. He is perfectly acceptable to God so we are perfectly acceptable to God.

"Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need" (Hebrews 4:16).

Galatians 4:7

"Therefore you are no longer a slave but a son, and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ"

Therefore

Paul concludes his argument about sonship with a summary of his point by the word "therefore."

you

The word "you" is in the singular making the application very personal to the Galatians.

are no longer a slave but a son,

The believer is not a slave under the law but a son with adult privileges with God under grace. The Christian is free from the law because he is a "son." Sonship brings with it the privileges of an heir. The Galatians are free from slavery to the law.

and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ

We are an heir of God and joint-heir with Christ.

"The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs – heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together" (Romans 8:16-17).

Principle

Because we are God's sons, we fall heir to God's provision.

Application

Christians are joint-heirs with Christ. Many of married couples have joint bank accounts. Often the first thing young couples do when they get married is to take out a joint account. They put their entire assets into the account in one big lump. They assume that it is a 50/50 account; 50 percent is hers and 50 percent is his. It doesn't work that way, however. He beats her to the withdrawal every time. Our joint account with Christ is not a 50/50 deal. We hold all of His assets equally with Him. Are you writing spiritual checks that are tantamount to the kind of account you have with God?

What Jesus Christ did for us in the incarnation was incalculable. The Son of God became the Son of Man that the sons of men might become the sons of God. Christ came down from where He was to where we are that He might lift us from where we are to where He is eternally.

The Christ is the heir of all things (Hebrews 1:1,2). His privilege as an heir is based on his Sonship (Romans 8:16,17); He is an heir because He is the Son of the Father. We are heirs of Christ and fall heirs to eternal life (Titus 3:7); to fall heir to Christ demands that we fall heirs to eternal life. The heirs of Christ share His destiny (Ephesians 1:11). The Father elected both Christ and us from eternity (Hebrews 9:15). We, therefore, share Jesus' election and destiny. This guarantees our eternal security (1 Peter 1:4,5).

God always makes us heirs based on His grace (Galatians 3:29). The Holy Spirit is the down payment on our eternal inheritance (Galatians 4:6; Ephesians 1:14).

Galatians 4:8

"But then, indeed, when you did not know God, you served those which by nature are not gods"

Paul now appeals to the Galatians not to revert to the slavery of religion. They were under slavery to the religion of the Greco-Roman pantheon. Now legalists want to take them back to the slavery of the law, the slavery of religion. Paul appeals to them to stick with the grace principle, and not revert to legalism (4:8-20).

But then, indeed, when you did not know God,

There was a point when the Galatians did not know the true God – life before Christ. The Jews were enslaved to the law and the Gentile Galatians enslaved to idols of the pantheon. Why should the Gentiles go back into legalistic religion? They already knew something about slavery to religion before the gospel came to them.

you served those which by nature are not gods

The polytheistic gods of the first century were not, by natural endowment, characteristics or condition, true gods. The very constitution of the plethora of gods in the Roman Empire was nil. Aphrodite and Zeus could not help them because they were not real. The Galatians themselves were in slavery to Zeus and Hermes (Acts 14:11-13) so they understood something about slavery to false gods. This sad form of slavery put them in subjection to dead gods utterly unable to help them. How can something that does not have any existence help anyone?

Sonship is free but religion is slavery. Pity those in slavery to religion. This is a great contrast to those who live in the glorious liberty of grace.

Principle

It is folly to revert to legalism.

Application

It is an amazing and alarming thing to watch Christians who came to grips with the grace principle revert back into legalism. To embrace the gospel of grace of no works and no effort for salvation and then go back to a merit system is to lose sight of the work of Christ.

When we revert into legalism, we relapse into a religious straightjacket. Many want to sell this bill of goods today. The purpose of Satan is to blind our minds to the finished work of Christ on the cross.

"For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into apostles of Christ. And no wonder! For Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also transform themselves into ministers of righteousness, whose end will be according to their works" (2 Corinthians 11:13-15).

Satan's mission is always to convince us to leave the beauty of grace for the sadness of legalism.

Galatians 4:9

"But now after you have known God, or rather are known by God, how is it that you turn again to the weak and beggarly elements, to which you desire again to be in bondage?"

But now

"But now" is the contrast after the conversion of the Galatians.

after you have known God,

Now that the Galatians came to "know" [intimately] God on a personal level, why would they revert to legalism? Christianity is a relationship, not a religion.

or rather are known by God,

Paul corrects the emphasis of the previous phrase. Salvation is not due to Galatian efforts at gaining God's favor but God who planned their salvation billions of years in eternity past.

Galatian knowledge of God did not come from within them; it came from God Himself, from the sovereign grace of the gospel. It was not they who made the change in their lives but the gospel. We know God only because He took the initiative.

how is it

How is it possible that the Galatians would revert to legalism in the light that they did not come to Christ by their own effort?

that you turn again to the weak and beggarly elements,

The words "turn again" means to convert. This is a belief term that focuses upon that to which one turns. It is to turn one's manner of life in a particular direction with the idea of turning one's back on grace. The Galatians were in the process of converting back to legalism. Legalism was in their blood before they came to Christ so there is a natural tendency to revert to it. In their case, they would return to "weak and beggarly elements."

"Weak" means feeble, miserable. Why would the Galatians revert to a feeble faith legalism? This would place them in a state of helplessness because of the limited capacity of legalism. Legalism lacks the wealth of grace because self-effort is impotent in comparison to the effort of Christ on the cross. The law never had the ability to save anyone.

"Beggarly" means poverty. Legalism is a state of poverty in comparison to grace. It does not have enough capital to give salvation or sanctification.

Legalism is elemental compared to grace. The word "elements" means elemental substances. The secular Greek world used this term for the basic materials on which the cosmos is composed. It is any first thing from which other things take their rise, a first principle. The first principle of legalism is that a person must earn their rights with God. That is why legalism is a beggar to the grace of God.

to which you desire again to be in bondage?

To revert to legalism is to revert to paganism. They knew something about slavery to the gods of the pantheon, why would they go back to a similar slavery in legalism? We cannot find God by the efforts of the self. Legalism is powerless to impart salvation or sanctification. It cannot produce the results that the gospel does.

Principle

Man's efforts of merit are trash; God's grace is treasure for us.

Application

Salvation is all of grace. God finds us; we do not find Him. God extends His grace to us; we offer Him nothing. When we turn back into earning God's favor and approbation, we turn back the clock spiritually. There is a proclivity to revert to the past. Somehow, someday, we want salvation or the Christian life to depend on us. That is a warm and wonderful feeling not based on the Bible.

Many people need to trade in their religion and get the gospel of grace found only in the finished work of Christ on the cross. This is a bitter pill to swallow for those who are impressed with their self-effort.

Galatians 4:10

"You observe days and months and seasons and years"

Under the influence of legalists who came into Galatia [Judaizers], the Galatians began to keep the Jewish religious calendar. Love for religious holidays is to go from one religious trap to another.

You observe

The word "observe" denotes to watch carefully, assiduously. The Judaizers convinced the Galatians to keep the Sabbaths and Old Testament feasts scrupulously lest any prescribed observance of the law be overlooked. If the Galatians relapsed into this slavery to religion, they lose their freedom in Christ. Religion always brings a scruples approach to gaining merit with God.

days

The word "days" here probably refers to the weekly Sabbaths in the Old Testament. The Sabbath was one day of rest out of seven. The Christian rests seven days out of seven. Our Sabbath is in Christ (Matthew 11:28; Hebrews 3,4).

and months

"Months" is new moon observance, the monthly feast.

and seasons

Passover, Pentecost and Tabernacles were occasional celebrations, each with a span of seven days.

and years

The Jews observed sabbatical and jubilee years (Corinthians 2:16). God designed all religious days on the Jewish calendar to picture the person and work of Christ. These days were a shadow of the reality. They were not the reality but only pointed to the reality. Christ was the reality. Passover was a picture of the death of Christ on the cross. The eating of the lamb was a picture of personal trust in Christ.

Principle

We confound law and grace when we attempt to gain God's approbation by what we do.

Application

Legalism does not commend us to God. Special observance of religious holidays do not merit any favor with God. When we attempt to justify ourselves by what we do, we expect self-righteousness to impress God. Mankind has a love for religion.

Legalism immobilizes us and keeps us from living the most effective life possible with God. In God's economy of grace, no single day is greater than another. If we single out special holy days, we tacitly admit that some days are more holy than other days. The Christian observes every day equally. We do not discharge our duty to God by observing certain religious days. Some of us say, "I'll do my religious thing on religious days but the other days are mine." We cannot make a superficial division between God's days and our days. Every day is God's day; our whole life is God's possession.

We cannot parcel out the Old Testament. If we keep the Sabbath then we must keep Passover, Pentecost and Tabernacles. If we do this then we violate the fact that Christ fulfilled these feasts. Christ fulfilled all feasts fully. He is our Passover (1 Corinthians 5:7,8). The law was good at diagnosing sin but it could not produce a cure. Jesus was the cure for sin. All of this came to the end in Christ.

"For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes" (Romans 10:4).

"So let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a festival or a new

moon or Sabbaths, which are a shadow of things to come, but the substance [reality] is of Christ" (Colossians 2:16-17).

There is no brazen altar any longer because Christ is our sacrifice for sin. It does not obtain for the church today. God eradicated the tabernacle and temple because Jesus fulfilled the law completely. God has a different plan altogether for people in the church.

"And of His fullness we have all received, and grace for grace. For the law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ" (John 1:16-17).

Galatians 4:11

"I am afraid for you, lest I have labored for you in vain"

I am afraid for you,

Paul fears for the Galatians because of their relapse into legalism. How easily we surrender the grace principle! The issue here is clearly a danger for Christians, not non-Christians.

lest I have labored for you

The word "labored" means labor to the point of exhaustion. Paul went to great lengths in his labor for the Galatians.

The words "for you" indicate that Paul aimed at obtaining results in his ministry at Galatia.

in vain

If the Galatians revert into legalism, Paul would have labored in vain. Paul's labor to the point of exhaustion for the Galatians was fruitless if they fall back into legalism.

Principle

We should design our ministry to obtain results.

Application

A great heartache of ministry is for a leader to pour his or her life into someone and then watch them go off on some theological tangent. The best contribution we can make to those who follow us is to give them the Word of God and trust that it will remain in their souls.

"...holding fast the word of life, so that I may rejoice in the day of Christ that I have not run in vain or labored in vain" (Philippians 2:16).

Anyone who violates the equation Christ plus nothing, shackles himself or herself with legalism. Christ plus nothing equals salvation. Christ plus nothing equals sanctification. It is not Christ plus our religion. It is Christ plus nothing, period!

Many Christians are more than willing to defect from the principle of grace. Some people are incurably religious. They want to go through religious rigor to gain favor with God. This gives them the feeling that they can make some contribution on their own that will commend them to God. They have great difficulty in accepting pure, unadulterated grace.

Galatians 4:12

"Brethren, I urge you to become like me, for I became like you. You have not injured me at all"

Paul now shifts his approach from dealing in the historical and doctrinal, to personally appealing to the Galatians remembering their initial reception of the grace principle (Galatians 4:12-20). At their conversion they accepted the mutually exclusive principle of grace.

Brethren,

Paul makes an appeal to the Galatians based on their relationship in Christ. Why should they resent him for telling the truth?

I urge you to become like me,

Paul is faithful to the gospel of grace. He now urges the Galatians to be faithful to the gospel as well. As a Pharisee, Paul was proud of his self-righteousness but when he came to Christ, he left self-righteousness for Christ's righteousness (Philippians 3:4-9). He completely threw himself on the grace of God. Paul's appeal is that the Galatians would come to the same position.

for I became like you.

Where Paul was once, the Galatians are now -- legalistic. Paul laid aside legalism to take his place beside the Gentiles. He gave up legalism and its associations. Paul urges the Galatians to abandon

the law as a system of gaining God's approval as he abandoned it for them.

Paul was just like the Galatians when they received Christ. They rejected religion as a way of salvation and fell on Christ as their only hope. Paul is a man of grace, for he rejected legalism as a way of salvation. He understood the pressure legalism could put on people.

You have not injured me at all

The Galatians did not injure Paul in their regression into legalism. This is not a personal issue with Paul. He has no personal quarrel with them.

Principle

We should not make doctrinal battles a personal issue.

Application

When someone falls into false doctrine, it becomes not only an issue of principle but also an issue of people. False doctrine is a valid area for falling out with those who err from the truth. In any case, mature Christians cannot allow personal feelings to get in the way of principle or essential truth. If we allow feelings to get in the way of truth, we undermine truth. There is no place for unfriendliness and hostility in the work of Christ.

Fighting for the principle of grace should never become a personal issue, however, it is worth the price of war on grounds of principle. The issue is too great and the stakes too high to cave into the false teachings of legalism. We should not view this as an attack on us personally; it is an attack on the person and work of Christ. Legalism puts people in a religious straightjacket.

Galatians 4:13

"You know that because of physical infirmity I preached the gospel to you at the first"

When Paul came to preach the gospel the first time in Galatia, he came with physical illness. Paul did not come to Galatia with personal power or strength, he came with "physical infirmity" depending on the grace of God.

Principle

Handicaps help grace.

Application

When we feel that we have little means to preach the gospel, we must depend on the Lord's provision. Handicaps help, not hinder, grace.

"And He said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness.' Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong" (2 Corinthians 12:9-10).

Galatians 4:14

"And my trial which was in my flesh you did not despise or reject, but you received me as an angel of God, even as Christ Jesus"

And my trial which was in my flesh you did not despise or reject,

When Paul came to Galatia to preach the gospel, he came with an appalling disease that reeked havoc on his appearance. Despite his looks, the Galatians received him with open arms.

Paul uses two terms to describe the Galatians' response to his coming: they did not "despise" or "reject" him. The word "despise" means to set at naught, treat with utter contempt. They did not regard him as of no account. They did not disdain him as a person because of his illness. The Galatians saw beyond the repulsion of his appearance.

The second word "reject" is a compound word made up of two words: to spit and out. They did not spit him out when he came. They did not spurn him or his message.

Paul healed many people but he could not heal himself. He preached Christ as a handicapped man. God left him with this infirmity so that he would depend on God in his ministry (2 Corinthians 12:9-10).

but you received me as an angel of God, even as Christ Jesus

The Galatians showed huge respect for Paul when he first came to Galatia. The word "received" means welcome. They not only tolerated him, they

embraced him. His appearance did not affect the way they viewed his message.

The Galatians received Paul "as Christ Jesus," as a representative of Christ. Paul was not handsome. There is no evidence that he had a great personality. He came to Galatia as a total stranger with no advance man or advertising. He was not impressive. He had nothing but God's Word.

"For his letters,' they say, 'are weighty and powerful, but his bodily presence is weak, and his speech contemptible'" (2 Corinthians 10:10).

Principle

God uses people with insurmountable barriers.

Application

Some people feel that they cannot be servants of Christ unless they are attractive with a great personality. There are few people with outstanding gifts in the service of the Lord. Most of us do not have all the resources. God even uses people with limitations.

God does not necessarily use people with promotional ability and good looks. God transcends a great personality to get His message across. A bracelet in a brown paper bag is as valuable as a bracelet in a beautiful box.

Galatians 4:15

"What then was the blessing you enjoyed? For I bear you witness that, if possible, you would have plucked out your own eyes and given them to me"

What then was the blessing you enjoyed?

"Blessing" indicates an ascription of blessing rather than a state, to pronounce one blessed. The Galatians counted themselves blessed when they first heard the gospel of grace. What has happened to that conviction? It does not appear that they hold that belief any longer. They formerly received Paul with a sense of blessedness, what has happened? They no longer view him and his message as a blessing, whereas once his physical appearance did not bother them (Galatians 4:14), now they are repulsed by his message of grace.

For I bear you witness that, if possible,

Paul did not say it was possible for the Galatians to pluck out their eyes. The "if" in the Greek means "if, and it is not so." The "if" is a contrary to the fact "if". Paul speaks hypothetically of the time when they first grasped grace as a reality. At one time they would have gone to great lengths for the apostle Paul. Now they follow legalistic leaders. They are both unstable and fickle. They went from deep love for Paul to intense hatred. They are now his enemies (Galatians 4:16).

you would have plucked out your own eyes and given them to me

There was a time when the Galatians would have torn out their eyes for Paul. This may indicate that Paul's physical problem was an eye problem. Paul may speak with hyperbole but the idea is clear that they had great love for him when they first became Christians.

"And I will very gladly spend and be spent for your souls; though the more abundantly I love you, the less I am loved" (2 Corinthians 12:15).

Principle

Whenever we abandon the principle of grace, we become spiritually fickle.

Application

Whenever we lose sight of the wonder of the gospel of grace, our hearts will grow cold toward God. Our zeal will decrease. Legalism always robs us of blessedness and spiritual prosperity.

Galatians 4:16

"Have I therefore become your enemy because I tell you the truth?"

Have I therefore become your enemy

Paul pointedly spells out the issue that the Galatians did not want to face - Paul tells the truth about legalism. The Galatians did not want to part from their valued legalism. They moved from the one extreme of wanting to give their eyes for Paul (Galatians 4:15) to the other extreme of regarding him as an "enemy." They went from greatly loving Paul to greatly hating him.

"Do not correct a scoffer, lest he hate you; Rebuke a wise man, and he will love you" (Proverbs 9:8).

because I tell you the truth?

Paul became the enemy of the Galatians because he told the truth about the error of legalism. He confronted them with truth, not opinion. A person convinced against his will is of the same opinion still. Grace was an unwelcome idea to them.

A true friend tells the truth even when the truth hurts. The truth hurt the Galatians, because they would have to renounce their prized false teaching. Truth can damn us.

Principle

True love tells the truth even when it hurts.

Application

It is precarious business to tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth. It is amazing how many people are willing to count someone their enemy when they tell the truth. Biblically, someone who tells us the truth is our best supporter.

"Let the righteous strike me; It shall be a kindness. And let him rebuke me; It shall be as excellent oil; Let my head not refuse it" (Psalm 141:5).

There are times when pastors must tell their congregation the truth, but the church members do not want to hear it. They reject their pastors because they reject their message. This is a necessary peril of ministry. Preachers should bite the bullet and pay the price for truth even if it costs them their job. Sadly, there are ministers and leaders who withhold telling the truth for fear of offending people.

Grace, amazingly, is a revolting thought to many people. Faithful teaching of God's Word will fly in the face of legalism. Many people in the church today are poised to embrace legalism. A faithful teacher of God's Word will confront this proclivity.

Many Christians are always on the search for new things. They are more than ready to cast off their past, because they are titillated by things they have never experienced. They are blind to foundational truth of the Word.

Galatians 4:17

"They zealously court you, but for no good; yes, they want to exclude you, that you may be zealous for them"

Paul now challenges the Galatians to change their attitude toward him (Galatians 17-20). He warns them of being manipulated by bad motives.

They zealously court you, but for no good;

The legalists were zealous. Zeal in itself is not good, but zeal for truth is good. Their courting the Galatians was unadulterated manipulation. They did not seek the good of the Galatians, but their own gain.

yes, they want to exclude you,

The word "exclude" means to shut out. The legalists wanted to shut the Galatians out of grace. They wanted to introduce merit into salvation and sanctification. In order to do this, they had to lock out Paul from having any influence on the Galatians. The ultimate aim is to get the Galatians to follow them.

that you may be zealous for them

The double use of "zealous" shows the motivation behind the legalizing Judaizers. The Judaizers zealously courted the Galatians to persuade them to join their camp. They were not interested in the truth; they were interested in a following. The end justifies the means, so their group became an end in itself. They did not truly love the Galatians but only used them. Legalists preyed on the Galatians, so that they would unite behind them.

Principle

Flattery always blinds us to truth.

Application

Many naive Christians use zeal as their sole criterion for determining whether something is true. They figure if a person shows passion about something, then it must be real. This may be true sometimes, but there is more than just one reason why people show passion about something. To hold to this single criterion for determining truth is to put oneself at great danger of being swayed by something other than truth.

The usual method whereby false teachers mislead their followers is to demonstrate great zeal for

their subject. Most cults display great concern for prospective followers. Their true interest is power lust. They use religious means to satisfy their hunger for power. False teachers will fawn all over people to get their attention.

"For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into apostles of Christ. And no wonder! For Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light [not darkness]. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also transform themselves into ministers of righteousness, whose end will be according to their works" (2 Corinthians 11:13-15).

Galatians 4:18

"But it is good to be zealous in a good thing always, and not only when I am present with you"

But it is good to be zealous in a good thing always,

Zeal is commendable, if other criteria are also present. Paul was zealous for the Galatians, but truth controlled his zeal. Paul did not preach to gain popularity (Philippians 1:15-18), but he preached truth even when it cost him personally.

Paul is not against other leaders influencing the Galatians so long as they did so "in a good thing." He did not exclude other leaders from interaction with his followers.

and not only when I am present with you

The Galatians had zeal for grace when Paul was with them, but when he left, they became vulnerable to the legalists. God's work should never depend on people. It must go on even when key leaders must leave. The fact that other leaders are zealous toward Paul's followers is not wrong in itself. He welcomes the fact that his followers would attach themselves to other leaders, so long as those leaders teach truth.

Principle

Freedom from pettiness advances the cause of Christ.

Application

Zeal is good if we exercise it under the restraint of truth. Leaders should release their followers to the influence of other leaders, so long as those leaders teach truth.

Christian leaders should not possess their followers so as to exclude others from having influence on them. God uses different people with different gifts. Some sow, others water, yet others reap. Petty jealousy should never get in the way of the growth of our followers. Great leaders seek the welfare of their people, not their own welfare.

Galatians 4:19

"My little children, for whom I labor in birth again until Christ is formed in you..."

My little children,

Paul views himself as a mother and calls the Galatians "my little children." Paul bases his appeal to the Galatians on the fact that he nursed them into salvation by teaching them the grace principle of faith in the finished work of Christ.

"But we were gentle among you, just as a nursing mother cherishes her own children. So, affectionately longing for you, we were well pleased to impart to you not only the gospel of God, but also our own lives, because you had become dear to us" (1 Thessalonians 2:7-8).

for whom I labor in birth again

A mother goes through birth pangs in bringing a child into the world. Paul experienced birth pangs in leading the Galatians to Christ while in Galatia. Now he goes through birth pangs "again" by helping them apply the principle of grace to their Christian living. How many mothers go through birth pangs two times for the same child? He seeks to help the Galatians understand how to live the grace principle in an ongoing way.

until Christ is formed in you

The word "formed" means to give shape to. Paul's desire is that his followers would take on the shape of Christ like a fetus takes shape within the mother's womb. We cannot become like Christ by legalism, by the external and extrinsic. We become

like Him by the real and inward. The forming of Christ in us is the outward expression of the inner nature God gives us through grace. We cannot fully form to the image of Christ unless we operate on the principle of grace. Grace produces the likeness of Christ.

"For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified" (Romans 8:29-30).

"But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord" (2 Corinthians 3:18).

The outward form of our Christian lives must correspond to our inner life in Christ. We need to give outward evidence of the indwelling Christ.

Principle

Legalism restricts the character of Christ from developing in the believer; grace is the basis for growth in the Christian life.

Application

Some Christians understand the grace of God in salvation, but they inconsistently live the Christian life by attempting to gain merit with God by works. Both salvation and sanctification are by faith apart from works. Works are the result, not the cause, of spirituality.

Many Christians have a case of arrested spiritual development due to legalism. The fundamental flaw of legalism is the illusion that we can become like Christ by self-effort. If this is so, then we have a flawed Savior. We must trust Christ and Him alone for our spiritual growth.

The Holy Spirit glorifies Christ by filling us (John 7:39; 16:14; Ephesians 5:18). He produces the character of Christ in us and thus glorifies Christ in us (1 Corinthians 3:16; 6:19,20). The filling of the Spirit is the supernatural means of doing this.

"You therefore, beloved, since you know this beforehand, beware lest you also fall from your own steadfastness, being led away with the error of the wicked; but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory both now and forever. Amen" (2 Peter 3:17-18)

The exercise of faith orients our heart to Christ. Christ's character develops in us as we trust in His person and work.

Galatians 4:20

"...I would like to be present with you now and to change my tone; for I have doubts about you"

I would like to be present with you

Paul wishes to be personally present with the Galatians so that he can address them face to face rather than through an epistle. The situation was so grave in Galatia that Paul wished to be there so that he could diagnose it more accurately and deal with it more directly.

now

The word "now" is the emphatic word of this verse. The church was at a grave point in their spiritual journey.

and to change my tone;

It is difficult to put the tone of one's heart in a letter. Paul wanted to adapt his voice to the true situation in Galatia. It is always wise for leaders to understand the context in dealing with a problem situation in a local church.

for I have doubts about you

The relapse into legalism perplexed Paul. He was at loss to come up with an adequate reason for the Galatians leaving the grace principle. The word "doubt" means to be without a way to go and so to be puzzled. Paul doesn't know what to think of the Galatians. How could he teach the grace principle so clearly, and yet they turn away from it so quickly?

"I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel, which is not another; but there are some

who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ" (Galatians 1:6-7).

Principle

Good leaders concern themselves with tone as well as truth in confronting false doctrine.

Application

Do you love truth enough so that when believers relapse into false doctrine, you grieve over them? Does their aberrant doctrine puzzle you? People with a heart for truth find themselves bewildered by people who go sideways theologically. People who love truth will take a stand for truth. Not because they are obnoxious but because they honor God's Word.

Mature Christian leaders do not rush into doctrinal error like a bull in a China shop. They seek to understand the context of the situation. They concern themselves with tone as well as truth.

Galatians 4:21-23

"Tell me, you who desire to be under the law, do you not hear the law? For it is written that Abraham had two sons: the one by a bondwoman, the other by a freewoman. But he who was of the bondwoman was born according to the flesh, and he of the freewoman through promise..."

Paul now takes a story from the Old Testament and turns it into an illustration to contrast legalism and grace (Galatians 4:21-31).

Tell me, you who desire to be under the law,

The Galatians opened themselves to legalism but they had not fully yielded to this false doctrine – at this point, it was still their "desire" to imbibe it. The word "under" indicates authority. They wanted to place themselves under the authority of the law.

The word "law" does not have the definite article to "the" in the Greek. This indefiniteness refers to the principle of law-keeping rather than the Mosaic law, although it clearly involves a misuse of the Mosaic law along with other legalistic rules for living.

do you not hear the law?

Paul takes them to the law to show them they do not want to be under the law as a rule of life! If they truly listen to the law, true perspective on the law will support the grace concept.

For it is written that Abraham had two sons: the one by a bondwoman, the other by a freewoman.

Paul again appeals to the first Jew [Abraham] to argue against the Judaizers. Abraham's two sons Isaac and Ishmael were born from different mothers. Isaac's mother was Sarah, a free woman. Ishmael was born to Hagar, an Egyptian slave.

But he who was of the bondwoman was born according to the flesh, and he of the freewoman through promise,

Paul draws a contrast between law and grace by an analogy between the births of Isaac and Ishmael. Ishmael's birth was ordinary but came out of fleshly manipulation by Abraham and Sarah. They thought that they could help God along by using a carnal method for obtaining a child, so Sarah suggested, because of her advanced age, that Abraham have sex with Hagar so that he could have a son.

Isaac's birth, sixteen years later, however, came by a previous promise of God (Genesis 15:1-4). Sarah was too old to bear a child (Romans 4:18-21) yet God promised her a child in the face of her aging years. Similarly, we cannot manipulate our way into salvation or sanctification, for we accept them by faith.

