

NOTES ON THE EPISTLE TO THE GALATIANS

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PAUL'S LETTER TO THE GALATIANS - WHEN AND WHERE WRITTEN (W. BUNTING)

There is little firm internal evidence to help us to determine when and where the apostle wrote this letter. At some point disturbing news reached him that many linked with the churches in Galatia were being led astray by teachers who had come from Jerusalem. It may be that the letter was written during his long stay at Ephesus (Acts 19:8-10¹). The apostle reminds the Galatians of his infirmity of the flesh, and despite this, how they received him as an angel of God. Indeed, they would have plucked out their own eyes, and given them to him (Gal.4:13-15²).

The news regarding the defections in Galatia is most likely to have reached the apostle at Ephesus, shortly after his second visit to Galatia. There are certain points of similarity between this letter and the one written to the Romans, and some commentators are of the view that both letters were written from Corinth and about the same time. The fundamental truth of justification by faith, and not by the works of the law, is emphasized in both letters. On a personal note, the apostle drew attention of the Galatians to the large letters, or size of the characters, in which he wrote with his own hand (Gal.6:11³).

1. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Acts%2019:8-10>

2. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gal.4.13-15>

3. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gal.6.11>

As a postscript to this letter, the apostle adds the poignant note, “From henceforth let no man trouble me: for I bear branded on my body the marks of Jesus” (Gal.6:17⁴). He refers to the scars of the wounds made upon the body of a slave by the branding-iron, by which he was marked as belonging to his Master. This is one of the few instances when the apostle uses the title Jesus. Paul bore in his body the scars of the wounds suffered for the sake of Jesus, and these marks testified to whom he belonged.

4. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gal.6.17>

COMMENTARY ON GALATIANS

1

Gal.1:1¹,2²

It seems that the apostleship of Paul was challenged frequently by Judaizing teachers and others, and Paul had to defend himself and the divine character of his apostleship, as he did in 1 Cor.9³, and elsewhere, even before the Corinthians and others who were the fruit of his work. Here he declares he was not an apostle either from men, as having been sent by men, or through man, as though man had had anything to do with his being constituted an apostle. His apostleship was through Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised Him from the dead. Paul was an apostle of the risen Christ, not like the twelve whom the Lord called and named apostles during His lifetime. He describes himself as one born out of due time. In addressing the Galatian churches Paul joins all the brethren that were with him, although he does not name who these were. The Roman province of Galatia included the regions of Pisidia and Lycaonia. Four churches in Galatia are known to us, Antioch in Pisidia, and Iconium, Lystra and Derbe in Lycaonia (Acts 13:20-23⁴). Note the difference between Antioch of Pisidia (Acts 13:14⁵), and Antioch in Syria (Acts 11:19-30⁶).

1. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gal.1.1>

2. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gal%201.2>

3. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/1%20Cor.9>

4. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Acts%2013.20-23>

5. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Acts%2013.14>

Gal.1:3⁷,4⁸,5⁹

Paul salutes these churches of God with grace and peace from the Father and the Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, and says that the Lord gave Himself for our sins. Though some authorities give Gk. *hyper* (for), the preposition which Paul uses in 1 Cor.15:3¹⁰, which means “over” in a substitutionary way, there seems little doubt that Gk. *peri*, which means “concerning” or “respecting”, is the word Paul uses here. John, in 1 Jn 2:2¹¹; 1 Jn 4:10¹², uses Gk. *peri* in the words, “the propitiation for our sins.” The object here stated why the Lord gave Himself for our sins was not to take us to heaven, but to deliver us out of the present evil age. Here divine deliverance is in view in the sacrifice of Christ, like the deliverance effected for Israel through the blood of the Passover lamb of old. This deliverance to be effected through the Lord’s death is according to the will of God. It is one thing to be a believer in Christ, but it is something more to be a separated believer. A believer, if he would please God, cannot continue to walk as he once did according to the course (age) of this world (Eph.2:2¹³). God’s will is that he should be delivered out of it. Believers have been taken out of the world (Jn 17:6¹⁴), which it is our privilege

6. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Acts%2011.19-30>

7. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gal.1.3>

8. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gal%201.4>

9. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gal%201.5>

10. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/1%20Cor.15.3>

11. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/1%20John%202.2>

12. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/1%20John%204.10>

13. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Eph.2.2>

14. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/John%2017.6>

to acknowledge, and are sent back into the world (Jn 17:18¹⁵) to be witnesses for Christ. Hence it was that churches of God were established as centres of divine testimony, from which there was to be sounded out the word of the Lord (1 Thess.1:8¹⁶). This testimony cannot be maintained in effectiveness if believers are not delivered from the world, from its ways and works, its purposes and plans. Some seek to flee from the world into religious houses, to become monks and nuns, only to find that they are far from being free from the corruptions of the world there. This kind of supposed deliverance from the world is not according to the will of God. There were neither monks nor nuns among the apostles and the early saints. These are to be found not only in Christendom, but amongst Buddhists, etc., also.

Gal.1:6¹⁷,7¹⁸

Paul here plunges at once into the trouble which was affecting the Galatian churches, that of the teaching of the Judaizers who were perverting the gospel of Christ. They were seeking to add circumcision to the work of Christ as necessary to salvation, to join faith and works, to amalgamate law and grace. As Paul yielded not an inch to the same sort of people at Antioch (Acts 15:1¹⁹, 2²⁰; Gal.2:6²¹), he advances here to join battle again with all his might against the same teaching. He marvels that the Galatians

15. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/John%2017.18>

16. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/1%20Thess.1.8>

17. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gal.1.6>

18. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gal%201.7>

19. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Acts%2015.1>

20. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Acts%2015.2>

21. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gal.2.6>

are so quickly removing or changing from God who called them in the grace of Christ (Eph.2:7²²,8²³). They were showing a disposition to change over to a different gospel (Gk. *heteros*, another of a different kind), which he says is not another gospel (Gk. *allos*, another of the same kind), for there cannot be two gospels of the same kind. Hence he accuses those who were troubling the churches of Galatia with perverting the gospel of Christ.

Gal.1:8²⁴,9²⁵

These are strong, yet excellent, words of a strong man valiant for truth. He saw that in a Judaized gospel the salvation of countless myriads of human souls was at stake, and consequently there could be no quarter given to those who chose to preach a gospel other than that which he had preached to the Galatians. Let angels as well as himself be accursed, with the Judaizers, if they dare to preach any other gospel than that of free grace, and by faith alone. Christian works have their place after salvation from the penalty of sin has been known and received, but are not accessory to faith for salvation. A combination of faith and works is a devil's gospel. In a word it means that the work of Christ is not all-sufficient to save human souls from sin and hell.

Gal.1:10²⁶

22. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Eph.2.7>

23. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Eph%202.8>

24. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gal.1.8>

25. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gal%201.9>

26. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gal.1.10>

Whom was Paul persuading? and whom was he pleasing in his preaching of the gospel? The answer to the first question is given in 2 Cor.5:11²⁷: “Knowing therefore the fear of the Lord, we persuade men, but we are made manifest unto God.” The answer to the second is in the verse itself, “If I were still pleasing men, I should not be a servant of Christ.” Once he pleased the men of the Jewish nation, the chief priests and the Pharisees, who saw in the zeal of this young Benjamite and Pharisee one who would promote Jewish interests to the fullest extent in his power, but their hopes faded when he was found in the ranks of the hated Nazarene. From then on his purpose was to please the Lord who had saved and called him to His service.

Gal.1:11²⁸,12²⁹

“My gospel,” as he calls the gospel in Rom.16:25³⁰, was a gospel which was revealed to him by Jesus Christ. This is plainly seen in the historical account of Paul’s conversion in Acts 9, for, in verse 20, we are told that “straightway in the synagogues he proclaimed Jesus, that He is the Son of God.” Shortly after that he went away into Arabia (Gal.1:17³¹), there, no doubt, to receive further revelations from the Lord as to his work and ministry. His gospel, therefore, was not after man. He did not receive it from man, nor was he taught it by any of the other apostles. As was his conversion, which was the result of the direct intervention of the Lord, who stopped him on his persecuting way near

27. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/2%20Cor.5.11>

28. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gal.1.11>

29. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gal%201.12>

30. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Rom.16.25>

31. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gal.1.17>

to Damascus, so also the gospel which he preached came to him directly from the Lord.