Principle

The Christian life is a supernatural way of life with all provisions coming from God.

Application

Christian leaders should be wary of their followers falling into legalism. Such a group will throw away their spiritual lives if their leaders let them. It is like training our physical children in the graces of life, and then they marry some good-for-nothing -- "She threw her life away on a jerk," we'd think all we can do is alert our followers and warn them of the consequences.

The law circumscribes people into bondage. False teachers come along and sell people a bill of goods

to descend from the high mountain of grace to the low valley of legalism. If they buy into it, they will take a giant step backward in their Christian lives.

Legalism says that we must do something to please God. "Christians must impress God by their works. They must change their wicked ways," says the legalist. No one can become a Christian or be spiritual this way. Anything human beings can do to save themselves apart from God's provision is not the Christian life. Either we operate by grace, or we engage with Satan's cosmos, his system of values.

Galatians 4:24-27

"...which things are symbolic. For these are the two covenants: the one from Mount Sinai which gives birth to bondage, which is Hagar— for this Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia, and corresponds to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children— but the Jerusalem above is free, which is the mother of us all. For it is written: "Rejoice, O barren, You who do not bear! Break forth and shout, You who are not in labor! For the desolate has many more children Than she who has a husband"

which things are symbolic.

Paul uses an historical situation to illustrate the superiority of grace over legalism. Although the Greek word for "are symbolic" is the term for allegory, this is not an allegory in the sense of hiding a truth behind fiction. We can translate this phrase as "which contain an allegory" [NASB]. Paul uses the actual history of Sarah and Hagar as an illustration allegorically. He does not interpret Genesis 16-21 allegorically. He carefully connects these women with an interpretation that is true to the facts of Scripture.

The word "which" means which class of things. Therefore, we can take these things in principle and can apply it to our lives today.

For these are the two covenants:

Hagar, the slave, represents the Mosaic covenant – the Law. Sarah represents the Abrahamic covenant, the covenant of promise. The Abrahamic covenant was an unconditional

promise. The responsibility to fulfill that covenant rested entirely on God, not on Abraham.

Paul already made the point that the purpose of the Law is to demonstrate our need for a Savior (Galatians 3:10). It is not a system of salvation or sanctification.

the one from Mount Sinai which gives birth to bondage, which is Hagar –

Paul uses the situation of the birth of the two sons of Abraham as a "symbolic" illustration of the contrast between law and grace. He turns an historical situation into an illustration. In the illustration Hagar, as a slave, represents the law. Sarah, as free, represents grace.

Legalists appeal to the Mosaic covenant. Grace oriented people appeal to the promise of grace in the Abrahamic covenant.

for this Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia, and corresponds to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children –

Paul introduces another corresponding metaphor – the contrast between the earthly Jerusalem and the heavenly Jerusalem. The word "corresponds" is literally to stand in the same rank with. The Jerusalem that "now is" is the Jerusalem of Paul's day. "Mount Sinai" is the location where Moses received the Law. Both the Jerusalem of Paul's day and Mount Sinai stand in the same rank with legalism.

but the Jerusalem above is free, which is the mother of us all.

True believers are children of "the Jerusalem above" and this Jerusalem is "free." We do not gain God's favor by merit; we receive God's grace freely (Galatians 5:1; 2 Corinthians 3:17-18). Freedom is the mother of grace. Salvation and sanctification are free because of the finished work of Christ on the cross.

For it is written: "Rejoice, O barren, You who do not bear! Break forth and shout, You who are not in labor! For the desolate has many more children Than she who has a husband."

This verse is a quotation from Isaiah 54:1, which is a prophecy of the future of Israel. The quote speaks of Israel's captivity in Babylon. Israel was like married woman without children. The

woman with "many more children" is Israel restored to the land especially during the Millennium when Christ will reign on earth. Christians operate in the new Jerusalem by grace, not works. Whether in the new Jerusalem in heaven or in the restored Jerusalem in the Millennium, Christians reside there by grace.

Principle

The best way to interpret Scripture is by the normal method we interpret any other literature, and by this we find the principle of grace.

Application

The best way to interpret Scripture is to take it in its normal sense. The allegorical method of interpreting Scripture regards the normal sense of Scripture as secondary to the spiritual idea. However, the problem with this method is that objective data does not govern interpretation but someone's view of what is "spiritual" about the passage governs the understanding. The interpreter's understanding of what is the spiritual meaning becomes the determining idea of the passage, making the passage subject to personal opinion. Allegorical interpretation is subjective, whereas normal interpretation is more objective.

There is a difference between the allegorical method of interpreting Scripture and using allegory as a teaching tool. The allegorical method alters the normal meaning of the passage to jump to the spiritual meaning. Sound interpretation always gives due consideration to history, grammar, occasion, context, etc. Biblical allegory always seeks clarification of truth. It also seeks to apply truth to experience.

All this shows that whether in the Old Testament or the New Testament, God always deals with us in grace.

Galatians 4:28-31

"Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are children of promise. But, as he who was born according to the flesh then persecuted him who was born according to the Spirit, even so it is now. Nevertheless what does the Scripture say? 'Cast out the bondwoman and her son, for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the

freewoman.' So then, brethren, we are not children of the bondwoman but of the free"

Paul now turns to apply his illustration of verses 21-27 to the Galatians (4:28-31).

Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are children of promise.

Paul now applies the illustration of verses 21-27 to the Galatians and thus to Christians ["brethren"]. He makes three comparisons.

First, Paul compares Isaac's physical birth to the Galatians' spiritual birth ["children of the promise"]. Christians become Christians through "promise." Isaac came to this world as a result of a "promise" to Abraham. Christians become Christians and live the Christian life by the promise of God's grace. The central point in Isaac's birth is that his birth depended on God entirely, for it was the work of God and not the work of Abraham or Sarah. On the other hand, Ishmael's birth was the work of human beings.

But, as he who was born according to the flesh then persecuted him who was born according to the Spirit,

The second comparison is Ishmael's harassment of Isaac (Genesis 21:8-10). Ishmael was an Arab. This conflict between the first Arab [Ishmael] and the second Jew [Isaac] continues to this day.

even so it is now.

Legalists always persecute grace-oriented people, because grace and legalism are polar opposites. Christians should expect opposition from legalists. It is amazing how people hate the grace of God.

Nevertheless what does the Scripture say? "Cast out the bondwoman and her son, for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the freewoman."

Paul makes a third comparison between the expelling of Hagar and Ishmael by Abraham and the responsibility of Christians to reject legalism. Paul alludes to Sarah's words "Cast out the bondwoman" (Genesis 21:10). The Galatian Christians needed to deal firmly with legalistic Judaizers. They needed to "cast" legalism out of their midst. Legalism and grace cannot co-exist together because one negates the other.

If people do not receive grace, then there is no hope for them. All that is left is for God to throw them out. We cannot receive anything from God except through grace.

So then, brethren, we are not children of the bondwoman but of the free."

Dynamic Christians do not follow legalism but grace. Grace-oriented people are people who trusts in Christ alone, by faith alone. They are therefore free in their relationship to God because of Christ.

Principle

Grace and legalism cannot co-exist together.

Application

Grace and legalism cannot co-exist at the same time. The very idea of the one excludes the other. Either we please God by what we do, or we appropriate what Christ did to please God. It is either one or the other, not both.

Legalists do not like grace-oriented people because grace humbles the believer. Legalism points to self and self-righteousness. Grace points to the finished work of Christ. One is self-effort the other is Christ-effort. The two ideas are diametrically opposed. We have a tendency to confuse the two. They are as different as black and white, yet some Christians try to merge them together. The law always presents stipulations in order to fellowship with God. Grace has no provisos. Legalists hate grace people because it is not trendy to humble one's pride.

Legalism always results in slavery. As long as we have one foot in grace and one foot in legalism, we are in bondage. Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law. When we go back to the law we diminish Christ's death for our sin.

Galatians 5:1

"Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage"

Paul now focuses on the practical appeal of living by the grace principle (Galatians 5:1-6:10). The last two chapters challenge the believer to practice the principle of grace.

First, he says that legalism enslaves the believer (Galatians 5:1-2). The whole epistle argues grace more from the Christian viewpoint than the non-Christian. Liberty characterizes the Christian life. But just not any kind of liberty.

Christians have liberty in their position with Jesus Christ. Jesus gave them a life that sets us free from sin and the responsibility to gain God's forgiveness for their sin.

Stand fast

It is important for believers to take a firm stand on the grace principle. It is not enough to float along. Christians must persist in their understanding and application of grace. It takes attentiveness to sustain our freedom in Christ. Legalism will creep back into our Christian lives if we are not on our toes spiritually.

therefore

The "therefore" harks back to chapter 4 where Paul used the word "free" in relation to Sarah the freewoman. We take our stand in liberty in view of our freedom in Christ.

in the liberty

"Liberty" is our license to walk with God freely (Galatians 5:13). The Christian has manumission from the bondage of trying to measure up to God's standards. In the Roman Empire, slaves could not purchase their freedom. Their masters paid for their freedom to the temple treasury. A god then set them free. No one could enslave them again for they were the property of the god. Freed slaves received a document to certify their liberty. Christians have their certification of liberty by the cross of Christ.

The word "liberty" is first in the sentence making it very emphatic. The gospel of grace brings the Christian into new privilege and position before God. The emphasis in this chapter is living the Christian life by God's grace.

by which Christ has made us free,

The combination of "liberty" and "free" (from the same root) stresses the completeness of our authorization to walk with God. The Greek tense (aorist) indicates the totality of our liberty. We owe our liberty to Christ's finished work on the cross. He did all the suffering necessary to forgive

us and place us in a position of rights with God. We cannot add to that suffering by feeling guilty for our personal sins. Christ made us free from the penalty of sin at the cross.

Principle

The principle of liberty is our right and pass to access the presence of God.

Application

The liberty that Christ gives is not civil liberty but personal liberty from paying for our sins. Christ acquired a liberty of the soul for us. We no longer fear God's wrath because Christ took that wrath, already for us. It cost Him His human life.

Christians should stand on their liberty. They should hold to God's grace. If they do not stand on the principle of grace, the Christian life falls into legalism, a self-effort approach to gaining God's favor. That is why we must come to grips with the fact that we have God's favor already. The principle of grace can slip from us very easily; it is necessary to hold it fast.

Christian liberty is not liberty to sin or to indulge selfish desires. It is a liberty to live in a life of godliness.

"But God be thanked that though you were slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered. And having been set free from sin, you became slaves of righteousness" (Romans 6:17-18).

The liberty of being right with God is the greatest liberty of all. When our heart possesses assurance with God, our heart is free to live with God forever. We are free to serve the Lord without compulsion. We serve Him because we want to do it. This is the polar opposite of serving the Lord in a straightjacket of legalism that throttles our walk. We do right because it is right, not because of some extrinsic reason.

God saves us by grace; we live by grace and we will die in God's grace. One day God will free Christians from the very presence of sin.

The basis for all freedoms is grace. Grace is the provision God makes for us on the basis of His Son's person and work. Jesus provided a way that we might have eternal salvation, power to live the Christian life and be in the presence of God

eternally. God provided these things totally by Himself. We did nothing to get them or earn them. We cannot add anything to get them or do anything to take away from them.

and do not be

The Christian has personal responsibility not to plummet again into legalism since Jesus provided for the Christian a perfect standing with God.

entangled again

"Entangled" means to hold in, to ensnare. It shows legalism holds us in its grip. Legalism is a system of bondage. It will load us down with a burden. It will press us down so that we cannot live the Christian life as we should.

Note the word "again." Legalism enslaved the Judaizers in their false understanding of the Mosaic law. Also, the Galatians experienced legalism in their slavery to paganism (4:8). God liberated them from slavery to false gods but now these Galatian Christians were about to enter Judaic legalism.

with a yoke of bondage

A "yoke" couples two things together—like two oxen with a wooden crossbar beam and ropes around their necks. Neither ox could move independently of the other. Christians share the same yoke as Christ (Matthew 11:29,30) but this is a yoke of liberty, for it gives us free access to fellowship with God. On the other hand, we are not to share the yoke of legalism with other Christians. Legalism is a burden of bondage, slavery to something other than Christ. Christians should enjoy the freedom of their sonship in Christ.

A child lives within the parameters set by his parents so liberty is not liberty from the character and principles of God. It is a liberty from the method by which we live. We can live by self-effort and self-dependence in an attempt to gain God's favor or we can trust the work of Christ for that.

Principle

Legalism makes slaves of those who exercise it.

Application

Legalism cannot make us right with God. It can only enslave us by hitching us to the yoke of the law.

Do you feel acceptable to God only after you measure up to a list that you think will please Him? If so, you are a legalist. If you want to impose rules on other people so that you control them, you are a legalist. You do not trust the work of Christ in their heart so you force them into certain criteria for measuring up to God. This is an attempt to live life without the power of the Spirit of God.

The antithesis of legalism is grace, the freedom that we have because of Christ. No amount of legalism will acquire fellowship with God. An authentic walk in the Spirit produces freedom. Refraining from five things and doing five things is not the Christian life. True Christian liberty means we don't have to pay for our own sins or measure up to God to be saved or sanctified. This is the principle on which the Christian must stand – the grace principle.

Sin is a usurper of freedom. It so blurs the idea of true freedom that without revelation from God, it is difficult to detect apart from the ministry of the Holy Spirit in our lives.

"Now the Lord is the Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord" (2 Corinthians 3:17-18).

Galatians 5:2

"Indeed I, Paul, say to you that if you become circumcised, Christ will profit you nothing"

Indeed I, Paul,

Paul asserts his apostolic authority on the issue of trying to gain God's approbation by works or merit versus Christ gaining the merit for us. "Take note of what I am about to tell you regarding works righteousness."

say to you that if you become circumcised,

Circumcision was a Jewish ceremony of cutting off the foreskin of a male child to initiate him into Judaism. It was a sign of God's covenant relation with His people (Genesis 17:11,14). The issue is not circumcision itself but circumcision as a religious method to gain God's favor. It is not a factor in salvation or sanctification.

Christ will profit you nothing

The word "profit" conveys the ideas of to assist, to be useful or advantageous. We have no advantage in Christ, if we do all the work. Seeking God's acceptance by merit violates Christ's person and work. The sacrifice of Christ is no advantage to us if we use religious ceremony as our basis for approaching God.

Principle

Any supplement to Christ supplants Christ.

Application

Only by mutually exclusive trust in the finished work of Jesus can a person become a Christian or live the Christian life. We must choose one or the other. We cannot have both Christ and works. When we put ourselves under legalism as a system, we deprive ourselves of the ministry of the Holy Spirit in our life. We also supplant our work for Christ's work on the cross.

"I do not set aside the grace of God; for if righteousness comes through the law, then Christ died in vain" (Galatians 2:21).

Galatians 5:3

"And I testify again to every man who becomes circumcised that he is a debtor to keep the whole law"

And I testify

Paul lodges a strong protest against circumcision by throwing his personal authority behind it. The statement he is about to make, he makes with the authority of an apostle.

again

Paul does not mind repeating himself. He formerly drilled into the heads of the Galatians the principle of grace and the evil of legalism and he

now does it again. Leaders must repeat themselves if they are going to make their point so that their people lodge the principle in their minds.

to every man who becomes circumcised

The words "every man" mean that Paul refers to a universal principle. This applies to any man, anywhere, Jew or Gentile. Paul not only testifies to the Galatians but he testifies against legalism to "every man" as a method for salvation or sanctification.

that he is a debtor to

A "debtor" is someone under an obligation. A person under the law is bound to the law. Christ assumed this obligation for us. Since Christ died for our sins, we have no obligations to keep before God. Christians are free from the condemnation of the law (Romans 8:1-4) so they do not have to measure up to the law on their own. This makes them free from the obligation to keep the law for justification or sanctification.

keep the whole law

If Christians choose to operate by the law, then they become debtors, required to keep the "whole law." The law represents the character of God, which is perfect. If we try to measure up to the law, we are in effect trying to measure up to the holiness of God in our own strength. The law is one unit as God's character is one.

"For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse; for it is written, 'Cursed is everyone who does not continue in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them'" (Galatians 3:10).

"For whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one point, he is guilty of all" (James 2:10).

Principle

If we use the law as a method of salvation or sanctification, it will put us so deep in debt that we will not recover until we reject it as a system to please God.

Application

To offend in one point of the law is to violate the whole law. Since God is 100 per cent righteous, anyone who fellowships with Him must be 100 per cent righteous. If we attempt to keep the law by righteousness then we have to measure up to 100 per cent righteousness - we must keep the "whole law."

We cannot observe part of the law and then think that God will accept us. No one can keep the law perfectly. No quantity of good deeds makes up for the slightest misdeed. If the Internal Revenue Service nails us for misstating our taxes, they will not listen to an argument that we love our kids! If we throw a rock through one part of a sheet of glass, it breaks the whole sheet of glass. If we break the law at one point, we break it at every point.

Galatians 5:4

"You have become estranged from Christ, you who attempt to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace"

You have become estranged from Christ,

When Christians involve themselves in legalism, they become "estranged from Christ." The word "estranged" means to make inoperative, bring to nothing, make of no effect. Legalism renders our relationship with Christ ineffective. It paralyzes our spiritual life by producing a deadening effect on our spirituality.

you

The second word for "you" in this verse means whoever. The emphasis is upon the class of people who attempt justification by law. The principle of this verse applies to everyone, saved or lost - it is a universal principle. In the immediate context, Paul addresses weak Christians in Galatia who were in the process of changing their theology of salvation by grace to one based on works. Even if people change their theology, this does not change their status quo with God but it will render them ineffective in their spiritual life.

who attempt to be justified by law;

Those who attempt to be justified by the law estrange themselves from Christ and fall from

grace. The present tense of the word "justified" implies that the Galatians were contemplating justification by the law. They had not fully come to that place yet.

you have fallen from grace

The words "fallen from" is literally to fall out of. Legalists are outside grace. They cannot experience God's grace while they are in the way. A person falls from grace when he seeks salvation by merit. The Greek tense [aorist] indicates that at the point people enter legalism, they fall from the grace principle.

Paul challenged Galatian Christians to take a stand on their liberty [grace] (5:1,2) but they fell from the privileges of that standing. They put themselves in a place where they could no longer benefit from Christ. Either Christ must be everything or nothing to us. He does not accept divided loyalty. We must not lose our hold on Christ for daily living otherwise we will fall from the higher level of living by grace to the lower level of legalism. It is possible to receive the grace of God in vain (2 Corinthians 6:1). God wants us to "continue" in the grace of God (Acts 13:43).

"Grace" is not salvation in itself but it is God's way for us to engage salvation. Paul does not speak of someone losing their salvation in this verse but of the method by which one engages in a relationship with God.

Principle

When we move into legalism, we fall from the grace principle and sever ourselves from the benefits that flow from Christ on a daily basis.

Application

Whether in salvation or sanctification, living by legal prescriptions preempt us from Christ. Legal routes for relating to God are mutually exclusive from grace. They are in direct antagonism to grace. We renounce grace when we adopt legalism. When we wholly rest on God's grace, we embrace Christ.

Either Christ is everything or He is nothing; there is no in-between position. There is no limited faith or divided allegiance to Him. The man justified by grace is a Christian but the man who trusts in justification by merit is not. The man who seeks sanctification by law is not right with God but the

man who seeks fellowship with God by faith operates according to the grace principle. We cannot receive anything from Christ except by grace. Our spiritual life operates by grace alone. Grace finds huge victory when we are most powerless. We cannot receive spiritual benefits from Christ apart from humility (2 Corinthians 12:9,10).

Falling from grace has nothing to do with committing some sin and then falling out of salvation. It has to do with the fact that we are too bankrupt to offer anything to God for we have no righteousness in ourselves. Christians can fall from grace but not by sinning. We fall from grace by reverting to the law as a system of merit with God. Whether we realize it or not, we received justification at the point we came to trust Christ's death on the cross to forgive sins. The law cannot impart a means of salvation nor can it provide a rule of life for the believer. Jesus' death on the cross freed us from the obligation to merit salvation and sanctification. If we reject God's provision for salvation, we reject His grace. A genuine believer cannot truly depart from grace in salvation except in his contemplation of the possibility of it.

Legalism is as far below grace as kindergarten is below graduate school. Christians can fall from the high principle of grace to the low valley of legalism. If they do, they operate on a principle which could never save a soul or sanctify a saint. In this situation, Christ has no effect on us and we have no effective relation to Christ. We lose our hold on the grace principle for daily living.

The issue of this verse is not eternal security but a contrast of grace and law as systems of relating to God. Grace and law are mutually exclusive; we cannot mix them. A Christian cannot lose his justification. Legalism does not draw us close to God but it drives a wedge between us and God.

Christians must understand the importance of taking a stand on the grace principle. Grace and legalism cannot co-exist. When we adopt legalism, we desert from the grace in Christ.

"And if by grace, then it is no longer of works; otherwise grace is no longer grace. But if it is of works, it is no longer grace; otherwise work is no longer work" (Romans 11:6).

Galatians 5:5

"For we through the Spirit eagerly wait for the hope of righteousness by faith"

Paul now points out the distinctions between grace-oriented believers and legalistic believers.

For

In contrast to those who fall from the grace principle, grace-oriented believers "eagerly wait for the hope of righteousness by faith" "through the Spirit." Grace people do not look for perfection from works righteousness; instead, they eagerly anticipate a day when they will attain perfection.

we through the Spirit

It is the Holy Spirit who directs the heart of Paul and his associates toward the hope of righteousness. Legalism works through the power of self; grace works through the power of the Holy Spirit. This is the divine side. Grace depends on God to work. There is a stark contrast in the method employed between legalism and grace. One depends on God and the other depends on self.

eagerly wait

The Greek word for "eagerly wait" occurs seven times in the New Testament for Christ's return (Romans 8:19, 23, 25; 1 Corinthians 1:7; Galatians 5:5; Philippians 3:20; Hebrews 9:28). We "eagerly" wait because it is worth waiting for. That is why we anxiously anticipate it. When we possess it, we enter into its blessedness. We have not arrived yet. Jesus saved our soul but He will save our body in a future day. Until then, save your Anacin!

"Not only that, but we also who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body" (Romans 8:23).

for the hope of righteousness

God put His righteousness into us, gave us imputed righteousness at the point of our salvation. One day we will have another righteousness, a perfect, consummated righteousness when Christ comes to glorify us (Romans 8:18-21). That is our hoped-for righteousness, the object of our hope. In that day

God will totally sanctify us to sin no more. Grace-oriented believers do look for perfection, not perfection in time but in eternity.

by faith

This hope of righteousness comes by "faith." The word "by" means from, out of. The human side of grace is to exercise "faith." Christ will provide perfect experiential righteousness when He perfectly conforms us to God's will when He comes back. That is our confidence.

Principle

Grace-oriented people simply wait for the culmination of their perfection in Christ; they do not pretend to have it now.

Application

Christians have received imputed or positional righteousness at the point of salvation. When Jesus comes, He will transform our body of flesh into a body like His glorious one. Then we will have perfect righteousness.

"For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself" (Philippians 3:20-21).

Christians do not work for perfection; they wait for it. Their objective is perfection in eternity, not in time. Grace has no illusions about obeying the law.

What a contrast between the grace-oriented person's hopefulness and the legalist's hopelessness! We wait to receive all that the Lord purchased on the cross. Jesus justified us at a point in time so we do not hustle around trying to work for righteousness. We simply wait for the perfect righteousness He will give us in that day.

Legalism is a rat race because it is futile to measure up to God. No matter how hard legalists work, there is no end to it for they will never arrive. The harder they work, the deeper in debt they get. On the other hand, the grace believers rest in the provision of Christ. They do not need to

work for righteousness because Christ did all the work necessary.

Galatians 5:6

"For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but faith working through love"

For in Christ Jesus

Positional truth [in Christ Jesus] is the Christian's status quo before God forever. The moment we become a Christian, God gives us the same status that Jesus has in His eyes forever. God views us just like He views His son. Jesus is perfect; therefore, God views us as perfect. Jesus has eternal life; therefore, we have eternal life.

The entire Christian life revolves around our position in Christ. Our status in Him is purely spiritual. There is nothing outward or mechanical about it. It is not dependent on religious rites such as circumcision or baptism.

neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything,

"Circumcision" was the outward sign of being a Jew. Legalism does not have power to produce results with God.

The word "avails" means to be strong, to prevail indicating forceful ability. There is no overpowering force in circumcision or in uncircumcision, that is, legalism.

but faith working through love

Genuine faith shows itself in love. It is not passive and inactive. Faith does not need the law to move it toward love. Love energizes faith.

The New Testament always uses the word "working" for a supernatural work. God supernaturally works on our faith through love. God's love is a great motivating power.

Principle

Faith burns the fuel of God's love.

Application

External religion cannot displace dynamic faith; however, love energizes dynamic faith. We should not think that grace is passive and does not produce anything. It produces dynamic results because it is supernatural.

Christians who work and struggle in hope that somehow they will gain merit with God, ultimately end in futility. They never arrive or achieve their aim because they cannot live up to perfection. Religious rites cannot produce spirituality for only God can take us to perfection. However, God's love working in our faith will produce what we need. God does the providing. God's love provides what we do not earn or deserve.

Galatians 5:7

"You ran well. Who hindered you from obeying the truth?"

You ran well.

When the Galatians became Christians, they ran with the principle of grace. They did not walk, they ran with grace. The Greek indicates that it was their pattern to go with grace. The word "well" indicates that their running in grace was honorable and becoming. There was a sense of excellence in their attitude about grace.

Who hindered you

The Christians at Galatia ran with grace but then something "hindered" their running in grace. The word "hindered" means to cut into, impede. They allowed legalists to come along and break up their road of grace by placing rules and regulations along their path.

from obeying the truth?

If we are not careful, we can misunderstand this word "obeying." Fundamentally, the word means commit, entrust, trust. Sometimes "obey" in the New Testament carries the idea of to believe, be persuaded, listen to. The idea is not submission to authority but action that comes from persuasion. "Obeying" is the outward result of inward belief. It is the conviction of believing God. The Galatians at one time came to such a conviction about grace that they relied on it, trusted in it. The Greek indicates that it was the Galatians themselves who broke their stride in grace.

"And to whom did He swear that they would not enter His rest, but to those who did not obey? So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief" (Hebrews 3:18-19).

Principle

We get off the road of grace when we descend into the belief that we can impress God by what we do.

Application

Persuasion of truth results in faith. Persuasion produces an actual and outward result. Truth is far more than something we academically accept; it should grip our lives.

Satan's method is to get Christians to think they can impress God by their works. If he can get us to believe we can amass brownie points with God, he has us where he wants us.

Galatians 5:8

"This persuasion does not come from Him who calls you"

This persuasion

"This persuasion" is legalism. Legalism did not come from God.

does not come from Him who calls you

God is not the author of legalism for He is the author of grace. Salvation is God's work and it is a work of grace. God called the Galatians to grace and grace alone.

"I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel, which is not another; but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ" (Galatians 1:6-7).

Principle

God always calls us by grace.

Application

Any time we add anything to the work of Christ, we invade the genius of the gospel of grace. Grace means Christ's death alone is sufficient to pay for salvation. It is not Christ plus baptism or church membership or good works. Human nature wants to share in the work of God but this belief is the devil's lie. We do not want God to get all the credit for our salvation or sanctification.

Galatians 5:9

"A little leaven leavens the whole lump"

A little leaven [yeast, for example] kneads the whole lump [of dough]. "Leaven" is an agent that produces fermentation. Leaven transforms the substance of something such as sour dough when it is in a high state of fermentation--in the making of bread, for example. What was once grace is now legalism.

Yeast takes time to ferment a substance. It is possible to transform grace so gradually that no one will notice the change. What looked innocent to the Galatians would change the every nature of Christianity.

Paul uses "leaven" here for corrupt doctrine (Matthew 13:33; 16:12). Whenever we mix even a little error with truth, it corrupts truth. Even a little legalism corrupts grace. Legalism will contaminate the whole church if its leaders allow it to become invasive in the assembly. False doctrine will permeate like yeast in dough.

Principle

A little false doctrine can do great damage to the local church.

Application

It only takes a little false doctrine to ruin a local church. A speck on the telescope will distort the heavens. Benjamin Franklin said, "For want of a nail the shoe was lost; for want of a shoe the horse was lost; for want of a horse the rider was lost; and for want of a rider the battle was lost." Any teaching that adds to Christ's work on the cross, no matter how small, does damage to His work of grace. Grace plus any work, no matter how small, is evil leaven.

A little yeast converts the entire dough; the dough never converts the yeast. Yeast works on the principle of fermentation. Legalism ferments a church until it totally corrupts the church. A little legalism destroys all grace. Legalism and grace are mutually exclusive.

Galatians 5:10

"I have confidence in you, in the Lord, that you will have no other mind; but he who troubles you shall bear his judgment, whoever he is"

I have confidence in you,

Paul has confidence in the Galatian believers that they would not fall from the grace principle into legalism.

in the Lord,

Paul's confidence lies in the Lord, not in the Galatians.

"...being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ..." (Philippians 1:6).

that you will have no other mind;

Paul is confident that the Galatian believers will keep the grace principle presented in this book of Galatians. They will come to a place where they recognize the evil of legalism.

but he who troubles you shall bear his judgment,

Paul laid the onus on the pusher of legalism who disturbed Galatian confidence in the principle of grace. He will bear heavy judgment [Greek: heavy burden] for his false teaching. This judgment is not eternal judgment but the divine discipline of the believer. God will discipline in time Christian leaders who lead people into false teaching with a grievous burden of judgment. The issue is not the gravity of the person but the gravity of his faulty teaching. The "judgment" here is ostracism. We must separate false teachers from the body of Christ or the "little leaven will leaven the whole lump."

whoever he is

Evidently there was one person who was the ringleader - "whoever he [singular] is." It is important to differentiate between the leaders and the led. Leaders always bear a greater judgment than followers because they deal in truth. There is always individual responsibility to bear censure in this.

Principle

Leaders bear greater responsibility than followers for what they teach.

Application

Leaders must take individual responsibility for what they teach and how they lead. If they are not careful in teaching His Word, God will discipline them. The issue is not the gravity of the person but the gravity of his faulty teaching. Churches today need to throw out false teachers. The courage to do this is not there. We do not believe strongly enough about anything to take strong action. We imbibe legalists without a problem. We live in a day of syncretism. We can merge doctrines together and blur the truth because we do not hold on to truth ourselves. Christ's cross plus anything is legalism. We do not hold that truth unalterable. We think it is Christ plus tears, Christ plus the Lord's Supper, Christ plus walking down the aisle, Christ plus catechism, Christ plus repentance, Christ plus sincerity, Christ plus joining the church. All these things are legalism to curry brownie points with God. A person under grace must junk all attempts to gain God's approbation by what he does to become a Christian or to live the Christian life. The more religious we are, the greater an offense it is. The cross offends people because it does not cater to the pride of man's self-righteousness. It humbles us to fall at the mercy of the grace of God.

"Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me His prisoner, but share with me in the sufferings for the gospel according to the power of God, who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was given to us in Christ Jesus before time began, but has now been revealed by the appearing of our Savior Jesus Christ, who has abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel, to which I was appointed a preacher, an apostle, and a teacher of the Gentiles. For this reason I also suffer these things; nevertheless I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep what I have committed to Him until that Day" (2 Timothy 1:8-12).

Galatians 5:11

"And I, brethren, if I still preach circumcision, why do I still suffer persecution? Then the offense of the cross has ceased"

In this verse Paul answers the charge that he preached circumcision, which was inconsistent with his doctrine of grace alone.

And I, brethren, if I still preach circumcision,

Evidently the legalists represented Paul as still preaching "circumcision" while at the same time advocating grace. This was a lie for it would be inconsistent for Paul to do so. Paul did circumcise Timothy to lessen disapproval among the Jews (Acts 16:3). This left him open to the charge that he circumcised to suit his purposes.

The word "if" is contrary to the fact in the Greek – "If, and I don't." Paul never promoted circumcision for salvation or as a norm for living the Christian life.

why do I still suffer persecution?

Paul proves that he did not preach circumcision and is not a legalist because he suffered persecution for preaching the cross. If Paul still advocated the same thing as the legalists, why were they still persecuting him? Turning back to legalism would abrogate his persecution.

Then the offense of the cross has ceased

Paul uses "offense" here metaphorically for the cross giving offense or causing revulsion to legalism. Legalists in Galatia looked on the mutually exclusive work of Christ on the cross with disdain. The cross aroused opposition from the legalists because it revolved around grace. Man's total depravity offends people because they must lay their self-righteous pride at the feet of the cross.

Principle

People hate grace because it is an affront to their pride.

Application

We cannot add anything to the Christian life without destroying the very essence of it. We can add nothing to faith through grace for salvation

nor can we add anything to faith through grace for sanctification.

What is it about the cross that stumbles people? God requires them to junk their self-righteousness and trust Christ alone. We want our morality to curry brownie points with God. This does not cater to educated and nice people for this is where they place their pride. The more religious they are, the bigger the offense with God. We must throw ourselves on the cross and the cross alone.

Galatians 5:12

"I could wish that those who trouble you would even cut themselves off!"

The words "could wish" indicate something that probably cannot be done. Paul wishes that they would castrate themselves! He does not think that there is a very high likelihood they will do this. The idea is if they want to circumcise themselves, why not go all the way and castrate themselves. This is powerful irony.

"Those who trouble" are those who unsettle, stir you up to sedition. Legalists were leading the Galatians into rebellion against the biblical teaching of grace.

Now we come to the strongest sarcasm in Galatians. The words "cut themselves off" come from a Greek word meaning to cut away, castrate, amputate. With dripping sarcasm Paul says, "Make yourselves eunuchs! Don't stop with circumcision. Go all the way! Castrate yourselves!" This was not all that far from reality because the pagan priest of Cybele in Asia Minor did this. Galatia was in Asia Minor [Turkey]. The idea may be to excommunicate legalists from the congregation.

Principle

Take radical action with false doctrine.

Application

Many people are under the illusion that they can do something to gain God's favor. If they believe this, then why not go all the way with religion? Why don't they crawl on their hands and knees across glass to gain God's approbation? If you go with works to please God, you have to go a long way. However, it is impossible to go far enough because God is perfect. We need to take radical

action when truth is at stake. People hang in the balance between truth and error. A trustworthy physician has no time for a quack doctor because a patient's health is at stake. Shyster lawyers trouble credible lawyers. Why are not more Christians troubled by false doctrine? If someone loses the dynamics of their spiritual life because of false doctrine, it is worse than a quack doctor or shyster lawyer pawning off their wares. Taking radical action with falsehood flies in the face of the core doctrine of our time - tolerance.

Galatians 5:13

"For you, brethren, have been called to liberty; only do not use liberty as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another"

For you, brethren,

It is clear that Paul directs his arguments toward the Christian - "brethren." There is a contrast in the Greek between the Galatians and the legalists who were trying to subvert them into legalism.

have been called to liberty;

God calls Christians to liberty. God has a purpose for us. God calls us to "liberty" or "freedom" (2:4; 4:21-31; 5:1). God did not call us to put us back under the bondage of the law. Christian liberty is our identity in Christ (Romans 7:25-8:4).

Principle

Christian liberty is our identity in Christ.

Application

Liberty is emancipation from slavery to the law as a rule of life. Christian liberty is the assurance of being identified with Christ.

There is no way that we can live up to the standard of God's character expressed in the law. However, Christ lived up to those standards perfectly (Romans 8:1-4). He put His righteousness to our account when we became Christians. Our identity is the same as Christ's when we embrace the cross to forgive our sins. The Christian life centers on the person of Christ. It is person-oriented.

"Therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed" (John 8:36).

Christian freedom originates and revolves around the person of Christ. When we get hold of our identity in Christ, we will live out the Christian life in power.

"Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage" (Galatians 5:1).

only do not use liberty

There is a special warning for those who exercise Christian liberty - do not let liberty become license for sin. Paul does not espouse that the Galatians become libertines. There are two polar opposite positions that are not biblical: legalism and license. Legalism is the attempt to gain God's favor by performance. License does not care about biblical standards but lives according to his own preferences.

God never set aside His moral law because the moral law is the expression of His character. God did set aside the ceremonial law of Moses, an outward expression of God's character. Although God did not do away with the moral law, He did do away with the law as a way of gaining God's approval.

as an opportunity for the flesh,

The Greek uses the word "opportunity" for a starting point of an expedition, a base of operations in war. The law can provide the sin capacity with a base of operation for attacking the soul (Romans 7:8,11).

Our freedom in Christ is not a base of operation for the sin capacity to launch an attack on our spirituality. Satan uses sin for a base of operations as well (1 Timothy 5:14). The flesh will use sin as an occasion, pretext, opportunity for undermining the Christian life.

"For when they speak great swelling words of emptiness, they allure through the lusts of the flesh, through lewdness, the ones who have actually escaped from those who live in error...While they promise them liberty, they themselves are slaves of corruption; for by whom a person is overcome, by him also he is brought into bondage. For if, after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and

Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and overcome, the latter end is worse for them than the beginning. For it would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than having known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered to them. But it has happened to them according to the true proverb: 'A dog returns to his own vomit,' and, 'a sow, having washed, to her wallowing in the mire'" (2 Peter 2:8, 19-22).

Principle

Liberty is not a pretext for sin.

Application

Whenever we provide a favorable environment to sin, sin will seize the moment. If we neck in a parked car isolated from view, there is a greater possibility that we will commit unfaithfulness.

"But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts" (Romans 13:14).

Some people use liberty as a pretext for sin. They rationalize their liberty into an excuse to sin. They use liberty as an opportunity to turn their flesh loose.

"...as free, yet not using liberty as a cloak for vice, but as bondservants of God" (1 Peter 2:16).

The flesh cannot improve, be refined or even converted. The sin capacity is the totally depraved, corrupt nature we received from Adam. The Christian is not free to serve the dictates of this sin capacity. That was our life before Christ. We are now free to serve God in spite of possessing a sin capacity.

but through love serve

The purpose of liberty is to serve one another in love. This is no unrestrained liberty in Christianity. Neither is liberty legalism. Legalism looks like biblical Christianity but it is a deception.

"Serve" is the word for abject slavery. Slavery to loving others is liberty. A mother who stays up nights and gives herself untiringly to her baby is not servitude but love. No one can serve the Lord until he is born again. Once a person accepts

Christ as his Savior he is free to serve God and becomes an ambassador of God. God calls us to serve from the motivation of love.

one another

The words "one another" mean one another of the same kind. Paul assumes that Christians live in community with one another. Our freedom affects other believers in the body of Christ. We love from the base of liberty.

Legalism hampers love because it searches God's favor. It is self-oriented. Biblical love orients to the needs of others. God did not give us liberty to indulge ourselves but to devote ourselves to others. A person operating in grace produces love for others.

"Owe no one anything except to love one another, for he who loves another has fulfilled the law" (Romans 13:8).

Principle

Christian liberty is not lawless liberty but a liberty to love out of grace.

Application

Some people feel that it is a deadly thing to operate on pure unadulterated grace. However, it is not dangerous if a person indwelt by the Holy Spirit allows himself to be filled with the Spirit (Galatians 5:16-23). He is a person with liberty to serve, not sin. The Spirit filled person burns the fuel of love. Grace adds the dynamic of love. The constraining motive for love is grace.

Some Christians use their liberty as an excuse to commit sin but liberty is not license. Christianity is not antinomianism [lawlessness]. Christian liberty is the right to serve the Lord on earth because of what God provided for us. The Christian life is freedom from sin, not the freedom to sin. If we use grace as an excuse to sin, we do not understand the essence of freedom from sin through grace. God never issues a license to commit sin. Liberty is no springboard for sin.

"For certain men have crept in unnoticed, who long ago were marked out for this condemnation, ungodly men, who turn the grace of our God into lewdness and deny the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ" (Jude 4).

Neither is Christianity a set of taboos or asceticism. Christian liberty is a dynamic that requires the Spirit of God to execute the Christian way of life. God gets all the credit because He gave us three things in grace: 1) He gave us salvation freely, 2) He gave us the Holy Spirit to empower our lives, 3) He provided eternity for free. It is not who we are and what we do that constitutes the Christian life but the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit. A policeman in a cruiser is more effective than a 60 mile an hour speed sign. We can post any number of rules but none of them will be as effective as the indwelling Holy Spirit.

Everywhere we hear siren songs of liberation. People demand freedom because they think that freedom will bring them liberty. Authority is evil to them and personal rights are everything.

"In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes" (Judges 17:6).

This thinking launched addictive orientation. People are slaves to many forms of bondage such as sex, violence, pleasure and drugs. They are powerless to escape for they cannot control their addictions. They have no eternal authority in their lives.

Christians do not have to earn the right to relate to God for they have that right. Yet there is a great proclivity to revert to either legalism or license. The Christian is not free from the law but from the curse of the law. Law is the expression of God's character; it is the code of God's way of operating.

Galatians 5:14

"For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself'"

For

Paul now gives the reason for the command of verse 13 to love one another.

all the law

The phrase "all the law" is different from the "whole law" in Galatians 5:3 where all separate precepts sum up the whole law. If a legalist chooses to keep the law, he must keep the "whole" law to be right with God.

In this verse Paul summarizes the essence of the law in one precept. Legalists must obey many precepts to keep the whole law but believers need to keep only the one law of love.

is fulfilled in one word,

The word "fulfilled" means completed. When we love our neighbor as ourselves, we carry out the intention of the law. If we keep the precept of love, the law stands fully obeyed. Liberty is an opportunity to fulfill the principle behind the law.

even in this: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself

The word "neighbor" literally means near one, close by. The idea is we are to love everyone in our circle. It is more inclusive than our English word.

This phrase is a quote of Leviticus 19:18. The principle of loving our neighbor was true under the Mosaic law. Jesus supported this idea in Matthew 22:39. Paul also makes the point that love is the summary idea of the whole law.

"Owe no one anything except to love one another, for he who loves another has fulfilled the law. For the commandments, 'You shall not commit adultery,' 'You shall not murder,' 'You shall not steal,' 'You shall not bear false witness,' 'You shall not covet,' and if there is any other commandment, are all summed up in this saying, namely, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' Love does no harm to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfillment of the law" (Romans 13:8-10).

Galatians 5:15

"But if you bite and devour one another, beware lest you be consumed by one another!"

The Galatian church entered onto a stage of conflict because of legalistic thinking. Paul now warns them about a consequence of this. All doctrine, whether false or true, has practical implications.

But if you bite

Secular Greek used the verbs in this verse of "bite," "devour" and "consume" for wild animals that bite

with the teeth in lethal battle. Legalists lacerate those who believe in grace with reproach.

and devour one another,

The word "devour" means to gulp down. It comes from two words: to consume by eating and down. The idea is to completely consume something. Evidently there is such a thing as Christian cannibalism! The Galatians did not nibble on one another!

beware

The idea of "beware" is to keep our spiritual vision sharp. The word comes from a word for to see. If Christians do not stay alert, they will fall into divisions that result from legalistic belief. Legalism is always divisive and censorious.

lest you be consumed by one another!

Christians can destroy one another by legalism.

Principle

Legalism produces a censorious spirit.

Application

Paul never fuses legalism and grace because they are opposites. Neither can we harmonize them into some sentimental doctrinal glob. We should set legalism and grace in stark contrast if we are going to live the Christian life as it should be lived. If we do not separate these two ideas, we will also experience rivalry in the church.

Legalists are contemptuous and severely critical people who show little mercy. However, true Christian love makes allowances for others and takes account of their frailties. Genuine love compensates for people.

"And above all things have fervent love for one another, for 'love will cover a multitude of sins'" (1 Peter 4:8).

Christians cannot afford to play god and become the judge of other believers. When we take the role of a critic, we put ourselves in the position of god. If we find fault with one another and tear each other's reputation apart, we will destroy the Christian community. All that we see from some churches God has used mightily, is smoke billowing from the ruins of wrath. The people of God could not get along. There is a great

difference between the fruit of love the ruins of wrath.

Galatians 5:16

"I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh"

The antithesis to the problems of the previous verse is to live by the filling of the Spirit.

I say then:

In contrast to letting the flesh form a base of operations in our soul by devouring one another with words, we are to let the Holy Spirit control us. The Christian walk is life, not regulations. Christians will not fall into a life of sin if they do not live by operation bootstraps but by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Walk in the Spirit,

The word "walk" means to walk around [as a course of life]. The walk in the Spirit here is a way of life, not a short stroll. "Walk" then means live. The Greek tense indicates that we are to keep on walking in the Spirit as a course of life. We are to order his manner of life by the Holy Spirit and not by the law. God wants our walk with Him to be permeated and dominated by the Spirit of God. "Walk" is also a command. The Holy Spirit will not automatically work in our lives; we must invite Him to control us. Walking in the Spirit is no option for the believer. Spirituality is not passivity but it involves volition. There is an onus on us to depend on the Holy Spirit for guidance and power in the Christian life.

Principle

The Spirit-filled life is not self-effort but counteraction to sin by allowing the Holy Spirit to control us.

Application

Walking in the flesh and in the Spirit are mutually exclusive. We cannot do both at the same time. We are either carnal or spiritual at any given moment. There is a clear line between the flesh and the Spirit. The line is as clear as the border between the United States and Canada. It is impossible to reside in both countries at the same time. We can

live in them sequentially but not simultaneously. We are either Spirit-filled or we are not.

There is a difference between walking in the Spirit and having the Spirit. Every Christian has the Spirit but the Spirit does not have every Christian. A non-Christian has a conscience but can stretch and bend his/her conscience according to his personal desires. A Christian has someone who cannot bend with the trends, cauterized according to their wishes. Non-Christians can sear their conscience with a hot iron of personal desire so that it will never murmur or complain again.

"But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you" (Romans 8:11).

We as Christians do not measure up spirituality by how much prayer, witnessing or service we do but by dependence on the Spirit. We cannot live the Spirit filled life by suppression of sin or by eradicating sin but by the counteracting power of being filled with the Spirit, walking in the Spirit. Victory does not come by self but by the Spirit. When we walk in the Spirit, we are spiritual and produce the fruit of the Spirit. The fruit of the Spirit comes from the Holy Spirit, not from our deeds lived in the power of self (Ephesians 3:16; 5:18).

Walking presumes activity; it is not a defensive stand. We enter actively into God's will by resting in the power of the Holy Spirit. We rest in His sufficiency. The Christian does not attempt to walk; he walks. He maintains a manner of reliance on the Holy Spirit. He lives daily to the glory of God.

A physical walk is an incipient fall. With each step we fall until our other foot catches the fall. Thus walk in the Spirit is dependence for it is a repeated succession of faith steps. Learning to walk in the Spirit should be as common a function as learning to walk physically.

and you shall not fulfill

"Shall not fulfill" is a very strong term for not at all [double negative]. God guarantees or promises that we will not carry out the desires of the flesh if

we walk in the Spirit. The Holy Spirit gives strong desire to do God's will.

This promise is not a guarantee of cancellation of sins or the sin nature. The Christian will struggle with the sin capacity as long as he lives on this earth. Yet we have a promise from God that we will "not at all fulfill the lust of the flesh." God does not say "maybe" or "possibly you will not fulfill the lust of the flesh" but "you shall not."

The sin capacity continues to influence the Christian till the day he dies. Although Christ crucified sin judicially on the cross (Romans 6:6), sin still stimulates us to violate God's will. The solution to our sin capacity is not regulations but living a life empowered by the Holy Spirit. The reason we must continually walk in the Spirit is that the sin capacity will influence us until we die.

"I find then a law, that evil is present with me, the one who wills to do good. For I delight in the law of God according to the inward man. But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? I thank God – through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, with the mind I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin" (Romans 7:21-25).

the lust of the flesh

"Lust" is a desire, craving, longing after mostly of evil cravings. It is a strong desire to have what belongs to someone else or engage in an activity that is morally wrong.

The "flesh" is the willing instrument of sin, the opposite of the believer's spiritual nature. It is human reasoning and desires autonomous from God and the spiritual life. God expects us to neglect, starve and ignore the flesh (Matthew 26:41; John 6:63; Romans 7:18; Philippians 3:3; 1 John 3:9).

"And those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires" (Galatians 5:24).

"But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts" (Romans 13:14).

Principle

The onus for living the Spirit-filled life lies on the believer.

Application

The Christian must exercise his volition both in salvation and sanctification. In salvation, the Christian must put faith in the finished work of Christ on the cross. In sanctification, the Christian must yield to the power of the Holy Spirit to execute the Christian way of life. The Christian does this by confession of sin (1 John 1:9) and yielding everything in his life to the control of the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 5:18). There is no peaceful co-existence between the flesh and the Spirit. Co-existence, yes. Peaceful co-existence, no. There is no compromise between the two domains.

Christians cannot ever be completely free from evil desires that originate in their sin capacity but they do not need to surrender to them because they have the power of the Holy Spirit available to them. God gives us strong assurance that if we depend on the Holy Spirit, He will give us victory over sin.

God puts the onus on the believer to refuse to obey the ruling of sin by placing ourselves under the power of the Holy Spirit. God chained the dogs but if we unchain them, that is our responsibility. By the power of the Holy Spirit we are free to choose the right and refuse the wrong. The Holy Spirit will not do for us what he asks him to do. The believer must cooperate with the work of the Holy Spirit.

The most effect way of keeping water moisture from forming in the gas tank is to fill the tank with gas. Thus the believer must allow himself to be filled with the Spirit to preempt the passions of the soul.

Galatians 5:17

"For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish"

For the flesh lusts against the Spirit,

The flesh counters the Holy Spirit and His work in our lives. The "flesh" is the sin capacity of the believer.

and the Spirit against the flesh;

The Holy Spirit counteracts the flesh and its influence on our lives. The provision of the operating power of the Holy Spirit represents the grace principle formulated throughout the book of Galatians.

and these are contrary to one another,

The word "contrary" is literally to lie opposite to, to be set over against. "Contrary" is a military term meaning to line up against someone in open conflict. There is an antagonism between the Spirit and the flesh. They are adverse to each other so they oppose each other. They are at war. The Spirit and flesh are as different as light and darkness or fire and water. Which side will you choose for these two principles lie in mutual antagonism? It is impossible to reconcile them.

Principle

There is no peaceful coexistence between the flesh and Spirit.

Application

There is no such thing as peaceful coexistence between the flesh and the Spirit. Coexistence, yes. Peaceful coexistence, no. There can be no compromise between the flesh and the Spirit because to capitulate to sin is to violate the Spirit. If the flesh is up, the Spirit is down; if the Spirit is up, the flesh is down.

The check and balance to our sin capacity is the power of the Holy Spirit. We cannot allow the Holy Spirit to control us by suppression or eradication of sin but by the counter action of the power of the Holy Spirit.

A spiritual titanic tug of war takes place in every believer. The non-Christian does not have that same kind of struggle for he is nothing but "flesh." He has no other reference point. Once a person comes to know Christ, he enters a significant spiritual struggle. This is partial proof that he is born again.

A Christian out of fellowship with the Lord is out of joint spiritually. Although he has the indwelling Spirit in him, that does not necessarily mean that he "walks in the Spirit." If he doesn't walk with the Holy Spirit, he is out of fellowship.

The "flesh" of the believer is just as foul as the unbeliever. The sin capacity of the believer never gets better. God never regenerates it. We cannot refine it. It never improves. God never blesses it. Our "flesh" is exactly the same as an unsaved person. God will have nothing to do with it. We dare not ignore the power of the flesh in our lives.

When God saves a sinner, He imparts a brand new nature to him, which he never had before and he cannot lose. We can no more lose the new nature than we can lose the "flesh." We cannot lose either one of them. We keep the "flesh" until we see the Savior. Then He will remove it from us forever. God will not disown his own.

You may have become a disobedient child of God, a black sheep in the family of God. If so, God will take you to the woodshed. There He will chasten you. Some spend most of their lives in the woodshed. Nevertheless, they are still children of God. They remain in the household of faith. The reason they receive chastening is because they come under the disciplinary care of the Father in the family of God.

We have a longer relationship with the "flesh" than we have with the "Spirit." We had the "flesh" from the moment of our physical birth. We received the "Spirit" at the moment of our spiritual birth. The Holy Spirit is our Divine ally who is closer to us than anyone. The Father and Son are majesty on high but the Holy Spirit resides within us.

The Christian cannot get around the fact that he has two mutually antagonistic principles within him. These principles are mutually exclusive making spirituality an absolute. Neither do they counterbalance each other abandoning the believer to his own preferences.

so that you do not do the things that you wish

The Holy Spirit interferes with what the flesh would otherwise do in its evil lusts. When we operate on the principle of grace [God's provisions], we will not do the things we wish. The grace of the Holy Spirit will not allow us to

invite evil into our souls. The best way to fight against sin is to walk in the Spirit.

Legalistic Galatians thought they could oppose sin by trying to live up to the law. By trying to gain God's approbation by the law, they failed to engage the grace of God provided by the Holy Spirit. Neither do believers operating under grace give license to sin. Life under grace is neither legalism nor license but a reigning principle that prohibits the sin capacity from doing what it otherwise would.

Principle

The spiritual dual within can lead us in two opposing directions.

Application

The indwelling Holy Spirit and the "flesh" are engaged in a titanic struggle for sovereignty of your soul. This is a great war within us. Every Christian on earth is a battleground. Why should we be surprised at the war with sin in us?

"But now, it is no longer I who does it, but sin that dwells [sin capacity] in me. For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells; for to will is present with me, but how to perform what is good I do not find. For the good that I will to do, I do not do; but the evil I will not to do, that I practice. Now if I do what I will not to do, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells [capacity] in me" (Romans 7:17-20).

The moment we come to Christ, the Holy Spirit sets up a system of checks and balances within us. Before possessing a new birth, we did as we pleased but now that we have the new life of the Holy Spirit, He puts checks and balances in our lives. He always finds a way for us to get through the spiritual battle.

Some teach that spirituality is a passive submission to the Spirit. No, it is a life of active faith in the power of the Spirit. The Christian life is a life of spiritual mortal combat. We combat our sin capacity by walking in the Spirit. This makes spiritual victory possible for we operate in the Spirit's power, not our own.

The more the believer says "no" to sin the easier it is to say "no." When it becomes a habit, we gain momentum in victory over sin.

Instead of expounding a particular passage dealing with spirituality, today I will depart from that normal custom and give an overview of spirituality.