Gal.1:13³²,14³³

Divine Revelation is here contrasted with Paul's manner of life in the Jews' religion in which he had had a good schooling. After he had left Tarsus in Cilicia, where he was a citizen of no mean city, he came to Jerusalem, where he sat as a student at the feet of the great Gamaliel (Acts 22:3³⁴; Acts 5:34³⁵). The Jews' religion was not the strict adherence to the law of Moses; it was a mixture of the law and the interpretations and traditional teachings of the elders (Matt.15:1-9³⁶). These traditional teachings in many things made void the word of God, and this resulted in their vain worship of God. Paul was more zealous than young men of his own age, and was no doubt a brilliant scholar of Jewish learning. He became a fiery, religious bigot, a persecutor of the disciples of the Lord. It says, "Saul laid waste the church (of God in Jerusalem), entering into every house, and haling men and women committed them to prison" (Acts 8:3³⁷). Need we say that it was not the Church which is Christ's Body that he laid waste and made havock of, which cannot be laid waste, but the church of God in Jerusalem could.

Gal.1:15³⁸,16³⁹,17⁴⁰

32. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gal.1.13>

33. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gal%201.14>

34. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Acts%2022.3>

35. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Acts%205.34>

36. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Matt.15.1-9>

37. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Acts%208.3>

The word *Aphorizo*, to separate, which means “to describe limits, to set apart, to choose,” is used three times of Paul. In Rom.1:1⁴¹, he calls himself “a called apostle, separated unto the gospel of God.” Here in the above quotation, he says that God separated him to this work, even from his mother’s womb. Then in Acts 13:2⁴², the Holy Spirit said, “Separate Me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them.” In 2 Tim.1:8⁴³,9⁴⁴, he goes far beyond birth when he speaks of what God had purposed regarding his and Timothy’s ministry, when he says, “God; who 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 us in Christ Jesus before times eternal.” Thus Paul’s apostleship was determined far in the depths of the eternal counsels.

He was in consequence separated to this work when he was born, but this was not revealed to men until the call of the Spirit, in Acts 13: After that his apostleship was challenged frequently, challenged by the evil one and by his enemies, because of his clear and powerful preaching of God’s free salvation by faith alone, that justification by God is by faith, without works of any kind. Paul says that God called him to reveal His Son, not to him, but in him. There must be the revelation of Christ in the preach-

38. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gal.1.15>

39. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gal%201.16>

40. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gal%201.17>

41. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Rom.1.1>

42. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Acts%2013.2>

43. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/2%20Tim.1.8>

44. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/2%20Tim%201.9>

er, as well as to the preacher; if the preaching is to be effective, the preacher must be like the One of whom he speaks. Think of Stephen the martyr; he was full of faith and of the Holy Spirit, full of grace and power, and as he stood before the Jewish council to bear witness for his Lord, it is said, "And all that sat in the council, fastening their eyes on him, saw his face as it had been the face of an angel" (Acts 6:15⁴⁵). His Jewish murderers, amongst whom was Saul, could bear neither his heavenly appearance, nor his heavenly message, and they stoned him to death.

Paul was himself to know a similar experience, not because of retributive justice, but because Christ was revealed in him, and because he preached Christ. This stoning took place at the city of Lystra through the incitement of the Jews, and no doubt left its mark on him, which, perchance, he called "the marks of Jesus" (Gal.6:17⁴⁶). He says, "Once was I stoned" (2 Cor.11:25⁴⁷). His rising and entering the city of Lystra, and going forth to Derbe the next day was indeed a miracle of divine power. After being called, he says that immediately he conferred not with flesh and blood, neither did he go up to Jerusalem to them that were apostles before him, but he went away into Arabia. From the recounting of these facts it is abundantly clear that he did not receive the gospel which he preached from man, nor was he taught it (verses 11,12). He went from Damascus to Arabia, and from thence he returned to Damascus again.