Principle

SPIRITUALITY

Application

I. Spirituality is not:

- a. Quietism
- b. Eradication
- c. Suppressionism
- d. Self-crucifixion
- e. Pacifism
- f. Making Christ Lord

II. A Spiritual Christian is a spiritual Christian because he is vitally related to the Holy Spirit.

III. The Holy Spirit at the moment of salvation:

- a. Regenerates, John 3:5
- b. Indwells, 1 Corinthians 6:19,20
- c. Baptizes, 1 Corinthians 12:13
- d. Seals, Ephesians 4:30

IV. Subsequently, the Holy Spirit fills at the point of fellowship.

V. Spirituality and carnality are mutually exclusive, 1 John 1:5-7; 3:4-9, therefore, spirituality is an absolute.

VI. The spiritual believer is not subject to the Mosaic Law, Romans 8:2-4; 10:4; Galatians 5:18,23.

VII. The spiritual believer is under a supernatural law, Galatians 5:16-18; Romans 8:2-4.

VIII. When filled with the Spirit, the believer cannot sin.

A Christian must make a decision to go out of fellowship, then he can sin, 1 John 3:4-9 (unyielded).

IX. Fruit in the life depends on the filling of the Holy Spirit, 1 Corinthians 3:1-15.

X. The results of the control of the Holy Spirit, Ephesians 5:18ff:

- a. Singing, Ephesians 5:19
 - b. Thanksgiving, Ephesians 5:20
 - c. Good relations with other believers, Ephesians 5:21
 - d. Domestic tranquility, Ephesians 5:22
 - e. Good relations on the job, Ephesians 6:5-9
 - f. A well equipped believer, Ephesians 6:10-17
 - g. Prayer, Ephesians 6:18
 - h. Witnessing, Ephesians 6:19-20
- XI. The workings of spirituality:
- a. Confess, 1 John 1:9 b. Yield, Romans 6:13, 12:1
- XII. Spirituality must have constant application, Ephesians 5:18 (present tense); John 15:1-5.
- XIII. The Spiritual life is never free from temptation.
- XIV. There is no room for a defeated attitude.
- XI. True spirituality is the manifestation of Christ in the believer, Ephesians 5:1.
- XVI. Spirituality is always based on the work of Christ:
- a. Present work of Christ, John 16:13-14, Hebrews 2:18, 4:15-16; 7:25, 1 John 2:1
 - b. Past work of Christ, Romans 6:3-4, 7:4; John 14:16, 26; 15:26; 16:7; Galatians 2:20; Colossians 2:11,12,20; 3:1-3,9,10.
 - c. Faith appropriates Christ's work, John 7:37-39.
- XVII. The power of spirituality is the Holy Spirit.
- a. Baptizes, 1 Corinthians 12:13
 - b. Indwells, 1 Corinthians 6:19
 - c. Fills, Ephesians 5:18
 - d. Produces fruit, Galatians 5:22,23
- XVIII. Spirituality is both passive (grace) and active (human responsibility).
- XIX. Righteousness of God and man's righteousness (total depravity):
- a. Total depravity does not mean that man has no concept of right and wrong, Romans 2:14,15
 - b. All men are completely sinful in relation to God, 2 Timothy 3:13, James 3:9
 - c. Everyone is defective in personality: 1. Mind, Romans 1:20, 3:11 2. Will, Romans 1:32, 3:12 3. Emotion, Romans 1:32, 3:17

d. All men have an evil tendency, Romans 7:17, 20,21,23,25.

e. No one has capacity to produce self-righteousness that will please God, Isaiah 64:6 1. Two kinds of righteousness: a) Man's, Philippians 3:7-9 b) God's, Romans 10:1-4 2. Difference is one of quality, not quantity.

XX. Free from the law

a. Law has three parts: 1. Ceremonial 2. Civil 3. Moral (we did not die to the moral law) Romans 7

b. Imperative of the New Testament: 1. OT Law = penalty NT Imperative = no penalty, but corrects 2. OT Law = no supernatural enablement NT Imperative = there is supernatural enablement 3. OT Law = motivation to get blessed NT Imperative = motivation because we are blessed 4. OT Law = results in man's righteousness NT Imperative = results in God's righteousness, Romans 3:7-9.

XXI. The New Man

a. The new man is not the natural man made better

b. The new man is not the infusing of a new personality

c. The new man is a new influence on personality

d. The old and new men do co-exist -- the old is not eradicated, Romans 7:14-25; 8:23; Galatians 5:16,17; I John 1:8

e. The new man is a new capacity implanted in us, Ephesians 4:22-24; Colossians 3:9,10, 1 Peter 1:23; 2 Peter 1:4; 2 Corinthians 5:17; Galatians 6:15.

XXII. Baptism of the Holy Spirit

a. Never repeated in an individual in the NT

b. It is universal - He baptizes every Christian into his body, 1 Corinthians 12:13

c. It is never commanded so it is not our responsibility

d. In NT, experience is related to filling, never baptism

e. The baptism of the Spirit is positional truth

f. Spiritual baptism is distinctive of the dispensation of grace 1. In Gospels - always anticipated, Matthew 3:11; Mark 1:7; Luke 3:13; John 1:33 2. Occurred first at Pentecost, Acts 1:4-5

(prophesied), Acts 11:16 (occurred already) 3. Church not found in the OT

g. Spiritual baptism is the basis of justification, 1 Corinthians 5:21

h. Spiritual baptism is the basis of unity; 1 Corinthians 12:13; John 7:37-39 i. Union with Christ is the basis of sanctification, Romans 6-8 Positional sanctification by union with Christ, Romans 6:1-14, Judicial; Galatians 2:20; Galatians 3:27; Ephesians 1:3; Colossians 2:9-12

j. Distinction between: Baptism - never commanded - past event - true of all believers - occurs once - union - positional and Filling - commanded - present experience - true only of some - continuance - communion - experiential

Galatians 5:18

"But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law"

Paul now makes a summary statement about life under the law and under grace. One is about what the self can do and the other is about what the Holy Spirit can do.

But if

The word "if" means that it is true that the Holy Spirit leads some Christians in their walk with God.

you are led by the Spirit,

The Christian lives by intrinsic, not extrinsic, power. He does not live by pulling on the bootstraps of self-effort. He lives under the power of the Holy Spirit when he walks in the Spirit.

"For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God" (Romans 8:14).

you are not under the law

The law cannot condemn Christians because Christ already paid the penalty of the law.

Being led by the Spirit or operating under the law are mutually exclusive. It is one or the other, not both. If a Christian operates by the law, he must operate by the flesh (Romans 7:8-11). But grace supercedes the Mosaic law for the law is a system of gaining God's favor by "operation bootstraps" (living the Christian life by self effort).

There is a double antagonism in this section of Galatians: The Holy Spirit versus the flesh, and the Holy Spirit versus the law. The law is the outward conduct of men in an attempt to please God by human effort. The leading of the Spirit is the sphere where the Holy Spirit does His work in the life of the believer.

The Galatians failed to live the Christian life because they depended on themselves rather than the Holy Spirit to live the Christian life.

"For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace" (Romans 6:14).

Principle

Walking in the flesh versus being led of the Spirit to please God are diametrically opposed to each other.

Application

No Christian is led of the Spirit unless he walks in the Spirit. Unless the Holy Spirit fills us, He will not lead us.

Walking in the flesh emphasizes on the self whereas walking in the Spirit emphasizes the Holy Spirit. The Spirit of God leads the believer under grace to a new standard for living. Intrinsic regulation is far more effective than outward regulation.

This is no special leading but simply the leading of the Spirit toward sanctification. The Holy Spirit is the one who engages us to live the Christian life. We can never live that life in our own power.

Galatians 5:19

"Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness..."

Now the works of the flesh are evident,

The works of the flesh are open to sight so that they are plainly visible. Carnality is apparent to all. The flesh will display itself palpably by its works. We can assess the kind of tree by its fruit.

Notice the striking contrast between "works" and "fruit" (5:22). There are works of the flesh and fruit of the Spirit. Work takes effort but fruit comes naturally from within.

Principle

Works testify to what a person is.

Application

What is the basis for your values? Some older people operate on memory to establish their values. They accept values passed down from previous generations. They haven't formed core convictions for themselves.

Why should they follow those traditions if they have no ultimate authoritative source for them? Although absolutes are in vogue for this group, they do not hold them with conviction because they believe that man is simply a machine, a product of chance.

If there are no absolutes, why hold to any morality? The only possible morality left in our generation is one of preference. Morality is determined by society at a given time. No wonder people of this generation reject the values of the previous generations. If the older generations thrust aside the basis for absolute morality [the Bible], then why hold to the absolute values of the Bible? Newer generation morality is more consistent with the conclusion that there is no revelation from God. Morality to them is just personal preference.

If we accept the premise that God spoke through the Bible, then we can authoritatively hold to absolutes. If this is so, we no longer sail on a sea without a shore because universal principles would hold true regardless of time or culture. We can affirm that murder, pedophilia, adultery and fornication are wrong because there is a God who holds these values.

North America is moving away from its Christian foundation. Although we still benefit from its legacy, there will come a time when that legacy expires. When it does, chaotic values will dominate and society will pay the price. People will cheat on the ones they love the most and lie to people to whom they are close.

which are:

The Greek indicates that the following list of sins is not exhaustive. If you do not find a specific here, that does not mean that it is not a violation in God's eyes. These are only suggestive sins. Paul could delineate many other sins. These suggestive

sins fall into four categories: 1) sins of sensuality, 2) sins of false doctrine, 3) sins against others and 4) sins of excess.

adultery,

The word "adultery" does not occur in older manuscripts. Neither "adultery" nor "murder" is in this list as they occur in the King James Version.

The sin of adultery was a capital crime in the Old Testament indicating the seriousness with which God views the violation of the family unit. Adultery is a violation of intimacy.

All absolutes are for our benefit because they give us freedom. By forbidding adultery, the partners in marriage have a sense of security in the commitment of their partners toward each other. This protects the stability and set-apartness of the family. Children know their parents. Partners will not carry out vendettas against each other. Fidelity to each other is at the core of marriage vows.

Principle

Adultery always compromises the integrity of the persons committing adultery.

Application

Adultery always compromises the integrity of the person who commits this sin. It cheapens personal and sexual intimacy. This always results in the loss of intimacy in marriage.

fornication,

Fornication is any form of sexual immorality including adultery. We get our English word "pornography" from this Greek word. The Greeks used "fornication" for "prostitution." It is a love that is bought and sold and sex without involvement with the person. It also includes illicit sex sins whether homosexuality, lesbianism, bestiality, or incest.

Principle

People will go to any extent in violating norms when it comes to sex sins.

Application

The only answer to this sin is Jesus Christ. Laws and legislation will not do it. Legislation only keeps things down to a minimum. Only a change of heart that comes from Christ will change this

kind of pattern. Jesus will take sinful people and change them. He will give each new life and a new heart. We do not get this by joining a church or by baptism.

The operating principle for dealing with sexual sins is "flee." This is not something we debate or dabble with. We must deal with them decisively. Don't put yourself in a place where you will be tempted.

"Flee sexual immorality. Every sin that a man does is outside the body, but he who commits sexual immorality sins against his own body" (1 Corinthians 6:18).

uncleanness,

"Uncleanness" is moral defilement whether in the form of lust or profligate living. It is a state of moral impurity related to thought, action or speech, and can be sexual. (Romans 1:24).

lewdness

"Lewdness" is licentiousness or lasciviousness. This word denotes excess or absence of restraint. Lewd people have unbridled lusts and little sense of shame. They are outrageous in their shamelessness and give themselves to debauchery in a brazen way (Ephesians 4:19; 1 Peter 4:3).

"Lewdness" is reckless sinning. It does not care what God or people think. It shocks public civility. This sin has no regard for society or self-respect.

"Let us walk properly, as in the day, not in revelry and drunkenness, not in lewdness and lust, not in strife and envy" (Romans 13:13).

"...lest, when I come again, my God will humble me among you, and I shall mourn for many who have sinned before and have not repented of the uncleanness, fornication, and lewdness which they have practiced" (2 Corinthians 12:21).

Principle

Some people reach a stage of utter shamelessness.

Application

People do what "comes naturally." We can squirt religious perfume on people, but it will not change

their hearts. Immorality appeals to people in every walk of life.

The media encourage us to accept perversion. However, God views perversion as a subject for judgment. When people reach the place where they do not respect themselves and lose their sense of shame, they are ready for judgment.

Galatians 5:20

"...idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies..."

Now we come to the category of religious sins. Paul lists two. These sins come from the same source - the "flesh."

idolatry,

Idolatry is the worship of something or someone other than the true God (1 Corinthians 10:14; Colossians 3:5; 1 Peter 4:3). Pagans often sacrificed to demons (1 Corinthians 10:19). Originally, a physical idol helped visualize the god it represented then later people worshipped the physical object itself (Romans 1:19-23).

The New Testament uses idolatry four times both in the literal sense of bowing before a physical idol and in the metaphorical sense of worship of something other than God. The Bible views covetousness as idolatry.

"Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry" (Colossians 3:5).

Principle

Idolatry is anything that we put before the Lord Jesus in our lives.

Application

Christians commit idolatry when they put anything ahead of God. When we put our careers, business or family before God, we commit idolatry. Some people make money their god. Anything that we put in the principal place of our lives other than God Himself is idolatry.

Some idolaters fall down before statues. Others fall down before their careers, wife, family, possessions and bank accounts.

"Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Amen" (1 John 5:21).

sorcery,

The Greek word for "sorcery" is pharmakia, from which we get our English word "pharmacy." Priests in the ancient world administered medicine, drugs, and poison to exercise sorcery in their religion. They accompanied their use of drugs with incantations and cultic systems of potions, spells, charms and amulets.

Sorcery is the use of magical arts, often in connection with idolatry. This sin attempts to do something that normal means cannot accomplish. It steps into the domain of mysteries and exploits occult powers to enter the supernatural.

"Sorcery" may be "black" or "white" magic. Black magic tries to impose evil upon people through curses and spells. This frequently takes the shape of witchcraft. White magic attempts to undo curses and spells. All magicians try to manipulate the power of a god or demon to work on their behalf.

Sorcery was one of the sins that destroyed Babylon (Isaiah 47:9,12).

Principle

At heart, sorcery is rebellion against God.

Application

The essence of sorcery is rebellion against God by seeking to manipulate the supernatural. God pronounces judgment on magicians and magic because it is rebellion against His truth.

"For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, And stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the Lord, He also has rejected you from being king" (1 Samuel 15:23).

Scripture always condemns sorcery in Scripture. God views it as opposed to His sovereign plan. People who wear charms violate that plan.

Some people think that their involvement with Ouija boards, palm readers and séances is innocent toying with the supernatural. From God

viewpoint, reading one's horoscope and the signs of the Zodiac is involvement with satanic powers. From God's standpoint, necromancy and astrology are also sin, not fun.

Some folk have the idea that sorcery is old-fashioned yet there are people today who would not consummate a business deal without consulting the zodiac. Others will not marry unless their signs are right.

"You shall not permit a sorceress to live" (Exodus 22:18).

"When you come into the land which the Lord your God is giving you, you shall not learn to follow the abominations of those nations. There shall not be found among you anyone who makes his son or his daughter pass through the fire, or one who practices witchcraft, or a soothsayer, or one who interprets omens, or a sorcerer, or one who conjures spells, or a medium, or a spiritualist, or one who calls up the dead. For all who do these things are an abomination to the Lord, and because of these abominations the Lord your God drives them out from before you. You shall be blameless before the Lord your God. For these nations which you will dispossess listened to soothsayers and diviners; but as for you, the Lord your God has not appointed such for you" (Deuteronomy 18:9-14).

"Also he caused his sons to pass through the fire in the Valley of the Son of Hinnom; he practiced soothsaying, used witchcraft and sorcery, and consulted mediums and spiritists. He did much evil in the sight of the Lord, to provoke Him to anger" (2 Chronicles 33:6).

Fortune-tellers supposedly tell the future. Everyone wants to know the future. We want to know what tomorrow holds. But God has our future in His hand and wants us to trust him

Sorcerers and spiritists are in the same crowd. The Bible condemns contact with the spirit world because it is not all hokum or fake. Not all of it is quackery. Much of it is pure trickery, but not all. Contact with your ancestors may put you into contact with demons. Many mediums that contact

the spirit world are demon-possessed. That is why the Bible condemns it.

Astrology has taken the place of psychology for many today as their personality decoder. Even a well-known Episcopal bishop supposedly contacted his dead son a half dozen times through séances. Many seek career guidance through the charting of their horoscopes or tarot cards. Movie stars wear zodiacal signs embroidered on their clothing. High Schools and universities offer courses in witchcraft. Preoccupation with UFOs leads many into exploring the world of sorcery.

All of this is sin against God's revelation. It is amazing that some Christians buy into this.

Paul now lists sins toward others. Sins of faulty relationships flow naturally from the fallen nature of the sons of Adam.

Non-believers may be cultured or refined, but they are unadulterated flesh. They cannot produce the fruit of the Spirit

(Galatians 5:22-23). They do what comes naturally. They do not care whether it is right or wrong, religious or irreligious.

Life is simple for non-believers, because all they have is flesh.

Every believer has the same potential as a lost person, if he or she allows the sin capacity to operate without the power of the Spirit. Victory comes to the believer, not by changing his or her overt behavior patterns, but by the counteracting power of the Spirit of God.

hatred,

"Hatred" is a state of enmity toward someone. This sin causes us to cast someone in the role of the enemy. This is a sin of animosity. It is the opposite of love, for love seeks the highest good in others. It does not put up barriers between people.

It is possible to be an enemy of God (James 4:4) as well as of people. Christians who want to live like they did before they became a Christian are enemies of God.

Principle

Having an attitude of personal animosity toward others violates God.

Application

The sin of hatred is closer to home than the sin of sorcery. Hatred never comes from God. It always comes from the flesh.

Christians may outwardly be respectful of others around them, but if they persist in personal animosity toward other Christians, they are out of fellowship with God.

People who hate are little people. They allow others to control them by reacting with negative attitudes. People who allow themselves to develop an attitude of hatred dedicate themselves to perpetual misery. Life is too short and the issues are too great to get caught up in the small world of hate. All of the king's horses and all of the king's men cannot put such people back together again unless they yield themselves to the Spirit of God. Such people dedicate themselves to perpetual misery, because hatred is an ineffective sin that cannot accomplish what it sets out to achieve.

"Hatred stirs up strife, But love covers all sins" (Proverbs 10:12).

"Whoever hides hatred has lying lips, And whoever spreads slander is a fool" (Proverbs 10:18)

"For we ourselves were also once foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving various lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another" (Titus 3:3).

"But he who hates his brother is in darkness and walks in darkness, and does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded his eyes" (1 John 2:11).

"Whoever hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him" (1 John 3:15).

"If someone says, 'I love God,' and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen?" (1 John 4:20).

Christians who walk around with animosity toward others do not walk in the Spirit. They may

command respect from other Christians, but they do not have God's respect.

contentions,

The sin of contention is strife, quarrel, especially rivalry, debate, wrangling. This sin is an expression of enmity (Romans 1:29; 1 Corinthians 1:11; 3:3; 2 Corinthians 12:20; Philippians 1:15). A person indulging in this sin loves to do battle with people and express antagonism with hostility. "Contentions" is conflict resulting from rivalry.

Four out of the nine uses of the word "contentions" in the New Testament refer to life in the church. When we put priority on parties, slogans and personal issues over living for Jesus Christ, our relationships go bad.

"For it has been declared to me concerning you, my brethren, by those of Chloe's household, that there are contentions among you" (1 Corinthians 1:11).

"...for you are still carnal. For where there are envy, strife, and divisions among you, are you not carnal and behaving like mere men?" (1 Corinthians 3:3).

"For I fear lest, when I come, I shall not find you such as I wish, and that I shall be found by you such as you do not wish; lest there be contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, backbiting, whisperings, conceits, tumults..." (2 Corinthians 12:20).

Principle

When we think more of our rivalry and rights than we do of Jesus Christ, contentions always ensue.

Application

People who commit the sin of "contentions" love to take sides in a dispute. They have no tolerance for any position but their own. The idea is "If you hate me, I'll hate you." This is the logic of personal antagonism and causes people to take the lid off their spiritual garbage can.

Some people are on the negative side of every positive issue and on the positive side of every

negative issue. Right or wrong, win or lose, they want to fight. It makes little difference whether they are right or wrong. Strife among Christians is wrong if it comes from the "flesh." We should not call our anger "righteous indignation." That is hypocrisy. There is no justification for exercising our sin capacity.

Some of us get our feelings hurt very easily. When we fight people, whom we consider enemies, with our own subjective anger, we violate God. "If you hate me, I'll hate you. Let's choose sides and fight," we think. Many of us live in this world. It is a life of strife, rivalry and discord.

Strife is a state of mind that brings a negative attitude of anger into actuality. Malignity produces debate, conflict and variance. Some people have no tolerance for anyone else's position—their attitude is saying, "I don't care what you think. I have my opinion." Usually, highly opinionated people are insecure of their own positions. They are unsure of their own beliefs so they set their position by reacting against others.

"...being filled with all unrighteousness, sexual immorality, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, evil-mindedness; they are whisperers..." (Romans 1:29).

"Let us walk properly, as in the day, not in revelry and drunkenness, not in lewdness and lust, not in strife and envy" (Romans 13:13).

"Some indeed preach Christ even from envy and strife, and some also from goodwill..." (Philippians 1:15).

"...he is proud, knowing nothing, but is obsessed with disputes and arguments over words, from which come envy, strife, reviling, evil suspicions..." (1 Timothy 6:4).

jealousies,

"Jealousies" is strong feeling of resentment against someone else's success. People having such feelings resent their friends' good fortune. They try to equal or surpass their friends. They view all others as rivals.

"But when the Jews saw the multitudes, they were filled with envy; and contradicting and blaspheming, they opposed the things spoken by Paul" (Acts 13:45).

"Let us walk properly, as in the day, not in revelry and drunkenness, not in lewdness and lust, not in strife and envy" (Romans 13:13).

"But if you have bitter envy and self-seeking in your hearts, do not boast and lie against the truth. This wisdom does not descend from above, but is earthly, sensual, demonic. For where envy and self-seeking exist, confusion and every evil thing are there" (James 3:14-16).

Principle

Jealousy is the desire to outdo other people.

Application

Jealousies develop between churches when one gets larger than the other. People develop jealousies when someone else has a success that they do not have. They want the success for themselves, but do not rejoice in the success of others.

Jealousy is the desire to outdo other people. It is a form of spiritual king of the mountain. You pull down others in order to lift yourself above them. It is an attempt to outdo others. If you envy the way someone dresses, you try to out dress her. If someone else can communicate, you try to outtalk him or her. If he or she has a wonderful personality, you want to develop better personality.

Some Christians believe that status symbols are more important than God. They hold greater concern about what others think of them than what God may think of them. They strive for a big house in the suburbs that shows their place above others.

"Set me as a seal upon your heart, As a seal upon your arm; For love is as strong as death, Jealousy as cruel as the grave; Its flames are flames of fire, A most vehement flame" (Song of Solomon 8:6).

Jealousy is as cruel as the grave and we all know how cruel the grave is. The grave does not care if

it swallows up a baby, a young person or mother. Jealousy will claim us just like the grave. It will strike out at people.

Do you recognize the symptoms in yourself? The very thing we hate in others, we permit in ourselves. We deceive ourselves and rename jealousy by some other name that sounds spiritual. We cannot see our own harshness and censoriousness, but we can see it clearly in other people.

Very few people are quick to admit that they operate in a jealous mode, that they do things and say things because of jealousy. They are afraid to admit that they bought a new car because the other guy in the office bought a new car. Jealousy is the attempt to surpass others for selfish gain. Sometimes this type of person pulls others down by petty faultfinding.

outbursts of wrath,

"Outbursts" denotes violent moments and carries the force of wrath. The Greek Old Testament uses "outbursts of wrath" for wild animals full of rage. People with this sin always poise themselves on the razor's edge of wrath.

"Outbursts of wrath" are very violent for a brief time, then die down. They blaze up and just as quickly die down. There is an element of fury in this sin, where passion boils up with the white heat of anger, wrath and rage. This sin carries a state of intense anger with passionate outbursts of fury and rage. The upside of this sin is that it quickly dies down.

There is a righteous wrath and an unrighteous wrath.

"For I fear lest, when I come, I shall not find you such as I wish, and that I shall be found by you such as you do not wish; lest there be contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, backbiting, whisperings, conceits, tumults..." (2 Corinthians 12:20).

Principle

Some forms of wrath are impulsive outbursts of violent anger.

Application

People who commit impulsive wrath are undisciplined. They have no control of their rage. They blow their cork without a shred of information. Often they flash forth their anger then it flames out quickly. They are often embarrassed that they did not take the time to inform themselves of the situation before they blew their cork. Their anger flares up and dies down when they discover the truth after the fact. They make rash and harsh statements and then proceed to forget about what they said. This leaves open wounds that do not heal.

Impulsive wrath is a perversion of righteous indignation. Wrath is a manifestation of anger and hatred. When we allow hatred to bloom, it springs out in outbursts of wrath.

We cannot say, "I have just cause." There is no good cause for impulsive wrath. God tells us to put it away. "Put your gun in its holster. Don't leave your gun half-cocked. Put it on safety."

"But now you yourselves are to put off all these: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language out of your mouth" (Colossians 3:8).

selfish ambitions,

People who have "selfish ambitions" use intrigue to accomplish their means. They want to put themselves forward above everything else. In doing this, they foster a partisan and fractious spirit with others. Aristotle used this word in referring to the self-seeking pursuit of political office by the manipulation of unfair means.

Paul used "selfish ambitions" for resentment based on jealousy. Paul's antagonists viewed him as a rival. They tried to exercise one-upmanship with Paul. They wanted to be seen as better and bigger than Paul. They were in ministry to aggrandize themselves. Of the seven occurrences of this word, Paul uses it three times for conflict within the church (2 Corinthians 12:20; Philippians 1:16; Philippians 2:3).

"Some indeed preach Christ even from envy and strife, and some also from goodwill: The former preach Christ from selfish ambition, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my chains; but the latter out of love, knowing that I

am appointed for the defense of the gospel. What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is preached; and in this I rejoice, yes, and will rejoice" (Philippians 1:15-18).

Principle

The sin of "selfish ambition" is the sin of personal ambition pursued at the cost of others.

Application

We live in a self-oriented society. Everyone wants to put himself or herself forward. People desire distinction, even if it means manipulating others. They cannot bear the thought of being the same as someone else. They want people to rally around them at any cost.

"Selfish ambition" is the sin of schism for selfish purposes. People who commit this sin will organize factions by bringing in friends to back them up with an idea. People naturally take the position of their friends. This is group antagonism. Instead of two people standing in antagonism to each other now you have two groups in antagonism to each another.

This is another perversion of righteous indignation. As some politicians care for nothing but their own career, some Christians will do anything to advance their career, regardless of whether it may hurt others and shred their own integrity.

"Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others" (Philippians 2:3-4).

Some people are in ministry for what they can get out of it. They do not stop at causing division in a church if it advances their interests. This is ambition at the cost of church unity. Rivalry is more important to them than the cause of Christ. Some people serve on boards simply to make a name. They serve for power. Jesus rarely blesses a ministry of manipulation.

As M. R. DeHaan, the founder of the Radio Bible Class, said, "You can explode a whole case of

dynamite on top of a rock without doing much more damage than making a nose, but bore a hole into the heart of the rock and insert only one stick of dynamite, and you can blow that rock to 'smithereens.'" Sin within the church causes far more damage than sin against the church.

dissensions,

The word "dissensions" means standing apart, coming from two words apart and standing. The idea is division.

"Now I urge you, brethren, note those who cause divisions and offenses, contrary to the doctrine which you learned, and avoid them" (Romans 16:17).

"For where there are envy, strife, and divisions among you, are you not carnal and behaving like mere men?" (1 Corinthians 3:3).

"Dissension" tries to get people to think of each other as enemies. Those who fall into this sin want to get ahead of others by crawling over others and separating people.

Principle

It is easy to confuse prejudice with principle.

Application

"Dissension" is perversion of devotion to principle. When we engage in the sin of dissension, we violate living by principle. Some people will do anything as long as it "works." Some politicians operate exclusively on polls. They have little core conviction of their own. Some Christians are this way as well. As long as they can advance, they care little about principle.

These Christians usually have great ignorance of the Word of God. Blindly, they charge ahead causing insurrection against stated authority in their organizations. This is the cause of divisions within Christian organizations and churches.

Carnality reigns when feuds flourish. It is sad to see Christians not meeting or speaking to one another. It is easy to confuse unreasonable stubbornness with unwavering resolution. Christians must examine themselves to determine which side is true for them. They should ask

whether their opinions are separating them from others as a matter of principle or pride.

It is easy to incite discontent and rebellion in people. Some people naturally find reasons for insurrection in the church. "I am amazed that you took that from your pastor. Where is your sense of pride? I would not stand for that."

heresies

"Heresy" is self-willed opinion in that stands in opposition to truth. We could translate this word "sects." The word "heresies" means act of taking. This is a sin of one's chosen selfish opinion.

In context, "heresy" is an opinion that varies from the truth of the Word. The idea is to choose doctrine that opposes Scripture. These people fall into heretical sects and parties causing dissension and factions with those who hold to truth (1 Corinthians 11:19).

Principle

Heresy is the sin of forming doctrinal cliques.

Application

Heresy is sin toward the Word of God. People love to separate others from their groups so that they follow their unique doctrines instead of constituted leadership of sound organizations.

Christianity is replete with people who develop their own unique doctrines and try to siphon others away from existing Bible-believing organizations. Anyone who holds opinions opposite to the Word is sectarian. We commit heresies when we hold viewpoints in opposition to the Word of God.

Cliques break up the unity of the church. They shut others out of their doctrinal circle. It is one thing to stand for truth but it is another thing to form novel doctrine because you think that you have come to an understanding of truth no one else has discovered yet. This is an area where we should carefully examine ourselves. We want to be true to truth, but truth should unite Christians, not divide them.

Galatians 5:21

"...envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in

time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God"

envy,

In the previous verse we had a word for "jealousy" but "envy" in this verse is not quite the same idea. "Envy" is more than the feeling of displeasure produced by witnessing the success of others; it goes beyond the idea to hoping that some evil would come upon that person. An envious person wants to deprive the other person of what he has. Jealousy simply desires the same thing for self. Envy is a state of ill-will toward the other person because of their presumed advantage.

"For he knew that they had handed Him over because of envy" (Matthew 27:18).

"Some indeed preach Christ even from envy and strife, and some also from goodwill..." (Philippians 1:15).

"Therefore, laying aside all malice, all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and all evil speaking..." (1 Peter 2:1).

Principle

An envious person is a bitter person who maliciously desires the worst for other people.

Application

An envious person is a discontented person who bemoans the good fortune of others. He looks at the advantages others may have rather than the advantages he has.

Envy also carries the idea of not wanting what someone else has, but resenting him for having it and wishing him harm because of it.

"For we ourselves were also once foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving various lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another" (Titus 3:3).

"Let your conduct be without covetousness; be content with such things as you have. For He Himself has said, 'I will never leave you nor forsake you'" (Hebrews 13:5).

A good test of the caliber of our soul is how we react to the success of others.

"A sound heart is life to the body, But envy is rottenness to the bones" (Proverbs 14:30).

It is interesting that the sin of envy is next door in this list to drunkenness and revelries. Envy is the seed of more destructive social sins like murder and revelries.

The person who commits envy, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions and heresies will not inherit rewards in the kingdom as much as someone who practices drunkenness and revelries.

murders,

The word "murders" means homicide, slaughter. The Bible distinguishes between killing someone and murdering him. Murder is premeditated taking the life of a human being illegally (Exodus 20:13; Deuteronomy 5:17). In the nation Israel in the Old Testament, the law demanded execution of a first-degree murderer. That is capital punishment for cold-blooded, premeditated murder.

"He who strikes a man so that he dies shall surely be put to death. However, if he did not lie in wait, but God delivered him into his hand, then I will appoint for you a place where he may flee" (Exodus 21:12).

The word "murders" does not occur in older manuscripts so many newer translations do not include this word.

Principle

The Bible sponsors capital punishment.

Application

The Bible sponsors the idea of capital punishment. This was a value of the Old Testament and is also a value of the New Testament.

"Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and God appoints the authorities that exist. Therefore whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God, and those who resist will bring judgment on themselves. For rulers are not a terror to

good works, but to evil. Do you want to be unafraid of the authority? Do what is good, and you will have praise from the same. For he is God's minister to you for good. But if you do evil, be afraid; for he does not bear the sword in vain; for he is God's minister, an avenger to execute wrath on him who practices evil. Therefore you must be subject, not only because of wrath but also for conscience' sake. For because of this you also pay taxes, for they are God's ministers attending continually to this very thing. Render therefore to all their due: taxes to whom taxes are due, customs to whom customs, fear to whom fear, honor to whom honor" (Romans 13:1-7).

God gave second-degree murders in the Old Testament provision to flee to a city of refuge. He also gave the right to someone in the victim's family to avenge their relative's death.

Those who agree with capital punishment should not eradicate the fact that God forgives even murderers (Matthew 12:31; Mark 3:28). God forgave Paul, the author of this book, for committing murder.

drunkenness,

"Drunkenness" is intoxication that causes a person to become drugged and deranged (Luke 21:34; Romans 13:13). A drunken person is a dissipated person who participates in drinking bouts. The Bible condemns the state of inebriation throughout its pages (Genesis 9:20-27; 19:32-38) because it renders people insensible to even their own values making them a social nuisance. Beyond moral degeneration, drunkenness also causes economic ruin to the family.

Principle

Drunkenness puts people in a condition that they step outside their system of values.

Application

The Bible has a lot to say about drunkenness. It is not so much drunkenness itself but what drunkenness produces. We cannot trust an intoxicated person. People will do things when they are drunk that they would not do otherwise. We would not say that a drunk is moral or honest.

Drunkenness produces poverty (Proverbs 21:17; 23:21), strife (Proverbs 23:29,30), error (Isaiah 28:7), contempt of God (Isaiah 5:12), scorning (Hosea 7:5), rioting and wantonness (Romans 13:13). Lot had sex with his own daughters because of his drunkenness (Genesis 9). This would have never happened had he been sober.

How many drunken drivers have dashed people into eternity? Drunk drivers go to jail but that does not help those who are left behind. There is no remedial help for them.

Some people might be alcoholics but not drunkards. We all know the devastating effects of alcoholism. Alcoholism is not a "disease" as modern society likes to claim. We have a way of renaming things today and more to be pitied and censured. God does not gloss over this as our society does.

revelries,

Whenever you have drunkenness, you also have revelry. "Revelries" are carousals. These are wild parties at night by people who parade through the streets with torches in honor of Bacchus (the god of drink and revelry) or some other deity. These drinking bouts go on until late in the evening with dancing and frolicking in the streets.

Today, the idea would be wild drinking parties involving unrestrained intoxication and immoral behavior. "Revelries" can include the idea of orgies. This is why Paul says we need to "conduct ourselves as people in the day.

"Let us walk properly, as in the day, not in revelry and drunkenness, not in lewdness and lust, not in strife and envy. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts" (Romans 13: 13-14).

"Drunkenness" and "revelries" were characteristic of pagan worship.

and the like;

Paul again makes the point that this long list of sins is not exhaustive but only representative of a longer list of possible sins. This list just scratches the surface of sins.

Principle

People in rebellion against God go for the wild side of life.

Application

Revelry is the equivalent of living on the wild side in nightclubs in our society. Many of these people are running from God by trying to blunt the pain of their rebellion with booze. They fly in the face of God by wild immorality. Still others let themselves to be given completely over to their passions.

"For we have spent enough of our past lifetime in doing the will of the Gentiles – when we walked in lewdness, lusts, drunkenness, revelries, drinking parties, and abominable idolatries" (1 Peter 4:3).

of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past,

Paul forewarned the Galatians that the inevitable consequence of those who practice this list of sins is that they would not inherit the kingdom of God. They still had not caught the idea.

Principle

To be forewarned is to be forearmed.

Application

Sexual promiscuity in our day is less shocking than it once was. Homosexual sins are less outrageous. This is because sexual looseness has become pandemic through television and other forms of media. Most everyone in our culture grows immune to this deterioration of standards because of the sheer weight of non-Christian information and communication in our society.

Some Christians "practice" some of these sins at least mentally every day. There will be great shock at the judgment seat of Christ when Jesus will hand out very few rewards because they allowed themselves to fall prey to the deterioration of morality. We can hardly distinguish between the standards of believers and non-believers today.

that those who practice such things

Three ideas in the word "practice" show that people who commit the sins of verses 19-20 on a

regular basis are carnal Christians. First, it is important to take note of the word "practice." It is one thing to "do" the sins of verses 20 and 21 and it is another thing to "practice" them. Another Greek term (poiew) denotes an act complete in itself whereas the word "practice" in this verse connotes more of a protracted habit. The one term means to accomplish or do something and the other deals with the process leading to the accomplishment (John 3:20,21; Romans 2:3).

Second, the idea of the word "practice" is not always the New Testament use of this term but it is the predominate use of it. It is the unrestrained practice that characterizes a person for who he truly is – a carnal believer. This list of sins does not characterize the Spirit-filled believer as a way of life.

Third, the tense of "practice" is durative. Those who habitually and repeatedly practice the list of sins in verses 20 and 21 as a course of conduct will not inherit rewards in the Millennial Kingdom. The Spirit-filled Christ produces the fruit of the Spirit (5:22-23) and God will reward him for that fruit.

Principle

We can identify carnal Christians by their ongoing character; it is presumptive evidence of who they are.

Application

There are times when we cannot distinguish between a believer and an unbeliever. In this case, the believer is carnal Christian, controlled by his sin capacity. He has not allowed himself to be controlled by the Holy Spirit. Christians can "practice" the sins of the flesh (5:19-21).

"...lest, when I come again, my God will humble me among you, and I shall mourn for many who have sinned before and have not repented of the uncleanness, fornication, and lewdness which they have practiced" (2 Corinthians 12:21).

The lost crowd would not be happy in heaven. Can you imagine those without Christ worshipping Him and singing His praises? Heaven is a prepared place for prepared people. Prepared people are those who are born into the family of God by embracing the death of Christ to

forgive their sins. Jesus takes the hell of the hearts of those who trust Him as well as saves them the place called hell.

"Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven" (Matthew 7:21).

"...who, knowing the righteous judgment of God, that those who practice such things are deserving of death, not only do the same but also approve of those who practice them" (Romans 1:32).

"But we know that the judgment of God is according to truth against those who practice such things" (Romans 2:2).

Carnal Christians will have to make a dramatic right-about-face in their attitudes toward heaven as well.

will not inherit the kingdom of God

The word "inherit" originally meant to receive by lot. It came to mean to possess oneself of, to receive as one's own, to obtain. It is something we receive as a gift, not from the reward of merit. The word "inherit" clearly carries the idea of access to God without any prior entitlement.

God assigns the Christian the right of inheritance from Christ's possessions. We receive a share of what belongs to Christ who died on the cross by virtue of being born into God's family (John 3:5).

Christians who practice the sins of verses 19-21 cannot carry those sins into the Millennial Kingdom. There, everything will be in submission to God's character. Nobody will live with an alcoholic father in the Kingdom. The word "not" in "shall not inherit" means as a matter of fact shall not receive rewards in the Kingdom.

A Christian who practices the list of sins in verses 19-21 will lose his or her rewards in the Millennial kingdom. Paul already assured the Galatians that they received the inheritance of eternal life (3:14; 4:6-7). They do not need to ensure their standing with God by works. The Spirit of God changes the character of those who walk in the Spirit (5:16-18, 22-23).

Principle

God will reward certain Christians in the Kingdom and not others.

Application

In order to be an heir of God we must first be sons of God (John 1:12; Galatians 3:2; 4:1-7; Romans 8:16,17). Christ is the heir of the Father who will fall heir to "all things" (Hebrews 1:2-14). Because of our association with Him, we receive eternal inheritance (Hebrews 9:15). God provides our heirship on the basis of grace, not works (Acts 20:32; Galatians 3:18, 29; 4:7; Titus 3:7).

Positional truth makes the believer fit for heirship (Colossians 1:12,13). Heirship demands that we will receive eternal life (1 John 5:11,12) and in this we share the same destiny as Jesus Christ (Ephesians 1:11). God gives us a guarantee of our inheritance by giving us the indwelling Holy Spirit (Ephesians 1:14) and a promise of eternal security (1 Peter 1:4,5).

Carnal Christians characterized by moral corruption shall not inherit rewards in the Millennial Kingdom (5:21). Their habitual practice of the sins is presumptive evidence that they are not Spirit-filled believers.

Galatians 5:22

"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness..."

Now we move to a striking contrast from the works of the flesh (5:19-21) to the fruit of the Spirit with its nine characteristics. There is a contrast between the "works" of the flesh (5:19) and the "fruit" of the Spirit (5:22).

The nine characteristic qualities of the Spirit form three triads:

- 1) fruit directed toward self internally: love, joy, peace
- 2) fruit directed toward others horizontally: longsuffering, kindness, goodness
- 3) fruit directed towards God vertically: faithfulness, gentleness, self-control

But the fruit of the Spirit is

Fruit is something produced by living organisms such as trees or vines. Human beings can produce

living organisms called children. Metaphorically, the Bible uses "fruit" for character or deeds such as giving praise to God. The character of the fruit comes from the organism that produced it.

"Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves. You will know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes from thorn bushes or figs from thistles? Even so, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Therefore by their fruits you will know them" (Matthew 6:15-20).

Walking in fellowship with the Spirit yields the fruit of the Spirit. The Christian does not produce this fruit. He is not the source of the fruit but the Holy Spirit Himself.

The singular form of "fruit" suggests that the Holy Spirit produces a package of character. Love, joy and peace do not stand alone but in relation to each other. All nine manifestations of fruit stand in relation to each other. The works of the flesh are mutually antagonistic to each other but the fruit of the Spirit is the natural, coalescing result of the Holy Spirit controlling our lives.

The Spirit-filled believer always manifests a unity of nine character qualities. He does not love at the exclusion of inner peace. He carries all of these qualities when he is Spirit filled. It is possible to practice two or three fruit of the Spirit but the Spirit-filled believer produces all of them. Carnal Christians can produce some of these qualities but only a Spirit-filled believer produces all of them.

The idea here is one of complete submission to the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives. There are nine divine grapes hanging together in one cluster that come from the Spirit filled life.

Principle

The Holy Spirit is the source of the fruit of the Spirit.

Application

Romans and Galatians are parallel books but with different emphases. Romans is the work of the Son

of God for us and Galatians is the work of the Spirit of God in us. After God places enormous credit of His own righteousness to our account, He then piles further blessing on our souls by giving us operating assets to live the Christian life day by day.

Sin "works" in our sin capacity but fruit comes from the Spirit. He produces the fruit, not us. Fruit comes from the root; qualities of the Spirit come from the Holy Spirit. It is the product of divine energy, the living Holy Spirit. This is a power that comes from within, not without, like the works of the flesh.

The Holy Spirit is the agent of regeneration and comes to indwell each believer at the point of salvation. Then the Spirit goes to work immediately changing the believer. Before Pentecost, the Holy Spirit did not permanently indwell each believer. He worked around them but not in them. Since Pentecost, we have a close, intimate relationship to the Holy Spirit.

The moment we yield ourselves to the Spirit of God, this triggers a process of dynamic Christian living. By this, the Spirit progressively molds us into the image of Christ and, in turn, reproduces the character of Christ in us – the fruit of the Spirit. The purpose of sanctification is that we might become more accurate representatives of His character. God will finish this work when we meet Him face to face.

The Christian who walks in the Spirit produces the fruit of the Spirit. The flesh demands certain activity but the fruit of the Spirit naturally produces the character of Christ. The flesh is self-assertive and self-indulgent but the fruit of the Spirit reaches out to others. The one is human manipulation but the other is divine production.

The Holy Spirit does not produce some of the fruit of the Spirit in isolation from others. We cannot separate them for our convenience. We cannot isolate one characteristic from another. The Holy Spirit does not first produce love in us and then begins to work on joy at some later point. If that were the case, none of us would live long enough to finish the list!

love,

Love leads the list of virtues of the fruit of the Spirit because it is the supreme virtue of the

Christian life (1 Corinthians 13:13). It is a sacrificial love whereby we lose something in order to give to others.

"Love does no harm to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfillment of the law" (Romans 13:10).

"For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself'" (Galatians 5:14).

Biblical love is not primarily emotional but volitional. Agape love is not emotional love but love that springs from character. God loved us with His character even in the face of our sin,

"This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends" (John 15:12-13).

"But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8).

"By this we know love, because He laid down His life for us. And we also ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. But whoever has this world's goods, and sees his brother in need, and shuts up his heart from him, how does the love of God abide in him?" (1 John 3:16-17)

Principle

The outstanding hallmark of being a believer is love.

Application

The outstanding hallmark and essential earmark of being a believer is love. The Holy Spirit is the only one who can produce biblical love. This is not the kind of love you receive from your parents. This love cannot come from a close relationship with your wife. It does not come from human relationships but from the Spirit Himself.

One of the by-products of becoming a Christian is that the Holy Spirit revolutionizes our love toward God and other people. One of the benefits of salvation is that God drops a large lump of sugar in our hearts enabling us to love someone beside our mother, father, children or wife. That is

the best non-Christians can do sometimes they cannot even do that.

When a Christian comes into contact with the love of God, it changes their love to others. When we heard the gospel, God amazed us that He loved us so. His love so captured our hearts that it captivated and mastered us.

"Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us" (Romans 5:5).

God does not call upon us to love with our own puny, skinny anemic love. God enables us to love beyond our own natural brand of love. Natural love loves those who love us in return. Divine love enables us to love the unlovely. That is a potent, powerful love that goes beyond self. This love indwells us whether we know it or not. It waits there for the floodgates to open because the love of God dwells in our hearts.

"For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but faith working through love... For you, brethren, have been called to liberty; only do not use liberty as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another" (Galatians 5:6,13).

The Holy Spirit donates this love to us. The day our Savior died, He commanded us to operate on the virtue of love.

"A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another" (John 13:34-35).

Some of Jesus' disciples might have said, "Jesus, can't you wait until we mature more in our Christian lives to love my fellow disciples?" Maybe Matthew said, "I can't love that big mouth Peter sitting over there." James could have said, "How can you love a dreamer like John. He is always on cloud nine. You need to be practical and have your feet on the ground, you know." No, Jesus said, "love each other" right up front in their ministry

We might say, "OK, Lord, well, how much should we love fellow believers?" Jesus answer is clear --

"As I have loved you." "Oh, [gulp]. I did not think the standards were that high!"

Jesus added something more to this statement – "by this shall all men know that you are my disciples." Men will know that we are Jesus' disciples when we wear the badge of love. The badge of Christian discipleship is not witnessing or manifesting a gift of the Spirit but the production of divine love.

Jesus said, "Love you enemies (Matthew 5:43)." Some of us cannot even love our friends let alone our enemies.

joy,

"Joy" is the second sign of the fruit of the Spirit in our lives. The word "joy" means a state of delight. The Spirit filled believer carries a sense of gladness. Spirit-filled believers living with joy do not depend on circumstances that go their way to keep their equilibrium because they have great confidence in God's sovereign control of circumstances (Romans 8:28).

Joy is the sense of well-being that God is in control of all circumstances. That is why Nehemiah could say,

"Do not sorrow, for the joy of the Lord is your strength" (Nehemiah 8:10).

Joy is not happiness – the warm bubbly feeling in the self. Happiness depends on circumstances. Joy does not depend on circumstances for it is the inner animation of the soul that is glad for God's sovereign working in our souls. It is a sense of contentment in God's dealings with us.

"These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full" (John 15:11).

"Until now you have asked nothing in My name. Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full" (John 16:24).

"And these things we write to you that your joy may be full" (1 John 1:4).

Principle

Joy is a character quality produced by the Holy Spirit that has a sense of well being knowing that all is well in God's sovereign purposes in our lives.

Application

Joy is a character quality produced by the Holy Spirit that has a sense of well-being knowing that all is well in God's sovereign purposes in our lives. Joy does not come from living a rosy bed of ease but from knowing that God has all things in control. This joy comes from the Spirit-filled life.

"...for the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit" (Romans 14:17).

The Spirit filled believer carries joy in difficult circumstances. The fruit of the Spirit called "joy" does not depend on circumstances to orient one's life. A person with joy is independent from negative circumstances because he knows that God sovereignly controls all aspects of his life (Romans 8:28).

"In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ, whom having not seen you love. Though now you do not see Him, yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, receiving the end of your faith—the salvation of your souls" (1 Peter 1:6-9).

In the face of rejection and hatred of men, Jesus went to the cross with a sense of joy because He knew He was in the plan of God.

"Yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation" (Habakkuk).

"But let all those rejoice who put their trust in You; Let them ever shout for joy, because You defend them; Let those also who love Your name Be joyful in You" (Psalm 5:11)

"Be glad in the Lord and rejoice, you righteous; And shout for joy, all you upright in heart!" (Psalm 32:11).

"You will show me the path of life; In Your presence is fullness of joy; At Your

right hand are pleasures forevermore" (Psalm 16:11).

"Restore to me the joy of Your salvation, And uphold me by Your generous Spirit" (Psalm 51:12).

"...looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God" (Hebrews 12:2).

God expects to fill each believer with joy. Is your heart full of joy? Jesus wants it full, not ½ full. Do you walk around in the Christian life with a full tank of joy? Peter says we can have "joy unspeakable" even in adversity (1 Peter 1:8). God wants us to have persistent and insistent joy (1 Thessalonians 5:16).

"Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice!" (Philippians 4:4).

God Himself is blessed (1 Timothy 1:11). Since God is blessed, He wants His people to be blessed. A joy-oriented God wants joy-oriented people. If our hearts are without joy, it is our fault, not God's. There must be something in our soul that short-circuits that joy. We must remove whatever hinders our joy by confessing sin. God will bring up on the television screen of your soul what it is. Come to the place where you can say, "I do not have anything between myself and God."

peace,

Peace is a sense of tranquility (1 Corinthians 16:11). A person who lives in the Spirit's peace is free from anxiety and inner turmoil. This is a believer free from inner trouble and who can sit down on the inside because He knows God. He may face exceedingly great difficulty but he has a sense of peace through it all.

"Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit" (Romans 15:13).

Peace is that tranquility of mind that rests in God's will. It is a peace whereby one knows that he is reconciled to God and that God sovereignly cares for his soul.

This kind of person is much more likely to be at peace with others because she is at peace with God and herself. Therefore, she is not contentious, selfish and seeks self over others. The Greek word "peace" means to bind together.

Principle

The Spirit-filled believer can sit down on the inside.

Application

The Spirit-filled believer has a sense of inner repose in the face of adversity. It is an inner calm that comes from the Holy Spirit. This is a person who truly has it "together" with a sense of inner repose and settlement of soul in reversals.

"Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus....The things which you learned and received and heard and saw in me, these do, and the God of peace will be with you" (Philippians 4:6-7, 9).

The peace that comes from the fruit of the Spirit is not world-peace but peace in the heart. How can we expect world peace if people do not have peace in their hearts? Diplomats and statesmen try to make peace without peace in their own hearts. They do not have peace in their homes nor do they have peace with their colleagues! When they talk about world peace, they have little credibility.

Nor is this the peace that Christians receive when they embrace Jesus as their Savior (Romans 5:1). The peace that the believer receives at salvation is not the peace that comes from fruit of the Spirit. The peace here is the believer who can sit down on the inside. There is a peace that floods the heart of a Spirit-filled Christian so that he can stay on an even keel. He can keep his equilibrium in the face of provocation. This person does not blow her top or become volatile and volcanic at the drop of a hat. He does not shoot off his mouth revealing that his sin capacity controls him. No, this Christian carries internal tranquility, a quietness in her soul.

"And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also you were called in one body; and be thankful" (Colossians 3:15).

This is a peace that we cannot understand. Peace guards our soul like centuries guarding an instillation.

"...for the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit" (Romans 14:17).

"Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit" (Romans 15:13).

What is bothering you right now? Is something eating at you? Is it your boss, your business, your family? Have you considered the fact that it might be the Devil? The Devil will use anything and everything to cause you to lose internal tranquility. He wants you off balance and upset.

If we yield to Satan's suggestions, we will always be off balance. He will keep you in a stew so that you will easily work into a frenzy. Everything will bother you. People will eat at you. Their aggravations will chew you up, "They make me so mad. I am sick of them." No, it is not them who is the problem, but you. Why should you get angry over their aggravations? "Well, he gets under my skin and into my hair." Then get a haircut!

The more people agitate us, the more they gain the upper hand. They will attend our funeral and snicker. We are too sensitive and wear our feelings on our sleeves. We get hurt too easily. We would not carry that attitude at work or we would lose our job very quickly. People act differently in church than they do at work, "I'll not come to church for a couple weeks because someone hurt my feelings." If we acted like that at work, we would not get paid for a couple weeks! This attitude is just spiritual immaturity.

No one can get through life without standing by a freshly made grave. Though your heart may break, you can still have peace in your heart. Many people have peace before they go into surgery. They never felt so calm in their lives.

Why should you carry a sense of dissatisfaction with you? Why are you blue, discourage,

depressed and down? There is nothing big enough or important enough for you to lose your sense of internal peace. Don't rasp and irk yourself. Don't get yourself worked up and tied in knots. You have the fruit of the Spirit called peace available to you.

"But the meek shall inherit the earth, And shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace" (Psalm 37:11).

"Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me...Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid" (John 14:1, 27).

The second triad of a Spirit-filled believer is directed toward others.

longsuffering,

A person with "longsuffering" has a sense of forbearance, patience, constancy, steadfastness, perseverance and endurance. This person is slow to avenge wrongs done to him. Longsuffering carries the idea of patience toward people under provocation. It will not retaliate when treated unjustly.

There is another Greek word that means maintaining patience under heavy circumstances. There are then two terms for "longsuffering" or "patience." One has to do with longsuffering with circumstances and the other has to do with longsuffering with people. Our term is longsuffering with people.

A longsuffering person is a person who is slow to anger and is anxious to forgive injuries. He has more capacity to put up with personal insults. People cannot easily offend a longsuffering person.

God Himself carries the characteristic of longsuffering in His soul (Romans 2:4; 9:22; 1 Peter 3:20). Jesus as well is patient (1 Timothy 1:16; 2 Peter 3:15).

Principle

The Spirit-filled believer has a sense of calm in the face of provocation, a capacity to defer anger.

Application

Spirit-filled believers have a sense of calm in the face of provocation. They do not complain about other people nor do they allow themselves to become irritated. They have the capacity to defer anger and are willing to accept pain inflicted by others (Ephesians 4:2; Colossians 3:12; 1 Timothy 1:15, 16).

Longsuffering is the steadfastness of the soul under adversity. This person manifests the quality of forbearance under provocation from others. It does not retaliate even when wrongfully mistreated

"My brethren, take the prophets, who spoke in the name of the Lord, as an example of suffering and patience" (James 5:10).

Longsuffering entertains no thoughts of retaliation even when wrongfully treated. This is a person with a long temper.

"He who is slow to anger is better than the mighty, And he who rules his spirit than he who takes a city" (Proverbs 16:32).

Chrysostom said, "It is the grace of the man who could revenge himself and who does not, of the man who is slow to wrath." That is like God, for He could have wiped man off the face of the globe for his sin but He did not. It is incumbent upon us to long hold out our anger before taking action. If we defer anger, we can characterize ourselves as longsuffering. Those who are short-tempered do not suffer others very long. Longsuffering carries the qualities of forbearance and patient endurance.

How do you endure exasperating people? Do you lash back and bash them with words? So many of us suffer shortly when it comes to our family, "Well, I told her a hundred times that I don't like the sport's page detached from the front page!"

God expects us to suffer long even if the cause is just, that is, your wife may be a nag or your husband may be a slob! "You do not know the jerk that attends my church. He gripes about everything. His personality rasps me. His character is in the negative case. He has never had a positive thought in his life. He always gripes

about how the church is run." The Bible tells to put up with them.

Suffering people difficult because they hit us in the area of our preferences toward life. It touches the world where we live. You say, "But he is a personality assassin." God gives no exceptions for longsuffering. Suffer them long. Keep your attitude in a state of prolonged freedom from revenge.

The length of our patience with people determines the measure of our spirituality. Take the guff. Keep your mouth shut. Bitterness or retaliation never improves anything. A long temper always gains victory over the short temper. The quality of self-restraint does not punish others. It is not hasty to retaliate. It does not surrender to adverse persons or succumb to duress.

"Love suffers long..." (1 Corinthians 13:4).

Love does not repay hate for hate or scorn for scorn. Anyone can answer a fool according to his folly. It takes two to tango and it takes two to make a quarrel. That is why God asks us to be loooooong suffering. It is the Holy Spirit who produces the fruit of the capacity to suffer for a long time.

"For consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls" (Hebrews 12:3).

Most believers have a low boiling point. That means that most of us boil most of the time. To counteract this, the Holy Spirit produces longsuffering in us.

God took an oath that every born-again person will be just like the Lord Jesus (Romans 8:29). He inaugurates this the moment we become Christians and keeps working on it until we meet Him face to face. The sin of short temperedness shortcuts this process. It is time to stop blaming others no matter if we believe that we are in the right. The sooner we come to that position, the sooner we will get squared away with God. The fruit of the Spirit of longsuffering is available to us if we allow the Holy Spirit to control us.

The second triad of the fruit of the Spirit is directed toward others. We now come to the second fruit in the second triad.

kindness,

"Kindness" carries the idea of goodness, generosity. A good person is upright toward others thus he has a sense of kindness toward them. This quality is both an attitude and an action. It expresses itself in implementing kindness in concrete compassion toward others.

Kindness is benevolence in action. This is a person who says the right thing at the right time. Sometimes a kind person is someone who keeps his mouth shut at the right time.

Kindness is compassion in action, a category of love. It is someone who acknowledges his grace from God and so acts upon that grace toward others.

Principle

A kind person cares about others more than themselves.

Application

Kindness is active benevolence toward others that mimics God's kindness toward us (Romans 2:4; Ephesians 2:7). If God is kind toward us, we should be kind toward others (2 Corinthians 6:6; Colossians 3:12).

A kind person is not occupied with himself. If what we say injures or slanders another person, this is the opposite of kindness.

"Love suffers long and is kind..." (1 Corinthians 13:4).

"Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering..." (Colossians 3:12).

Sometimes it is better to keep our mouth shut if what we say hurts others. We are very adept at injuring and slandering others. If there is anyone on the face of the earth that ought to be kind to others, it is the child of God.

"Kindness" is the opposite of self-assertiveness and self-interest. A kind person carries a spirit of equability for he is not cast down by defeat nor overly elated at some victory. He does not react to every adversity that comes his way. On the other hand, he completely depends on God and commits his cause to Him. He leaves vengeance with God sense of justice.

goodness,

"Goodness" is a quality of a Spirit filled believer that does good to another person although in doing so, it might cause them pain. The idea is that a good person orients himself toward the benefit of others. It is possible to be moral but not good, a willingness to give oneself sacrificially for others.

This word can carry the idea of "stern" goodness but always with the idea that that kind of goodness benefits the person receiving it.

Principle

Goodness is moral excellence – a generosity of soul that benefits others.

Application

Goodness is an act of grace toward someone else. This stems from being oriented to God's grace. This is latent in a grace-motivated person who is so because he has no illusions about himself. Therefore, he does not deal with other on the basis of merit. He knows that he cannot make deals with God by meriting His favor so he does not let others make deals with him to receive his blessing. He gives to others without any strings attached.

Christians should be good in character and constitution – upright in soul and action. A Christian with a high capacity for goodness can reach out to others even when they do not deserve it. He can be good to someone without liking his or her personality or attractiveness.

Many Christians try to humanly bend out something that looks like goodness. These people are not motivated by grace but by self-righteousness. In this case, people are motivated by what benefits themselves rather than others. The grace Christian does not twist himself like a pretzel to look like goodness.

Barnabas was a "good man." He was not as brilliant or as gifted as Paul but he was a "good man." He did not make himself good. God did that. God changed him so that he was benign in his attitude toward others and generous in material and spiritual matters. The Spirit of God always moves the child of God to live out the Word of God. He always moves Spirit-filled Christians toward generosity. Also, a Spirit-filled

believer does not believe anything contrary to the Bible.

"For he was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and of faith. And a great many people were added to the Lord" (Acts 11:24).

God is in the business of making bad people good but no one is good in himself or herself. God does this judicially. After He forensically declares us right with Himself, He then begins to change the character of those who own Him as God and Savior.

"Now I myself am confident concerning you, my brethren, that you also are full of goodness..." (Romans 15:14).

"For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light (for the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, righteousness, and truth), finding out what is acceptable to the Lord" (Ephesians 5:8-10).

faithfulness

"Faithfulness" here is the character of fidelity. Those are people who keep their promises. People can count on these people with assurance that they will keep their word or do what they say. They are reliable.

People who carry the character of fidelity carry convictions about certain norms. We can rely on them because they commit themselves to those norms. They will be true to what they say because their beliefs transcend the circumstance or situation. They do not put their finger to the wind to watch for the prevailing opinion. They do what is right even in the face of opposition. We can count on them because they will be true to their convictions regardless of the context. They are trustworthy and true.

Principle

Faithfulness is the quality that renders a person trustworthy or reliable.

Application

Genuine salvation faith produces an ongoing vital faith. A "faithful" person unconditionally trusts

God alone. He does not doubt that God sovereignly works all things together for good.

"And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose" (Romans 8:28).

The Holy Spirit not only enables us to initially believe in Christ but He also enables us to sustain unconditional trust in God. It is reliance on God for our daily Christian walk.

Doubt dims the soul and makes ongoing closeness with the Lord impossible.

"But I have prayed for you, that your faith should not fail; and when you have returned to Me, strengthen your brethren" (Luke 22:32).

"My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, 3 knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience" (James 1:2).

It is the object of our faith that makes our faith legitimate. Because we believe something intensely does not make it true nor does not believing it make it untrue. When a Christian believes a promise from God, that does not make the promise true. The promise is true whether we believe whether we believe it or not. However, if we fail to believe it, we lose the enjoyment of it.

Faith enables us to enter into the reality of what is objectively true. Faith sees the invisible but not the nonexistent (Tozer). That is the difference between faith and superstition.

Trust never tests God's promises. Testing God's promises shows lack of confidence in God. On the other hand, those who trust God can take the shocks of life. When that telephone call comes, a believer with strong faith can cope more powerfully than a Christian with little faith.

Galatians 5:23

"...gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law"

gentleness,

Trench, a Greek scholar, renders "gentleness" as inwrought grace exercised chiefly towards God. This person carries a temper that accepts all God's

dealings with us as good. He endures anything that may come his way because he accepts adverse circumstances as from God. He does not fight God on any issue.

Meekness is not weakness but unselfishness. There is a big difference between weakness and selflessness. A meek person is a powerful person. Moses was a strong leader but at the same time bore meekness in his soul. He did not have the attitude of haughty self-sufficiency.

Neither does meekness mean self-effacement. Meekness means that we have no illusions about ourselves. We think in terms of inwrought grace. Everything that we have and are is from God's grace. We deserve nothing from God. Everything is a gift from God. Neither do we deal with God or others on a merit system.

Jesus called Himself "meek" (Matthew 11:28, 29) His mission was to do the Father's will. Jesus was meek because He understood that He had all the infinite resources of God at his call.

"Now I, Paul, myself am pleading with you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ— who in presence am lowly among you, but being absent am bold toward you" (2 Corinthians 10:1).

Principle

A meek person understands that he has the infinite resources of God at his call.

Application

A meek person does not try to make deals with God. He views himself as worth nothing before God. He operates on inwrought grace exercised chiefly toward God so he does not resist God's sovereign actions on his soul. He does not fight God's will. Everything that he has, he has from God.

When Shimei cursed David and flung stones at him, David accepted that action as from God, not from Shimei (2 Samuel 16:11). David accepted this action as an action of God's justice.

A meek orientation does not mean that we have no regard for self but that we do not assert ourselves for our own sake. This is the opposite of pride. When we completely commit personal vengeance to God's justice, we depend on God.

This not to say that we cannot stand up for ourselves but it does mean that we do not assert our rights for our own sake independently of God.

When a "meek" person accepts God's dealings with us a just and right, this is grace shaped into his soul. He recognizes God's dealings in his life and accepts those dealings as God's perfect will. This is the polar opposite of self-assertiveness. This is a person who does not live for self-interest but for others. He has a sense of equanimity toward others.

"Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted" (Galatians 6:1).

"Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering..." (Colossians 3:12).

"But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear..." (1 Peter 3:15).

God does not take delight in weakness. Meekness is not weakness. God does not want us to come to Him with our tails between our legs like a whipped dog. God does not take delight in dispensing His grace to whipped dogs that wag their tails out of fear. He does not hold feeble character in high value.

Some people by nature are more mild-mannered than others. This is not meekness. A good disposition comes from our heritage, not our character. This would mean that a person who has coarse character could not develop meekness in the power of the Spirit. Moses was meek, not because he was that way by nature. He killed an Egyptian in a rage. A meek person is someone whom God orients to a blessed life (Matthew 11:28). Jesus does not say, "Blessed are those who have the greatest success in life" or "Blessed are the gifted and clever" but "Blessed are the meek."

Meekness is the state whereby a person enjoys who and what God is. We cannot acquire meekness by following some overt behavior pattern. Meekness comes from God who works within us. We cannot have this apart from God.

When we have it, we operate independent from external influences on our souls for we enjoy God regardless of circumstance. We cannot make God blessed but He can make us blessed.

"Therefore lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness, and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls" (James 1:21).

What happens within us is more important than what happens to us. If we build no inner buttresses, then we will fall prey to what happens to us. We have no defense against the enemy. Some fall prey to bitterness because they do not have a counteracting quality of character to stand against it.

self-control

"Self-control implies that a Spirit-filled Christians can control their desires. "Self-control" is self-mastery over a person or thing. It is inherent power over the self. Unrestrained flesh indulges the self but a person walking in the Spirit has power to control inner urges than a person walking in the flesh.

Biblical self-control is the concentration of the power of the Spirit toward the end of doing God's will. This goes beyond abstinence or unadulterated power in self. A purpose or end in view is always at the heart of biblical self-control. There is a reason beyond self to deny oneself of something whether it is the control of our tongue or our anger. We watch where we let our eyes fall because we want to please the Lord.

Principle

The Spirit-filled believer has the power of the Spirit to enable him to master his passions.

Application

Do you have control over your temper? Spirit-filled believers have the power to overcome their anger because they operate in the power of the Spirit.

"He who is slow to anger is better than the mighty, And he who rules his spirit than he who takes a city" (Proverbs 16:32)

Joseph exercised self-restraint in the presence of his brothers (Genesis 43:31). A self-controlled person can rule his anger although he might have just cause for his anger.

The dynamic Christian always concerns himself with not only his character but also his reputation because he does not want non-Christians to lose credibility in Christ.

"Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may obtain it. And everyone who competes for the prize is temperate [self-controlled] in all things. Now they do it to obtain a perishable crown, but we for an imperishable crown. Therefore I run thus: not with uncertainty. Thus I fight: not as one who beats the air. But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified" (1 Corinthians 9:24-27).

Against such

The word "such" indicates that this list of the fruits of the Spirit is representative of other fruits of the Spirit. This is not an exhaustive list. The Holy Spirit will do more for us than simply what this list indicates.

there is no law

God puts no ban on the fruits of the Spirit. There is no law forbidding the fruit of the Spirit because they fully discharge the demands of God's character [the law]. Obedience by our own bootstraps cannot fulfill the demands of the law. The law cannot prevail over the fruit of the Spirit because the fruit of the Spirit transcends the law. Paul says in effect, "So you want to merit God's favor by obedience to the law? There is no law that prohibits the fruits of the Spirit and no law necessary to produce them. There is no obedience to produce the fruits of the Spirit."

The fruit of the Spirit does not require an act of Congress to gain God's approval. The fruit of the Spirit is the natural outflow of walking in the Spirit. No law makes a person love or forgive or give peace. A person walking in the Spirit does not need law for anything but something that establishes standards. Living the Spirit-controlled

life goes beyond anything the law can provide. The law attempts to keep sin in check but does not have the power to do so. The Holy Spirit can do what the law cannot do.

Principle

The power of the Holy Spirit can do what obedience to the law by operation bootstraps cannot do.

Application

The purpose of the law is to bring sin under control but in doing so it provokes greater rebellion against God's standards. Walking in the Spirit (5:16), on the other hand, wars against the flesh (5:17). This live goes against our natural tendencies.

The law cannot reach the scope of living by the Spirit filled life because spirituality goes far beyond morality. Government cannot pass legislation to control the sinful appetites of man to help him control his behavior. Even the law of God cannot legislate spirituality. On the other hand, a believer controlled by the Holy Spirit, does not need law to govern her life because she has the dynamics of the Holy Spirit living within her.

Motivation comes from within the Spirit filled believer. Christianity is not primarily a system of morality but a system of spirituality. Christian dynamics do not come from legislation but from life, the life of the Spirit. The Holy Spirit takes the life of Christ and makes them real in our lives (John 16:14).

Galatians 5:24

"And those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires"

Paul shows how the believer has the potential to conquer sin by his position in Christ (5:24-26).

And those who are Christ's

We must distinguish "those who are Christ's" from those who are not. A child of God belongs to Christ. Believers belong to Christ. Not everyone is a Christian.

"For if we live, we live to the Lord; and if we die, we die to the Lord. Therefore,

whether we live or die, we are the Lord's" (Romans 14:8).

"And you are Christ's, and Christ is God's" (1 Corinthians 3:23).

"Do you look at things according to the outward appearance? If anyone is convinced in himself that he is Christ's, let him again consider this in himself, that just as he is Christ's, even so we are Christ's" (2 Corinthians 10:7).

"Nevertheless the solid foundation of God stands, having this seal: 'The Lord knows those who are His,' and, 'Let everyone who names the name of Christ depart from iniquity'" (2 Timothy 2:19).

have crucified the flesh

"Crucified" is not self-crucifixion but our positional crucifixion in Christ. This is something that God does, not us. When Christ died on the cross, He died there for our sins. God identifies Christians with Christ's death and resurrection. Our part is to apply that work of Christ to sin in our lives. We do this by placing faith in Christ initially at salvation and progressively through confessing sins by faith.

"Flesh" is that force that makes us violate a holy God. Jesus crucified the flesh. The grammar here (aorist indicative) indicates a definite and decisive act. This does not say that this is something that we must do. He did not say, "Those who are Christ's should crucify the flesh." The reality of crucifixion took place when we put our faith in the finished work of Christ on the cross.

Jesus settled the issue of our sins on the cross and we believed Him. When we recognize this as an ongoing fact, we make victory actual in our experience. Christ made the positional truth of a crucified flesh actual on the cross. We make it real to ourselves by faith.

Neither does this mean that Christ eradicated the present active function of our sin capacity on the cross. It simply means that God judged our sins by Christ's death on the cross in a judicial or positional sense.

Jesus nailed our flesh one and for all on the cross (Romans 6:3,4,6). This is true of the believer in position and in principle. It is important to understand that Paul does not appeal to self-

crucifixion here but to our identity in Christ's death (2:20) and resurrection (Romans 6:1-6; 11-12).

Principle

We appeal to the cross by faith to live the Christian life.

Application

It is vital that we recognize that Christ crucified the flesh, that it was His work on the cross that did this. Jesus settled the issue there. This means Christ's crucifixion is our crucifixion. We do not try to do what is already done; we do not crucify ourselves. We believe that Christ crucified us.

When we appeal to the cross by faith, we draw on the finished work of Christ to live the Christian life. Faith takes hold of God's facts and appropriates them to experience. When we lay hold on the naked Word of God, we honor God's promises.

We do not have to pray about being crucified; we are crucified with Christ. This is the crux of how we get victory in the Christian life. If we do not know our position in Christ, we do not know how to live the Christian life. Many sincere Christians try to crucify themselves but they always end in frustration. It is oh so unnecessary because it is already an accomplished fact.

with its passions

Paul describes "flesh" in terms of "passions and desires" seeking gratification independent from God. These are the byproducts of the flesh. Jesus gained the victory over passions and desires on the cross. A "passion" is an attitude with a propensity to violate the character of God.

"For when we were in the flesh, the sinful passions which were aroused by the law were at work in our members to bear fruit to death" (Romans 7:5).

and desires

Our position in Christ's death provides for us the facility to conquer passions and desires. A "desire" is a craving or longing. It actively reaches out to find gratification.

Principle

The flesh always manifests itself first in attitudes then in action.

Application

The moment we placed our faith in the finished work of Christ on the cross, a mighty transaction took place in the offices of heaven. God declared us as right as Jesus is right in His eyes the split second we were born again. Our life took on meaning, point and purpose. As far as God is concerned, everything that we were in our unregenerate state died at that moment. From that moment, we have new privileges and status with God.

Then we made an awful discovery – we still have the capacity to violate God. Our flesh cannot produce anything right in God's eyes so God always bypasses it. God never attempts to refine our sin capacity. He never saves it. He never educates it. God always bypasses it for another option.

Some of us try to get ahead of others at their expense. That is an unholy passion or desire. If our desire is to be thought well of no matter the motive, then that is an evil ambition or craving.

The byproducts of the flesh are "passions and desires." When envy, resentment and jealousy crop up, God's place for them is the cross. That surge of temper and desire to thrust ourselves forward or to make ourselves seen and heard belong on the cross. These things do not come from God. They are unadulterated flesh.

People who walk in the Spirit want to please Jesus. They have no time for pettiness. They take no notice if people snub them. People can overlook them and set their advice aside but they still please the Lord, "I am going to be a blessing, not a cursing. I will not expect anything but I will give everything." That is victory. This spirituality carries us beyond the petty, little things that sidetrack so many Christians.

Galatians 5:25

"If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit"

Paul now calls us to action based on our status in the Spirit. The dynamics of the Spirit should arrest our proclivity to criticize others.

If we live in the Spirit,

Paul's argument is "if" then "let us." The "if" relates to principle and the "let us" relates to application. God always appeals to living the Christian life based on our standing in Christ and the Spirit.

The "if" in the phrase "If we live in the Spirit" is not hypothetical but actual. Christians live in spiritual lives because they entered into God's life at salvation. Paul assumes that every believer lives in the Spirit. Since we hold status with the Spirit, we should walk according to that status.

let us also walk in the Spirit

The word "walk" means to be draw up in line, to hold to, to go in a line or row: to go in battle-order. There is emphasis on the word "walk" in the Greek. The word "walk" means to walk in a straight line, to conduct one's self (rightly). This is a different Greek word than the word "walk" in verse 16. The word "walk" in verse 16 means to walk around (as a course of life). The word "walk" in this verse means to take a step at a time in line with a leader. With each step we take spiritually, we must walk in line with power of the Spirit.

God wants us to walk in line with the Holy Spirit, to walk according to His principles. The Christian who conforms to the standards of the Spirit, lives in God's will. Spiritual Christians get in line to march behind the Holy Spirit.

The believer can walk confidently because the Spirit makes it possible for him to live beyond his natural powers. When we keep in step with the Spirit, He enables us to walk our talk.

We can walk in the Spirit because God crucified us to the cross with Christ in terms of spiritual standing. That was an act of sheer grace. God did the doing. Legalism that imposes regulations from without cannot provide what the inner dynamics of the Spirit can afford. When we yield ourselves to the Holy Spirit, He takes us beyond the system that imposes rules from without. This form of spirituality is a far cry from the charge of license from the legalists.

Principle

God always appeals to us to walk with Him based on our standing in Christ.

Application

Legalism always tends toward the pride and arrogance of self-effort. It always misses the true ground of glorying – Christ and His work on the cross of Christ. We walk in the Spirit on the authority of the work of Christ for us.

In view of the fact that all Christians live in the Spirit, they ought to line themselves up with the Spirit. A grace-oriented person always casts himself on the Spirit of God. When this happens, we stay in harmony with other Christians. We do not provoke or cause envy in them (5:26) because we walk in step with the Holy Spirit.

Galatians 5:26

"Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another"

Paul lays out a challenge to believers in Galatian to not allow tension to develop between them because of spiritual pride [legalism always fosters pride].

Let us not become conceited,

Paul begins with a negative exhortation to not allow ourselves to become conceited. The word "conceited" means to glory without cause. It is an empty glory because we cannot justify our glory. This is a person who is falsely proud. A "conceited" person operates at the polar opposite of God's plan for creation – to manifest God's glory because of His grace. This glory is not our own but His.

"Conceited" means empty glory. These are people who live in vacuous illusions about themselves. They portray themselves as bigger and better than everyone else but there is no basis for their claims. They think that they are more spiritual whereas they are arrogant legalists.

Principle

Conceit turns the tables on God's plan for creation to seek credit for self rather than God.

Application

Pride and ambition always seeks to be more important, richer and wiser than anyone else. Is your aim as a Christian to be more valuable than other believers around you?

Some Christians are more interested in portraying their status symbols than in fellowship with others. The idea is that they want to be on top of the pile. They seek honor for selfish reasons. They want the credit for everything that happens around them.

There is no church big enough for some egos who want to be better than everyone else. They lug unadulterated pride into their church. Christianity is no platform for self-portrayal. What right do we have to usurp the glory of God?

provoking one another,

There are two outcomes to conceit: 1) We irritate others and 2) We cause others to envy us. Conceit always disrupts the cause of Christ.

"Provoking" is to cause irritation in others. The word "provoking" means to call forth, as to a contest. The idea is to arouse evil activity in another by comparison. These people insult others at the drop of a hat. They get underneath the skin of others and deliberately irk them.

Principle

Pride always brings out the worst in other people.

Application

Pride always brings out the worst in other people. It challenges and sparks defensive pride in others. Some people provoke others to good works. Other people simply provoke others!

When we line ourselves with the Holy Spirit, we will not allow conceit to grip our hearts for it always exasperates others. We rasp others by our pride. We irk them. Some of us have a special gift with this. Some say the right thing at the wrong time or the wrong thing at the right time. They are born inside out.

envying one another

A person who envies is a person who begrudges another person's benefit. This is a person who bears ill will and malice toward real or presumed advantage experienced by someone else. These

people consume themselves with rank and station in their church or other Christian organizations.

Principle

Stronger types get provoked at pride while weaker types envy the apparent pride of others.

Application

If God has a purpose for our lives, if He gifted us in a special way, why do we envy others? Is it that we cannot accept the will of God for us? In this case, we do not want God's plan for us; we want our plan for us.

We must chose between carnality and spirituality. We cannot live half spiritual and half carnal. It is either/or, not both. We cannot be carnal and spiritual simultaneously. Consecutively, yes. Simultaneously, no. God's plan for us is to allow the Holy Spirit to control us completely, not our passions and desires.

Galatians 6:1

"Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted"

Although the believer is free from the Mosaic Law, he is nevertheless not free from the law of Christ, the law of love (6:1-10). We show love by extending compassion toward those who fall. Legalists deal with others by censoriousness.

Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass,

The word "overtaken" means to be run down by a sin. The "if" indicates that this is a hypothetical case of Christians who attempt to flee from a sin but they misjudge its speed and power, so sin overtakes them before they are spiritually prepared to deal with it. The idea is not that these believers did not sin deliberately for every sin is deliberate.

"Trespass" carries the idea of stumbling or falling beside. Believers who stumble over a sin that they did not anticipate or that they underestimated. They flirted with a sin and it rose up and quickly bit them. They make a false step spiritually and the fault will expose them. Be sure your sins will find you out.

Principle

Sin will sneak up on us if we are not alert spiritually.

Application

Sin sneaks up on us from behind and will catch us in its trap. The Devil sets booby traps for every Christian. Christians should always stay on guard against sin. Circumspection is a Christian value.

you who are spiritual

The word "spiritual" means one who has the capacity to relate to God (5:16-17). A spiritual Christian "walks in the Spirit" (5:16) and allows the Holy Spirit to govern his life (5:22-23). It is the task of spiritual believers to bring back those who fall into fellowship by both rebuke and encouragement.

"But he who is spiritual judges all things, yet he himself is rightly judged by no one" (1 Corinthians 2:15).

"And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual people but as to carnal, as to babes in Christ" (1 Corinthians 3:1).

Principle

Only the spiritual are qualified to restore backslidden Christians.

Application

People out of fellowship cannot help those out of fellowship get back into fellowship. Restoration of fallen Christians is delicate work. We do not send a butcher to perform brain surgery for we cannot entrust delicate brain surgery to just anyone. Some people drive fallen believers further away by butchering them spiritually. Not every Christians has the right to discipline those who fall (1 Timothy 3:1-13; \ 1:5-9); only the spiritually oriented believer has that right.

The first objective in restoring people spiritually is to help the fallen believer to understand his "trespass." The first step of restoration is to help him acknowledge his violation of God's standards.

When we say that the spiritually strong must take charge over the spiritually weak, we do not imply that the spiritual are to stick their noses into the business of the fallen Christian. This is especially true when it comes to motives.

"Judge not, that you be not judged"
(Matthew 7:1).

The purpose of church discipline is restoration, not punishment. How often do we see the reverse of God's purpose in church correction? The purpose is to "restore," not to hurt fallen people further.

Restore such a one

Spiritually minded Christians should "restore" the Christian overtaken by sin. Secular Greek uses "restore" for setting broken bones or mending fishing nets (Matthew 4:21). The idea is to restore to the former good condition.

The idea of "restore" is not that we are to criticize fallen Christians for their sin but that they will criticize themselves. That is confession (1 Corinthians 11:31; 1 John 1:9). Criticism of others will not help them get back into fellowship. The true issue is whether they are critical of what they have done.

The present tense in the Greek indicates that we should make it a habit to restore fallen believers when we see them.

Principle

Christians are in the business of unscrambling scrambled eggs.

Application

Fallen believers need mending, not tearing. They need restoration, not trampling. The objective is to restore them to an appropriate spiritual condition. We just go about the business of resetting broken spiritual bones.

"Now may the God of peace who brought up our Lord Jesus from the dead, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you complete [restore] in every good work to do His will, working in you what is well pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen" (Hebrews 13:20-21).

Instead of bringing fallen people back to fellowship, some churches drive them farther away. They put them out of church so they lose contact with spiritual Christians. Instead of giving

them help, we kick people while they are down. We treat them worst than the lost – worse than dirt. The only time it is justified to put people out of church is where there is implacability to God's authority (1 Corinthians 5:1f).

Do you take the responsibility to restore fallen believers back into fellowship? Many view this as an invasion of privacy but this is not a privacy issue when it comes to the family of God. Family members have the right to address concerns with one another.

Neither should a spiritual believer be overly sympathetic with a person out of fellowship. Empathy is one thing but sympathy is another. There is a delicate balance between being objectively critical on the one hand and overly subjectively sympathetic on the other. This is why God requires a spirit-filled believer to make these judgments.

If someone sins in an area where we are not weak, we might be tempted to be overly censorious with him or her. Some of us get a strange sense of elation by looking down our noses at a fallen believer because we have a particular strength in that area. They make us look good. In doing this, we make ourselves susceptible to our fallen nature because we are not alert to our own peculiar vulnerabilities. It makes us feel good that we have not committed this sin.

in a spirit of gentleness,

Restoration of a fallen Christian is to be done in a "spirit of gentleness." Gentleness is not weakness but the spiritual strength to help someone who falls. The idea is not to punish the fallen person but to help them. Anger is not a good methodology for correcting them. Meekness is the right method.

"Gentleness" is a fruit of the Spirit (5:23). A person who seeks to restore someone else must first recognize that God restored him by grace.

"Gentleness" is meekness and meekness is in-wrought grace. A meek person recognizes that he is what he is because of God's grace, not because of something in himself.

Principle

Gentleness is grace in action.

Application

Where the spirit of censoriousness prevails in our dealing with those who fall, we lose the idea of grace. We are in debt to God's grace because of our own sin as Christians. We earn or deserve nothing from Him. Everything we have as Christians is from His unadulterated grace.

All of us violate the Lord at some point. Grace means first that we receive unmerited blessing from God and, secondly, it should mean that we give undeserved blessing to other people. The best attitude that we can have in dealing with fallen people is to remember that we are the subject of God's grace as well as the fallen believer. It is by grace that we are here; it is by the grace of God that they are still here.

considering yourself lest you also be tempted

The spiritual Christian should keep in mind that he might find himself in the same place as the fallen Christian some day. If we stay alert to our own vulnerability, it will help us maintain a steady and balanced approach to others. No one is immune from falling into sin. No believer grows in maturity to the point that he goes beyond susceptibility to temptation.

"Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall. No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it" (1 Corinthians 10:12-13).

The word "considering" means to look attentively at, to fix the attention upon a thing with an interest in it. When considering temptation to sin, bring it close to home. There is a great danger in neglecting our own spiritual condition. Maybe we are the next on the Devil's list. We may be next on his agenda. The possibility is always there. That is why we must concentrate on the bobby traps the Devil might lay for us when we try to help fallen believers.

Principle

Christians should reconnoiter themselves.

Application

Christians should reconnoiter themselves. We must watch ourselves very carefully lest we fall into the sin from which we attempt to deliver others.

All of us stand on the slippery slope of temptations peculiar to us as individuals. Each of us is vulnerable to certain kinds of sins.

"Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us [these are sins that are peculiar to each individual], and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us..." (Hebrews 12:1).

Galatians 6:2

"Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ"

Verse two is an extension of verse one. This verse shows that the second responsibility of Christians toward fallen believers is to help them through their problems after they are restored. It is not enough to restore them to fellowship and then neglect them.

Bear one another's burdens,

Spiritual Christians bear the heavy "burdens" of others because bearing burdens is an act of love. Although we can cast our burdens on God (Psalm 5:22; 1 Peter 5:7), we should be able to cast them on fellow believers as well.

The word burden here refers to something that someone cannot carry on one's own; it is something that puts extreme strain on our spiritual capital. The word means a weight, heaviness or load. It is a load that presses down on us, a heavy burden. Fallen Christians need the help of spiritual Christians. The burden here is the burden of failing the Lord Jesus. Sin can be oppressive.

The words "one another's" means another of the same kind. We are to bear the burdens of Christians. We cannot bear the burdens of unbelievers in the same way we can a Christian's burdens. We can bless other Christians by helping them develop a biblical perspective on life. This is not sentimental love but true love. We have

something to say to those who need God's promises.

Principle

Christians are to get under the load other Christians bear.

Application

After God restores fallen believers to fellowship, often Satan immediately attacks them because they are still vulnerable to their sin. This is why it is imperative that spiritual Christians continue to walk them through their problems. Unfortunately, pride keeps some people from allowing others to bear their burden and walk them through their problems.

Many of us never know the weight other Christians carry. When Christians get under the load of other Christians, it's a lot easier to carry the weight. If we offer our shoulder, it makes the load lighter.

Some loads are just too heavy for one person to lift. It's good to be able to say, "Lend me your back, will you? I can't carry this load by myself. My heart is broken. I am not strong enough to bear this alone. I think between the two of us, we can do it."

Some of us are so busy with our own problems that we do not take time for others. We work long hours. We have our own interests. We have to meet the needs of our families. We don't have time for one another. We live in such busy times that our goals get in the way of our care for people. We do not have time for each other anymore.

The law of Christ compels us to love other Christians. We are to love them even when they are not lovely. You may argue, "But you don't know what he said about me. He spread false information about me." I say, forgive him and forget it. Help him. What he said about you is not the issue. The issue is his need. Forbear his lie against you (Colossians 3:12,13). Lovingly put up with him. In grace, swallow your pride. Other people put up with you, don't they? You are not all that perfect either! You have some irritating habits too. We all have our blind spots.

"Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving

preference to one another..." (Romans 12:10).

When some part of our body hurts, the whole body sympathizes with that hurt. If we hammer our finger, it isn't just our finger that hurts but the whole body. Other parts of the body rushes to get a Band-Aid and medicine. We are part of the body of Christ, when another believer hurts, we should hurt. This is empathy, not sympathy. It is the desire to identify with the hurts of fellow believers. We need to rally around one another. Get under the load and help out.

"Therefore comfort each other and edify one another, just as you also are doing" (1 Thessalonians 5:11).

Most people come to church to see what they can get out of it. We live in a consumer generation. This is the wrong slant to take on churchgoing. How many of us go to church to give? Do you ask yourself when you go to church, "How can I make a contribution to someone today? Make me a blessing to someone today. It makes little difference if I get anything out of the sermon or am blessed by the choir, I am going to give to someone today."

"Finally, all of you be of one mind, having compassion for one another; love as brothers, be tenderhearted, be courteous; not returning evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary blessing, knowing that you were called to this, that you may inherit a blessing" (1 Peter 3:8-9).

"Be hospitable to one another without grumbling. As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God" (1 Peter 4:9-10).

Some of us are so discouraged that we have little left over for others. Discouraged Christians cannot encourage others. When you get two discouraged Christians together, look out! That is why we must sound the note of encouragement. Everyone becomes discouraged from time to time. Declare before God that you are going to be an encouragement to someone, not a discouragement; a blessing, not a cursing; a wing, not a weight.

People all around us face domestic problems, financial problems, problems with children, problems with employees and with employers. We can cast our burdens on the Lord but God wants us to cast them on one another as well.

and so fulfill the law of Christ

The "law of Christ" is love. This is a contrast to the legalists who want to revert to the Mosaic law. Paul says in effect, "If you legalists want to carry legal burdens, try the burden of Christ - love" (Galatians 5:14).

"A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another" (John 13:34-35)

A believer that loves fallen Christians always has their best interest in view - their restoration. This is true love. Criticism is not love. Legalists love to legislate, but spiritual Christians loves his fallen brother and picks him up and carries him until his spirituality is restored. This operates the same way God deals with us - in grace.

The word "fulfill" comes from two words: up and to fill. When we restore fallen Christians we fill up the love of Christ. We satisfy His demands. This is more than partial fulfillment of Christ's standard. We make His love complete.

Principle

The spiritual Christian is his brother or sister's keeper.

Application

The legalist goes along with Satan's strategy of accusing our brethren (Revelation 12:10). The spiritual Christian is his brother's keeper. There is no place for a hard heart toward someone who stumbles. Get under the load of someone who falls. Lift them up. Don't kick them when they are down. Oh, may the church create an atmosphere of compassion and forbearance for those who fall in sin.

"We then who are strong ought to bear with the scruples of the weak, and not to please ourselves" (Romans 15:1).

The principle of grace has a practical outflow. We receive in grace and we give in grace. This is Christian fellowship. A Christian not connected to a local church knows nothing of this. They go it alone and they suffer alone. The Bible clearly indicates that believers join themselves to a body of believers who believe the Bible, share their faith and care for one another.

Legalists constantly overestimate their spiritual capital. They think they are beyond a fall. This is pride. People who have an overly good opinion of themselves are vulnerable to a fall. Once we lose the idea that our power is in Christ, we put ourselves at great risk.

"I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing" (John 15:5).

"I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me" (Philippians 4:13).

We cannot sit in judgment on those who are spiritually vulnerable because everyone is vulnerable to a fall. All of us need to throw ourselves on the power of Christ.

Galatians 6:3

"For if anyone thinks himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself"

For

The "for" gives further qualification to someone who attempts to restore a fallen believer. Not only should spiritual Christians take caution not to fall into the same temptation when restoring others but also they should beware of pride creeping into their thinking.

if anyone thinks himself to be something,

The "if" here assumes a fact. Some Galatians were actually thinking that they were something. They had an ego problem. In their legalism, they had come to the conclusion, as the word "thinks" clearly implies, that they were a cut above other people.

when he is nothing,

We are not sufficient in ourselves, so why should we assume that we are above Christians who fall?

Arrogance will keep us from assessing our true place. None of us have the right to imagine ourselves as a cut above other Christians.

Legalists constantly overestimate their spiritual capital. They do not value their debt to God or others. This is a problem with the overestimation of self. It is the polar opposite of a grace perspective on self. We cannot take the credit for who and what we are but we give the credit to God. From God's perspective, we get a more realistic view of our worth.

"But God forbid that I should boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world" (Galatians 6:14).

he deceives himself

An intolerant attitude toward others makes us assume that we are beyond spiritual bankruptcy. We can test ourselves against this by examining ourselves (Galatians 6:4). All of us are susceptible to sin. If we think that we are without sin, we cheat ourselves. This will put us in a very vulnerable position toward sin by making us susceptible to sin. There is a surprise coming to such a person one day.

The word "deceives" means to lead one's mind astray. It comes from two words: mind and deceive. The idea is that such people are very subjective about themselves for they can deceive their own mind. We lead ourselves astray with our pride. Arrogance is a sin against common sense. It is sheer folly to think that we can stand in our own self-assurance. This is why it is imperative that we carefully scrutinize self so that we can see how truly corrupt our heart really is. Rationalization of sin always misleads us into further self-deception.

"But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves" (James 1:22).

Grace eradicates any basis for bragging, for God's grace provides everything for us. Legalism puts value on how we measure up to God. It puts the emphasis on what we do rather than on what God has done for us. Self-righteousness is always arrogant.

"For we dare not class ourselves or compare ourselves with those who commend themselves. But they, measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise".

Grace-oriented believers do not condemn fallen Christians because they know all too well their own vulnerability to sin. They realize they must depend on God's grace to deal with it. We are not beyond a fall ourselves. To compare ourselves with others and think that we cannot do what they do is a fatal error.

"For who makes you differ from another? And what do you have that you did not receive? Now if you did indeed receive it, why do you boast as if you had not received it?" (1 Corinthians 4:7)

Principle

It is folly to stand aloof from fallen believers in our own self-sufficiency.

Application

The one thing that will keep us from bearing the burdens of other people is pride. We entertain wonderful thoughts about our own sufficiency. We think we are beyond the sin of others. This is an arrogant attitude that we are above failure.

Some of us have exaggerated estimations of ourselves. No one else seems to hold that opinion of us. We deceive no one but ourselves. Self-conceit blunts our care for others.

"Hypocrite! First remove the plank from your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye" (Matthew 7:5).

Some Christians are so deluded that they think that they cannot fall. They look down their nose at those who do. They look down on others as less spiritual than themselves. This attitude does not show any need for anything from fellow Christians or any desire to help others. It is undiluted self-satisfaction.

"But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me was not in vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me" (1 Corinthians 15:10).

"I have become a fool in boasting; you have compelled me. For I ought to have been commended by you; for in nothing was I behind the most eminent apostles, though I am nothing" (2 Corinthians 12:11).

Christians have a tendency to explain away carnality in their lives (1 John 1:8,10). The energy of the flesh distorts accurate self-appraisal (1 Corinthians 3:18). Deception distorts our application of the Word of God to our circumstances (James 1:22) and causes us to commit sins of the tongue (James 1:26).

Galatians 6:4

"But let each one examine his own work, and then he will have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another"

The answer to the self-sufficient person of verse three is self-examination.

But let each one examine his own work,

Arrogant people need to "examine" themselves. The word "examine" means to test something for the purpose of approval. The idea is to test something to find out whether it is genuine or not. When we expose ourselves to the objective Word of God, we can truly see ourselves for what we actually are. The Word is impartial and will not allow us to deceive ourselves. Rigorous self-judgment lets us see ourselves for what we truly are.

The word "work" means either our behavior or actions. The best way to be objective about ourselves is to examine our lives in the light of the Bible. It is very easy to delude ourselves into thinking that we are a cut above others spiritually.

The present tense in "examine" means that we are to keep testing ourselves constantly. "Be diligent in testing yourself. Make accurate tests about yourself using the Word of God."

and then he will have rejoicing in himself alone,

It is valid to rejoice in what God does through us. The true ground of our glory is strictly that which God does through us. The failure of others should give us no ground for glory. Criticizing others is no basis to build an honest life before God.

and not in another

Viewing others as lower than ourselves spiritually does not of necessity make us superior. It does us no good to lift ourselves by disparaging others. Comparing ourselves with others is not the issue; the issue is what we are truly in ourselves.

"For we dare not class ourselves or compare ourselves with those who commend themselves. But they, measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise. We, however, will not boast beyond measure, but within the limits of the sphere which God appointed us – a sphere which especially includes you. For we are not overextending ourselves (as though our authority did not extend to you), for it was to you that we came with the gospel of Christ; not boasting of things beyond measure, that is, in other men's labors, but having hope, that as your faith is increased, we shall be greatly enlarged by you in our sphere, to preach the gospel in the regions beyond you, and not to boast in another man's sphere of accomplishment. But "he who glories, let him glory in the LORD." For not he who commends himself is approved, but whom the Lord commends" (2 Corinthians 10:12-18).

Christians should never compare themselves with others. Legalists always seek to compare how much they do in comparison to others. Legalists love to push others down to lift themselves up, but pushing others down does not lift them up. Looking for a spiritual pygmy to measure yourself up against is not a noble goal! You cannot conclude that you are head and shoulders above other believers by this method. If we want to take a good measurement of where we stand, stand back to back with the Lord Jesus.

Principle

God requires that each of us examine ourselves so that we can be objective with ourselves.

Application

The Word of God is the acid test to determine whether we are truly spiritual or not. That is why

we must candidly allow the Word to serve as a standard to examine ourselves. None of us like the idea of God's mark of red ink over much of what we are and do. We like to fancy ourselves without fault or flaw.

"But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup" (1 Corinthians 11:28).

Many Christians play the one-upmanship game: "My production is better than your production." This always hurts the Christian life because anything that we do, we do by God's grace. Much of what we do is based on our gifts [special supernatural endowments of grace], of which we cannot claim credit. Moreover, it is God who determines how much He uses each of us.

"So then each of us shall give account of himself to God" (Romans 14:12).

Much of our service for the Lord is simply religious shadow boxing. We think that we are doing God's will but we simply delude ourselves. What others say is irrelevant to God's plan. The Devil will use other believers to get us off track.

They have no right to treat you that way, but they got you off track. You are bitter, sour and cynical. Everything with you is sour grapes. Your soul has curdled.

This attitude will take you out of spiritual circulation. Some of you have not done anything for God in 20 years because the church did not applaud you properly for your service. You were not appreciated but criticized. The problem is that you serve people, not God. You are after applause, not service. That is why you quit and threw in the towel. In your spiritual retirement, the blessing of God passed you by. You can trace it all back to something someone said about you.

Galatians 6:5

"For each one shall bear his own load"

Note the apparent contradiction between verse two and verse five. Verse two says, "Bear one another's burdens..." This verse says, "For each one shall bear his own load." Whenever we have antithetical statements in close proximity to one another, it is obvious the author did not intend to contradict himself. We shouldn't see a contradiction when there is none

Verse two has to do with carrying someone else's burden of another while verse five has to do with carrying a personal concern, a task no one can deal with except the person involved. Verse five confirms verse four. Each of us will bear personal responsibility at the judgment seat of Christ.

For each one shall bear his own load

The difference between "load" and "burden" (Galatians 6:2) is that "load" refers simply to something to be carried as personal responsibility while "burden" refers to weight (heavy). "Burden" is something that is burdensome.

The word "own" indicates personal responsibility. Certain things we can share with others, but personal issues must be addressed between God and us alone. We will stand before the judgment seat of Christ alone.

"But why do you judge your brother? Or why do you show contempt for your brother? For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. For it is written: 'As I live, says the Lord, Every knee shall bow to Me, And every tongue shall confess to God.' So then each of us shall give account of himself to God. Therefore let us not judge one another anymore, but rather resolve this, not to put a stumbling block or a cause to fall in our brother's way" (Romans 14:10-13).

In the military, each soldier must carry his own weapon. When a soldier falls in battle, his fellow soldiers must come to assist him. We must carry personal, moral responsibility alone.

The opposite of pride is not bogus self-abasement but authentic examination of ourselves in the light of God's Word. Legalism uses overt and subjective tests, not real or genuine testing. God wants us to test our own work rather than contrast it with others less worthy.

Principle

Each believer is responsible for his own spiritual production.

Application

Where a spirit of censoriousness, malice and bitterness prevails, there is no application of the principle of grace to self. It will be too late to correct this attitude at the judgment seat of Christ.

There, every tub will sit on its own bottom. You will have no one to blame but yourself. Each believer is responsible for his own spiritual production. We will not be able to blame others at the judgment seat of Christ.

"For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad [worthless]" (2 Corinthians 5:10).

It is crucial that we allow the Lord to harness us while we still have our health and opportunity to serve the Lord. We need to come out of our religious reclusion. This is a luxury that we cannot afford. Jesus will give us His report card one day. Some grades will be less than an "A."

Allow God to make you a blessing to someone else. Have you tested yourself to ascertain whether you are a blessing rather than a curse to someone lately?

Galatians 6:6

"Let him who is taught the word share in all good things with him who teaches"

Legalistic Judaizers influenced the Galatians to stop supporting the ministry of those who taught them the Word.

Let him who is taught the word

The word "taught" carries the idea of giving instruction (usually orally). We get our word "catechized" from this Greek word. The idea is literally, "him that teaches catechistically." "Taught" comes from two words: down and sound. The idea is to send a sound down to the ears. This is oral instruction in the Word of God, so it is public Bible teaching. Those who receive public, oral teaching are to do something with that privilege explained in the next phrase.

The "word" refers to both the Old and New Testaments, the canon of Scripture.

share in all good things with him who teaches

The word "share" means to take part, actively or passively, with another, whether in things evil or good. Those who "share" in a ministry are equal partners in or fellowship in the ministry. Both the teacher and the person taught share something

unique – a fellowship in the Word. People who break from fellowship in such a ministry of grace." cannot be restored unless they accept the validity of the teachers of God's Word.

This does not refer to giving money to teachers of grace because 1) there is no indication of this in context [fallen Christians], 2) "good things" are the principles of grace as indicated in the argument of the book, 3) Paul wouldn't be asking for money for himself in a context where he rebukes the Galatians for false doctrine and 4) Paul previously charged the Judaizers with ulterior financial motives.

To the contrary, this verse deals with fellowship with those who teach the Word, especially those who teach the grace principle. Those taught should make sure that their fellowship is with those who hold to the grace principle rather than the legalists [Judaizers]. "Don't have fellowship with error by listening to legalism."

"...for your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now..." (Philippians 1:5).

Principle

Those who listen to their pastors teach God's Word should be in fellowship with them as they pay attention to their teachings.

Application

Every time we listen to a sermon taught from the Bible, we have fellowship with whoever is preaching. Most of us think of fellowship in terms of a relaxed gathering of Christians enjoying one another. Christian fellowship is primarily in God and His Word.

Fellowship in this verse has to do with listening, not speaking. Listen to the Word of God from your pastor. You can't benefit from the Word unless you fellowship with your pastor during the teaching. If the teaching springs the grace principle, you will benefit by what God does for you rather than what you do for God. These are "good things" from God. Legalism is something grievous from humankind.

Each person in the congregation has the personal responsibility to expose himself or herself to the teaching of God's Word. This takes concentration. You may not have the ability to understanding

everything but you have the responsibility to attempt to understand at your level of maturity.

To fail to understand because you do not concentrate is another matter. Many people gather wool while their pastor teaches on a subject they think is not relevant to them. Then they come to a crisis and the very thing they missed is what they need. And it is very difficult to learn that lesson in the crisis.

Galatians 6:7

"Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap"

Verses seven and eight explain verse six.

Do not be deceived,

The word "deceived" means to lead astray. Legalism will lead us astray from grace. That is why we must carefully listen to pastors as they teach us the principles of grace (Galatians 6:6). False teaching always comes in the form of false doctrine. Religion is Satan's trump card. Those ignorant of God's Word are always susceptible to false doctrine.

God is not mocked;

Paul somberly cautions that we cannot mock God. The word "mocked" literally means to turn up one's nose. The idea is to treat God and His grace with contempt by turning our nose up at it. We sneer at God's grace. If we sin as if God does not exist, we mock the absolute being of the universe. We ridicule God's grace by self-help and self-effort.

for whatever a man sows,

Paul gives an agricultural illustration of the principle of an unbreakable law. If we plant oats, we will harvest oats. We will not harvest potatoes. Each seed produces after its own kind.

People determine what they reap by what they sow. If we sow for time, then we will reap in time. If we sow for God, then we will reap eternal reward. The previous verse talked about fellowship with our pastors as they teach God's Word. If we sow time listening to God's Word, then we will benefit spiritually. If we turn up our nose at God's grace, we will reap the result of that.

Principle

God always blesses us on the ground of grace.

Application

Fellowship with your pastor while God's grace is taught will result in eternal reward.

God always blesses us on the ground of grace. He will never change that principle. He blesses us in spite of us, not because of us. God does not bless us because we made a deal with Him. He blesses us because He already made a deal in Christ.

This is difficult for us to understand because it is outside our normal culture. It is normal for us to say, "I will do something for you because you did something for me." God does something for us regardless of whether we do anything for Him.

If we reject God's unadulterated grace, we turn up our nose at Him. Everything He does for us, He does it out of grace, not because we earned or deserve it. He always blesses because of what Christ did for us. Now that we belong to Jesus and that we are children of God, we receive His grace – all of us, not most.

God blesses us because of Christ, not because of some performance we do for Him. God does not give to us on the basis of what we deserve. God does not bless us because we keep our nose clean, stay in line and live respectable lives. No, He always blesses us because of Christ. Grace starts and ends with Christ. God always blesses us because of Christ.

that he will also reap

It is inevitable that what a man sows, he will reap. This is the overarching principle. The next verse is more specific about what we sow and reap. If we sow corruption then we will reap ruin.

There is a cause-and-effect correlation to life. As we think and behave, so we will end. There are absolutes. God ordered the universe on unalterable laws. If we live by legalism, we automatically pre-empt grace. Grace and works are mutually exclusive.

"And if by grace, then it is no longer of works; otherwise grace is no longer grace. But if it is of works, it is no longer grace; otherwise work is no longer work" (Romans 11:6).

This verse does not have anything to do with salvation. The argument in chapters 5 and 6 is about Christians and their rewards.

Principle

We reap what we sow.

Application

We reap what we sow and reaping is reward. A Christian will never reap reward in eternity if he does not produce in time.

The Christian does not give in order to get. However, if we give, we get (Proverbs 11:24,25).

"But this I say: He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that you, always having all sufficiency in all things, may have an abundance for every good work. As it is written: 'He has dispersed abroad, He has given to the poor; His righteousness endures forever.' Now may He who supplies seed to the sower, and bread for food, supply and multiply the seed you have sown and increase the fruits of your righteousness, while you are enriched in everything for all liberality, which causes thanksgiving through us to God" (2 Corinthians 9:6-11).

God's law of cause and effect is universal. It applies to anyone, any time, anywhere. It is as impartial and immutable as the law of gravity. There are no exclusions.

The principle of grace does not deny the law of sowing and reaping. We need the grace of God because we cannot measure up to God's standards. Only Jesus could do that. When we embrace Him, we measure up to perfection in Him. He enables us to produce for Him.

This does not mean that a believer is immune from failure. When we sin, we will reap the consequences of our sin. Faithful teaching of the full counsel of the Word of God will build into us a fortress against sowing evil.

There is great danger in deceiving ourselves. We just kid ourselves if we deny the principle of sowing and reaping or cause/effect. We cannot sin with impunity.

"The heart is deceitful above all things, And desperately wicked; Who can know it?" (Jeremiah 17:9)

"If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us" (1 John 1:8-10).

Galatians 6:8

"For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life"

For he who sows to his flesh

The idea of "flesh" is the sin capacity. If we give rope to our sinful tendencies, then we will reap those tendencies. Pandering to the flesh produces "corruption." What we do in the energy of the flesh is not subject to reward.

Principle

It is possible to serve God in the flesh but God will not reward this service.

Application

Many Christians have the appearance of serving God but all they are doing is operating in the flesh. Many people might announce what they do as spiritual but God declares it as fleshly. It does not cut any ice with God at all. A person who deceives himself this way, is in for a big surprise at the Judgment Seat of Christ.

will of the flesh reap corruption,

The flesh produces "corruption." "Corruption" means disintegration, deterioration, dissolution. It is not permanent but short-lived and transient. There is no eternal reward when we operate in the flesh.

Principle

It is spiritually nearsighted to live in the flesh.

Application

Sin will always cause us to deteriorate spiritually. A life lived for time will not produce anything for eternity. There is a great difference between a temporally oriented life and an eternally oriented life. A temporally oriented life is spiritual shortsightedness.

but he who sows to the Spirit

Those who live for spiritual things will reap eternal things. This is the person who "walks in the Spirit" (5:16). This person allows the Holy Spirit to control him so that he produces the fruit of the Spirit.

"And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit..." (Ephesians 5:18).

will of the Spirit reap everlasting life

"Everlasting life" corresponds to benefits in eternity. The person who walks in the Spirit will produce a quality of life that reflects everlasting life, not temporal life.

"The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly" (John 10:10).

If the Galatians continue in legalism, they will lose out in eternal rewards. Legalism always focuses on man and what man can do. Grace always puts the emphasis on God and what God does. Legalism will cause our spirituality to deteriorate while grace will build glory to God.

Principle

It is impossible to reap without sowing; it is impossible to get a reward without spirituality.

Application

God rewards those who walk in the Spirit. All genuine production that results in eternal rewards is the result of walking in the Spirit. In eternity, God rewards whatever we produce through the filling of the Spirit.

Legalism corrupts the dynamics of our eternal life. Carnal Christians are wretched people because they are out of sync with their eternal life. No one is more miserable than a Christian out of fellowship. When we allow the roots of sin such as bitterness, hatred and resentment to embed themselves in our attitudes, we sow to the flesh.

Some people serve for applause. They serve people, not God. This is an issue of pride. They do church work, not work for God. When the pressure comes, they throw in the towel. "They have no right to treat me like that. I have my rights." They become bitter, sour and cynical. Everything with them is sour grapes so their soul curdles. They go into spiritual retirement because people do not appreciate them. What a tragedy that they are out of spiritual circulation because of what someone said about them.

There are certain luxuries that we cannot afford. We cannot afford to serve Jesus Christ while out of fellowship. People may think well of our service but it's what God thinks that counts.

If we put very little into our spirituality, is it any wonder that we get very little out of it?

Galatians 6:9

"And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart"

And let us not grow weary

The word "weary" means to be spiritless, exhausted, lose heart, despair. The idea is not tiredness but that Christians can lose their motivation to do "good." Discouragement causes some to give up or give out.

"Therefore I ask that you do not lose heart at my tribulations for you, which is your glory" (Ephesians 3:13).

"But as for you, brethren, do not grow weary in doing good" (2 Thessalonians 3:13).

Note that Paul includes himself in the possibility of discouragement in Christian service by the word "us."

Principle

There is a direct correlation between persistence and motivation.

Application

The quality of persistence in the face of difficulty is a Christian quality. It is easy to excuse ourselves from not serving the Lord because of some perceived difficulty we face. If this happens, we will flag in doing God's will. We will lose interest and energy.

Dullness comes from blunting the keen edge of our Christian lives. Service does not seem worth it anymore. This loss of hope results in discouragement.

The spiritual Christian forges ahead in the face of ingratitude of those who should appreciate him. All of us need the quality of stick-to-itiveness in service. Some of us give up too soon.

We may get weary in serving the Lord but we never get weary of it. We need tenacity and patient persevering until the Lord comes (James 5:7,8).

while doing good,

The "good" in this context is spiritual sowing for an eternal harvest. The idea is more that of noble, praiseworthy or admirable deeds in contrast to the works of legalism. There is beauty in doing good. God's harvest is a noble mission.

for in due season

We will receive our reward in God's timing. "Due season" is God's season. God operates on His own time, the appropriate time. There is a long time between planting the seed and the harvest but God's appropriate timing will come at the Judgment Seat of Christ.

we shall reap

The one thing that will keep the Christian from flagging in his service for the Lord is to keep his eye on the goal – his reward at the Judgment Seat of Christ. God will not forget what we do for Him. "Shall reap" is a promise from God. Keeping our eye on that goal will give a perseverance that goes beyond our normal strength.

"Reap" here is not salvation but reward. Because of the distance in time until we receive a reward, we might become discouraged in doing good. Reaping will come in God's time.

"Look to yourselves, that we do not lose those things we worked for, but that we may receive a full reward" (2 John 8).

Principle

Because the Lord promises we will ultimately reap what we sow, there is no excuse to give up in our service for Him.

Application

There is a supreme harvest for every Christian. At the judgment seat of Christ, God will overlook no service done for Him. We will receive full reward there. By keeping our eye on that goal, we do not allow anything to discourage us from God's purpose for us.

Those who keep their eye on the goal of the Judgment Seat of Christ never become despondent. They never let apathy overtake them. People may criticize, malign and slander us but we move right on.

Each one of us will give an account for what we did. It will be rather grim for some of God's people when they have to account for their time, talent and treasures.

"But none of these things move me; nor do I count my life dear to myself, so that I may finish my race with joy, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God" (Acts 20:24).

"Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord" (1 Corinthians 15:58).

"I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing" (2 Timothy 4:7-8).

if we do not lose heart

There are two stages to discouragement. First, we grow weary then we "lose heart." This second word for discouragement in this verse means to

loose, release, to unloose, like a bowstring, to relax, and so, to enfeeble.

Christians can keep from becoming despondent if they keep their eye on the harvest. Losing heart carries "growing weary" to its end - dissolution and disintegration in one's life. We stop serving the Lord because we lose the power and dynamic to do it. Losing heart is the outcome of growing weary.

Both "growing weary" and "lose heart" carry the thought of giving up. The antithesis of giving up is persistence and hanging in there. Discouragement results from a failure of the will.

Principle

Losing heart is the outcome of discouragement.

Application

We must never lose the vision of the harvest. If we lose that vision, all we will see is the hole in the doughnut. We will develop a negative attitude and be against any suggestion to advance the cause of Christ. We will acquire a cynical attitude so that everything is sour grapes. God does not use this kind of person.

Many of God's people die bitter, old people. They have allowed life to sour them. They permit criticism to defeat them. This plays right into the Devil's hands. You will become cynical and censorious if you imbibe these attitudes. God always bypasses such people.

No Christian should allow himself to develop a defeatist attitude. "All I see around me are people fleeing from God. What use is there? Everything looks hopeless. I don't see how I can make any difference." We should follow the example of Christ's tenacity,

"For consider Him [Jesus] who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls. You have not yet resisted to bloodshed, striving against sin. And you have forgotten the exhortation which speaks to you as to sons: "My son, do not despise the chastening of the LORD, Nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him; For whom the LORD loves He chastens, And scourges every son whom He receives" (Hebrews 12:3-6).

We need to exclude from our lives anything that will deflect us from the vision of God's harvest. We ought to find what God wants us to do to bring in the harvest and refuse to let anything get in the way. A very small stream will make a big lake.

It is amazing how easily some of us give up. It takes very little to discourage us. Some of us imagine we are the only ones who are doing anything for the Lord. We think everything depends on us. Everyone else seems to be out of step or off base.

Do you get discouraged when people do not recognize your service? God recognizes everything you do. If we do things to get recognition from people then we are off base. Everything we do, we must do as unto the Lord.

Sooner or later you will be criticized for what you do for the Lord. It is impossible to do anything of significance without being criticized for it. Maybe your antagonist attacks you out of envy or sour grapes. It does not matter. A hundred people may approve of what you do and not say anything. Yet one person may criticize you and it will throw you off balance. If you're serving for the Lord, you let the criticism roll off your back. You will not allow it to discourage you.

It seems the only way to avoid criticism is to do nothing but you will be criticized even for that! People will always find some way to criticize you so why do you live by trying to please people? We can always come up with some excuse, "I am too tired, too old, too weak, too immature, too uneducated, too young, too something."

Some people lose heart in their prayer life (Luke 18:1). Some lose heart in ministry (2 Corinthians 4:1). God puts these people on the shelf. He discards them for service and passes them by. They miss out on God's blessing.

"Therefore, since we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we do not lose heart....But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us. We are hard-pressed on every side, yet not crushed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed— always carrying about in the body the dying of

the Lord Jesus, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body" (2 Corinthians 4:1, 7-10).

Galatians 6:10

"Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith"

In verse 9 we have God's season and in verse 10 we have our season, the season of Christians.

Therefore,

The "therefore" shows Paul is resuming his discussion of the harvest. Because the harvest is certain, do good to non-Christians and Christians.

as we have opportunity,

"Opportunity" conveys the idea of a kind of time. Chronology is not the primary idea of this word. There are seasons when we will have opportunity to do good. This present life is our only opportunity to sow for the harvest. That opportunity will only come by one time—while we live on this earth.

Principle

God gives us special opportunities to serve Him.

Application

We do not all have the same opportunities. Some of us have greater opportunities than others. God opens the door for special opportunities. We do not all have the same opportunities but we all have the opportunity to serve the Lord.

"Furthermore, when I came to Troas to preach Christ's gospel, and a door was opened to me by the Lord..." (2 Corinthians 2:12).

let us do

The words "let us do" refer to active, effective and diligent work. Christians should put great and continued effort in serving others. All of us have power to do good, we just need to exert it.

"This is a faithful saying, and these things I want you to affirm constantly, that those who have believed in God should be careful to maintain good

works. These things are good and profitable to men" (Titus 3:8).

good

The spiritual Christian does "good" to both Christians and non-Christians. The "good" here is an intrinsic good. We care about the essential welfare of others.

Principle

Godly Christians care about the essential welfare of other Christians.

Application

Godly Christians care about the essential welfare of other Christians. We will not pass on gossip about people because it will hurt their reputation. We give them the benefit of the doubt. We refuse to believe the worst and think ill of them.

Some people always think the worst of others. That is their bent of mind. They are willing to believe the worst on the smallest evidence possible. This is a compensation for their small egos. Spirit-filled believers are not only willing to think the best about others but they are willing to out of their way to do the best for others.

to all,

The word "to" means towards, face-to-face. Spirit-filled believers are willing to deal with people face to face. They deal with others with a sense of rapport.

Spirit-filled believers do not limit their good to Christians only; they are willing to do good to "all," whether Christians or non-Christians.

"Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven" (Matthew 5:16).

especially to those who are of the household of faith

The word "household" signifies belonging to, a house. The household of faith is the company of the redeemed, children of God, the family of God.

"We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love his brother abides in death" (1 John 3:14).

"If someone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen? And this commandment we have from Him: that he who loves God must love his brother also" (1 John 4:20-21).

The definite article before the word "faith" in the Greek emphasizes "those who belong to the faith." Paul discriminates between the saved and the lost here. God selects the saved for special treatment. An evangelical Christian is a dirty word to many people on television yet they are God's people. If there is a choice, God's people are to give priority to God's people.

"For God is not unjust to forget your work and labor of love which you have shown toward His name, in that you have ministered to the saints, and do minister" (Hebrews 6:10).

Principle

God's people must stick together for the cause of Christ.

Application

Philanthropy is a good thing but there is something better—the cause of the family of God. There is a massive difference between Gentile philanthropy and Christian work. Most pagan philanthropists will not give a dime to Christian work.

God's people ought to support God's work. God's work has a prior claim over secular work. Many of God's ministries are dirt poor. This is a disgrace and shame. This is because God's people support the great secular foundations of this world and neglect God's ministries. This is especially true with the baby boom generation.

Baby boomers give as much as previous generations but the proportion is much more directed toward secular institutions. They have lost a sense of the eternal, of heaven and hell. They respond to temporal maudlin needs rather than eternal issues. They could not care less about the family of God or about getting people into the family of God. They want to impress those around them.

"Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God..." (Ephesians 2:19).

God's people must stick together for the cause of Christ.

Galatians 6:11

"See with what large letters I have written to you with my own hand!"

Now we come to the conclusion of the book of Galatians (6:11-18). Paul now writes a personal postscript that emphasizes the main points of the book. He takes a parting shot at the legalists in this section.

See with what large letters

Usually Paul dictated his epistles to a secretary to scribe his books. Tertius scribed the book of Romans for Paul (Romans 16:22). However, Paul wrote Galatians himself because of the urgency and importance of the letter.

The words "large letters" does not refer to the length of the book but the size of his handwriting in the conclusion. He wrote in inch high uncial letters. He may have written in large letters because he had poor eyesight.

I have written to you with my own hand

Paul did not use an amanuensis [secretary scribe] to write Galatians. To guarantee that the Galatians knew Paul wrote Galatians, he wrote the epistle in his own handwriting so that they would know it was Paul who gave them the book of Galatians. Many people forged epistles in the first century.

"...not to be soon shaken in mind or troubled, either by spirit or by word or by letter, as if from us, as though the day of Christ had come. Let no one deceive you by any means; for that Day will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition, who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God" (2 Thessalonians 2:2-4).

"The salutation of Paul with my own hand, which is a sign in every epistle; so I write" (2 Thessalonians 3:17).

Principle

Handicaps should not hinder us from ministry.

Application

No handicap should keep us from ministry. It did not keep Paul from ministry so neither should it keep us from ministry. Paul was not a good orator. He had a poor speaking voice. Yet none of that kept him down.

Some people with handicaps take on a victim mentality. They feel sorry for themselves. They are filled with self-pity. They want everyone to wait on them. That is the worst thing they can do for it limits their potential. Seeking the pity of other people will not help them. It will not fulfill them. The last thing in the world that they need is for people to feel sorry for them. When they take on this attitude, they will fail to serve the Lord. No one has an excuse for not serving the Lord. God expects us to serve Him with or without a handicap.

Galatians 6:12

"As many as desire to make a good showing in the flesh, these would compel you to be circumcised, only that they may not suffer persecution for the cross of Christ"

Paul now describes his adversaries who hate grace (6:12-13). These people believed circumcision was necessary for salvation and sanctification. The cross plus nothing always offends religion.

As many as desire to make a good showing in the flesh,

The words "good showing" come from two words: good and face. Some Galatians wanted to show their self-righteousness by self-effort. They wanted to put on a good face to make a good impression. Appearance was more important to them than integrity. Many people today use religion as an outward appearance of righteousness. They take pride in external religious observance. Pride motivated legalistic Judaizers.

"For do I now persuade men, or God? Or do I seek to please men? For if I still pleased men, I would not be a bondservant of Christ" (Galatians 1:10).

these would compel you to be circumcised,

The Judaizers wanted to "compel" the Galatians to be circumcised because this was required by their legalistic standards. They wanted to force the Galatians into this. Legalism is a religion of outward force, not inward compulsion (2:14).

only that they may not suffer persecution for the cross of Christ

Not only were the legalists proud but they were cowards as well. The legalists did not want unadulterated grace because they had a vested interest—they were afraid of persecution. They did not want any hassle or trouble for the cause of Christ. They would rather adapt their doctrine to the situation than face persecution. Already there were those who systematically organized a program to oppress those who believed in grace.

"For you, brethren, became imitators of the churches of God which are in Judea in Christ Jesus. For you also suffered the same things from your own countrymen, just as they did from the Judeans, who killed both the Lord Jesus and their own prophets, and have persecuted us; and they do not please God and are contrary to all men, forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles that they may be saved, so as always to fill up the measure of their sins; but wrath has come upon them to the uttermost" (1 Thessalonians 2:14-16).

"Now Saul was consenting to his death. At that time a great persecution arose against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles" (Acts 8:1).

There is a correlation between legalism and cowardice. Legalists want security above everything else.

The cross is always an affront to legalism and religion. The cross offends people because we have to swallow our pride and fall at the feet of the cross for salvation. That is the opposite of self-

effort and self-righteousness. People hate the idea of grace so much that they persecute those who orient themselves to grace. Our whole system of salvation solely rests on the cross of Christ.

"For Jews request a sign, and Greeks seek after wisdom; but we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men" (1 Corinthians 1:22-25).

Principle

Legalism is appearance oriented because it focuses on religious pride.

Application

Religion that rests on appearance operates on pride. Religion always tries to impress us. Pride is the biggest stumbling block to embracing God's grace. The fact that Jesus did all of the work for salvation is an affront to our pride.

"And I, brethren, if I still preach circumcision, why do I still suffer persecution? Then the offense of the cross has ceased" (Galatians 5:11).

The offense of the cross is that it does not need us for salvation. The cross provides everything we need. Jesus finished the work of making us ready for heaven on the cross. That offends religious people. It offends religious pride.

The combination of pride and cowardice is a dangerous mixture. This deadly blend will attack grace every time. People always want to add something to the cross. Man's system is always the cross plus works or the cross plus baptism or the cross plus something. God's system is Christ plus nothing. Our readiness for heaven does not depend on baptism or works but solely on the cross.

"The boast measures the man." That quote shows insight into the nature of man. Those who brag about their accomplishments negate the accomplishments of Christ. Their Christianity is essentially an outward show. They have something to prove but not to God.

Galatians 6:13

"For not even those who are circumcised keep the law, but they desire to have you circumcised that they may boast in your flesh"

For not even those who are circumcised keep the law,

The legalistic Judaizers did not keep the law themselves. They knew this was impossible. They were not consistent with their own standards yet they tried to put others under those standards.

"Did not Moses give you the law, yet none of you keeps the law? Why do you seek to kill Me?" (John 7:19).

"For on the one hand there is an annulling of the former commandment because of its weakness and unprofitability, for the law made nothing perfect; on the other hand, there is the bringing in of a better hope, through which we draw near to God" (Hebrews 7:18-19).

but they desire to have you circumcised that they may boast in your flesh

The word "boast" means to speak loudly, be loud-tongued, vaunt oneself. The legalistic Judaizers were adamant circumcision was essential for salvation and sanctification. They wanted to brag about how many converts they could get.

Principle

Religionists are more interested in converts than conversion.

Application

Religionists often profess a religion they themselves cannot perform. They pretend to live with integrity but their lives deny it. Their real motivation is to gain proselytes to their side.

Galatians 6:14

"But God forbid that I should boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world"

But God forbid

"God forbid" is literally may it never come to be. Paul never wanted to boast in anything but the cross. Anything else was unthinkable to him. Glory in self-accomplishment was both an aversion and a worry to him.

that I should boast

In contrast to the boast of the legalists, Paul would not boast in anything except the cross of Christ. He refused to boast in himself or in his self-reliance. Paul in his humanity had much he could brag about but all that was so much manure.

"...have no confidence in the flesh, though I also might have confidence in the flesh. If anyone else thinks he may have confidence in the flesh, I more so: circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews; concerning the law, a Pharisee; concerning zeal, persecuting the church; concerning the righteousness which is in the law, blameless. But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ. Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish [manure], that I may gain Christ and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith; that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, if, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead" (Philippians 3:3-11).

except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ,

Paul's boast is in the cross that gives him eternal salvation. At the heart of the cross is the concept of grace. God gave us salvation based on the work of Christ, not our work.

Paul's "boast" appears to justify pride but the word "boast" in this context carries the idea of praise. The cross was an object of shame to the

Judaizers but it was the object of praise to Paul. They gloried in the flesh; Paul gloried in God.

"For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified" (1 Corinthians 2:2).

Principle

We should never boast in what we do but in what Christ does.

Application

Religion is based on human performance while Christianity is based on God. Religion always rests on self-righteousness, not God's righteousness that comes from Christ's cross.

"But what I do, I will also continue to do, that I may cut off the opportunity from those who desire an opportunity to be regarded just as we are in the things of which they boast. For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into apostles of Christ. And no wonder! For Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also transform themselves into ministers of righteousness, whose end will be according to their works" (2 Corinthians 11:12-15).

The believer does not look for pardon in self but in Christ. If we look for forgiveness in self, we put God under obligation to forgive us. If we glory in the cross, we glory in the matchless attributes of God because it took the cross to give us a perfect and absolute righteousness.

The cross is the accomplishment of Christ, not us. When God does the work, this is grace. When we do the works, this is works-righteousness. Our innate righteousness is only good relative to other people. The righteousness Christ gives us is relative to God's absolute righteousness. In other words, God declares us as righteous as He is because of the cross.

Legalists put little focus on the cross and more on themselves. To those who are graced-oriented, the cross means everything. We glory in the cross. We totally reject self-righteousness. We hold a clear view of the cross. When Jesus becomes the center

and circumference of our life, we enter into spirituality as it should be lived.

"But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him" (Romans 5:8-9).

by whom the world has been crucified to me,

The Greek tense [perfect] indicates God crucified Paul at the point Christ died on the cross and he stands crucified with Christ. This is our status quo before God eternally. Sin is no longer an issue with God because Christ's cross dealt with it completely.

"For I through the law died to the law that I might live to God. I have been crucified with Christ; 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 for me. I do not set aside the grace of God; for if righteousness comes through the law, then Christ died in vain" (Galatians 2:19-21)

"And those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires" (Galatians 5:24).

and I to the world

The word "world" is that which is against God, the satanic order. Paul died to the world system when Christ died on the cross. Those without Christ are victims of Satan's distorted worldview. Those with Christ have changed their worldview.

Although they may fall to temptations within Satan's order, their status is in a new order, a perfect status with God.

This does not mean the Christian is free from the influence of Satan's order. It does mean, however, the believer is no longer under the authority of his system. The believer is no longer under bondage to that system because he changed lords when he became a Christian.

"I have given them Your word; and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the

world. I do not pray that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the evil one. They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth. As You sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world. And for their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they also may be sanctified by the truth" (John 17:14-19).

"Therefore, if you died with Christ from the basic principles of the world, why, as though living in the world, do you subject yourselves to regulations – "Do not touch, do not taste, do not handle," which all concern things which perish with the using – according to the commandments and doctrines of men? These things indeed have an appearance of wisdom in self-imposed religion, false humility, and neglect of the body, but are of no value against the indulgence of the flesh" (Colossians 2:20-23).

Principle

The greater the cross looks to us the less the world can lure us.

Application

Paul looks at the world as if he were on the cross and that is the way the world looks at him.

Paul looks at the world as though he were dead to his aspirations. The greater the glory of the cross looked to him, the less the world attracted him. When our soul feeds on the cross, it closes down our heart for the world. The more our heart feeds on the world, the less our hearts care about the cross.

Galatians 6:15

"For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but a new creation"

For

The word "for" links verse 15 with verse 14. This verse explains why Paul does not yearn for the applause of the world.

in Christ Jesus

Paul looks at legalism in the light of the believer's status quo in God's eyes. Ritual cannot measure up to a believer's position in Christ because Christ did all the work necessary for salvation. He did all that is necessary to satisfy an absolutely holy God. There was no merit on our part whatsoever.

"There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit" (Romans 8:1).

"But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ" (Ephesians 2:13).

neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything,

Circumcision is of little moment in God's scheme of things. Human work cuts no ice with God. Circumcision was the pet theological idea of the legalistic Judaizers. Their goal was to get the Galatian believers to submit to circumcision.

but a new creation

It is regeneration that is important, not some ritual. The fact that God introduced us into His blessings transcends the mechanics of religion because it transforms the believer into God's economy. This is an intrinsic change, not extrinsic. Regeneration is the essence of true Christianity. The cross can do what circumcision cannot do. Circumcision cannot change lives by radical transformation of character but the cross can. The cross cuts ice with God.

"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new" (2 Corinthians 5:17).

The word "new" means new in quality, not new in the sense of recent. The person "in Christ Jesus" is new in quality. He is new because of what Christ did. He now has imputed righteousness—God's righteousness put into him.

Principle

Christ did all the work needed to satisfy the standards of an absolutely holy God.

Application

Religious rites do not impress God. Church membership or baptism do not impress God. The central factor that impresses God is the cross and the new standing that it affords the person who trusts the cross for salvation. The Law is powerless to bring about this new transformation. This is the fundamental error of legalism.

Properly oriented believers always rejoice in what God does and in what Christ did because they understand that Christianity is not a merit system. On the contrary, Christianity is a grace system—it is all about what God does in Christ.

Galatians 6:16

"And as many as walk according to this rule, peace and mercy be upon them, and upon the Israel of God"

And as many as walk according to this rule,

The word "walk" means to draw up in a line, to proceed in a row as in the march of a soldier, go in order. Militarily the idea is to go in battle order. Secular Greek used the word "rule" for a carpenter's measuring line. The idea is to direct one's life, to turn out well by living by fundamental biblical principles.

peace and mercy be upon them,

God's peace and mercy comes to those who walk according to His principles. Peace here is the peace of God, God's own peace, the peace that comes from God.

Mercy is the forgiveness of sins (Romans 12:1; Ephesians 2:4; Titus 3:5). Christians also need God's mercy in the fight against persecuting legalism.

and upon the Israel of God

The "Israel of God" are Jews, not Gentile Christians. The New Testament is not anti-Semitic. All other 64 occurrences of "Israel" refer to Jews. There are true Jewish believers and those who are not in "the Israel of God." But the Israel of God are physical Jews who became believers in Christ.

"But it is not that the word of God has taken no effect. For they are not all Israel who are of Israel, nor are they all children because they are the seed of

Abraham; but, 'In Isaac your seed shall be called" (Romans 9:6-7)

Principle

We do not gain peace and mercy by our own devising but by living according to God's principles.

Application

Christians receive peace and mercy from God when they follow His principles, not principles of their own devising. The Christian life is a walk, taking one step at a time.

Christians do not walk by their own rules. We follow God's regulating principles. We cannot establish the principle of salvation nor can we establish the principle of sanctification. We cannot change the conditions of God's principles. The believer who conforms to His standards will receive His blessings of peace and mercy.

"If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit" (Galatians 5:25).

Galatians 6:17

"From now on let no one trouble me, for I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus"

From now on let no one trouble me,

Paul gives a challenge to the Galatians to look at the price he paid for taking a stand for the cross of Christ, the doctrine of grace. Paul calls for an end to the conflict over law and grace.

for I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus

The word "marks" is the Greek word stigma. A stigma was a permanent brand, tattoo or mark burnt into the skin. Paul carried brands around like a cow or a slave. It was a sign of ownership of a cow or slave. Paul's stigma was a branding for his service in standing for the grace principle. Paul clearly demonstrated the price he paid for the cross. The Galatians saw that themselves when he was in Galatia.

The idea of "bear" is to undergo experiences that mark one as the slave of some master. That is the burden Paul bore. He bore or endured the burden of the cross.

"From the Jews five times I received forty stripes minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods; once I was stoned; three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I have been in the deep; in journeys often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils of my own countrymen, in perils of the Gentiles, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; in weariness and toil, in sleeplessness often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness – besides the other things, what comes upon me daily: my deep concern for all the churches" (2 Corinthians 11:24-28).

Principle

Christians should carry the indelible mark of belonging to Christ.

Application

People who take a stand for the grace principle of the cross will pay a price. We must count the cost.

"But none of these things move me; nor do I count my life dear to myself, so that I may finish my race with joy, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God" (Acts 20:24).

A good measure of our belief system is how much we are willing to pay for it. Do you have the scars to prove it?

We should be careful about assailing the enlistees of the army of Christ. Keep your static to yourself. All annoyances are a distraction from the real reason we are here.

All Christians must carry the blood-stained banner of the cross. They will not be the most popular or pleasing people but they will be faithful to God. We should view ourselves as soldiers, not floating along on a rosy bed of easy. People should clearly mark us as those who belong to Christ, who bear His indelible mark.

Galatians 6:18

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

We come to the benediction and final word of the apostle Paul to the church at Galatia. Paul does not give any salutation to the Galatians because of their biblical distortions of self-righteousness. He was in the business of serious communication of the principle of grace in this epistle.

Brethren

By his use of "brethren," Paul extends a touch of love to the Galatians. The Galatians are in the family of God. In the final analysis, the Galatians and Paul are in the family together.

the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ

Paul closes Galatians on a note of grace just as he began the epistle with grace (1:3,6). Paul finishes with his trademark—grace. All his letters close on that note.

"For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich" (2 Corinthians 8:9).

"The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen" (2 Corinthians 13:14).

Grace belongs to Jesus Christ. He both bought grace for us and distributes grace to us. Paul's

parting point is that grace revolves around Christ and His work.

be with your spirit.

All Christians need "the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ" with their spirit. This is the human spirit. As believers absorb grace, they will grow in Christ. This is Paul's desire for the Galatians.

Amen

The final word of Galatians is a word of confidence. The word "amen" means so be it. Paul in summary form affirms his own conviction that grace is the center of Christianity. Self-righteousness is the polar opposite of genuine Christianity.

Principle

Jesus embodies the principle of grace.

Application

The Bible is Christ centric and Christ is grace centered. The better we understand the principle of grace, the better we understand and love Jesus Christ.