Gal.1:18⁴⁸,19⁴⁹

45. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Acts%206.15>

46. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gal.6.17>

47. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/2%20Cor.11.25>

48. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gal.1.18>

“After three years” is to be dated from the time of the call of God to Paul on the Damascus road, and includes the time spent in Arabia and Damascus. He went up to Jerusalem to become acquainted with Peter, after he had been let down through the wall of Damascus in a basket (Acts 9:23-25⁵⁰; 2 Cor.11:33⁵¹). In Jerusalem he sought to join (to glue, showing the permanence of his fellowship with the disciples, the same word as to be joined to a wife in marriage) himself to the disciples, but they were afraid of him. Barnabas, however, took him and brought him to the apostles and declared to them his conversion. The apostles to whom he was brought were Peter and James. He continued in Jerusalem for those fifteen days until by his bold preaching his life was in danger, and the brethren brought him down to Caesarea and sent him forth to Tarsus (Acts 9:27-30⁵²).

Gal.1:20⁵³,21⁵⁴

Having been sent forth to Tarsus, he was in the province of Cilicia. Then, later when the work of God began in Antioch of Syria, Barnabas was sent from Jerusalem as far as Antioch, and when he saw the greatness of the work, he went forth to Tarsus to seek for Saul, and when he had found him, he brought him to Antioch. There they continued for a whole year with the church

49. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gal%201.19>

50. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Acts%209.23-25>

51. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/2%20Cor.11.33>

52. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Acts%209.27-30>

53. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gal.1.20>

54. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gal%201.21>

and taught much people (Acts 11:19-26⁵⁵). Thus it was that Paul came into the region of Syria, as well as into that of Cilicia.

Gal.1:22⁵⁶,23⁵⁷,24⁵⁸

Paul here writes of the churches of Judaea. He seems to connect these churches with the time when he came into the regions of Syria and Cilicia. If this is so, and there seems no reason to doubt it, then there were churches of God in existence in Judaea when he was brought down to Caesarea and sent forth to Tarsus. Following the reading in the RV of “church” instead of “churches”, in Acts 9:31⁵⁹, it does not mean that it was the scattered church of God in Jerusalem that is in view, but the church throughout all (Gk. *Kath Holes*, “throughout the whole,” from which “church catholic” is derived) Judaea and Samaria and Galilee which was comprised of a number of churches of God. This agrees with the use of the word church in 1 Tim.3:15⁶⁰, – “the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.”

What is meant by the churches of Judaea “which were in Christ”? Does “in Christ” here mean the unchangeable standing of believers “in Christ, ” as in such statements “one Body in Christ” (Rom.12:5⁶¹); “I know a man in Christ, fourteen years

55. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Acts%2011.19-26>

56. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gal.1.22>

57. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gal%201.23>

58. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gal%201.24>

59. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Acts%209.31>

60. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/1%20Tim.3.15>

61. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Rom.12.5>

ago” (2 Cor.12:2⁶²); “If any man is in Christ, he is a new creature” (2 Cor.5:17⁶³)? Does every use of “in Christ” refer to the unchangeable standing of all believers? Plainly, that is not the case. Consider the following; “I say the truth in Christ” (Rom.9:1⁶⁴); “Speak we in Christ” (2 Cor.2:17⁶⁵); “Ye are wise in Christ”; “Tutors in Christ”; “My ways which be in Christ” (1 Cor.4:10⁶⁶,15⁶⁷,17⁶⁸); “God, which always leadeth us in triumph in Christ” (2 Cor.2: 14⁶⁹); “Unto a dispensation of the fulness of the times (the Millenium), to sum up all things in Christ” (Eph.1:10⁷⁰); “My bonds became manifest in Christ” (Phil.1:13⁷¹); “Your good manner of life in Christ” (1 Pet.3:16⁷²); “Boldness in Christ” (Philn.1:8). The term the churches of God in Christ or in Christ Jesus (1 Thess.2:14⁷³) does not view the unchangeable standing of a man in Christ or that believers are one Body in Christ.

There were churches of God, but there were no such things as Bodies of Christ. There is but one Body of which Christ is the

62. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/2%20Cor.12.2>

63. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/2%20Cor.5.17>

64. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Rom.9.1>

65. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/2%20Cor.2.17>

66. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/1%20Cor.4.10>

67. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/1%20Cor%204.15>

68. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/1%20Cor%204.17>

69. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/2%20Cor.2.%2014>

70. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Eph.1.10>

71. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Phil.1.13>

72. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/1%20Pet.3.16>

73. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/1%20Thess.2.14>

Head (Eph.4:4⁷⁴; Col.1:18⁷⁵). Paul in his unconverted days made havock of the church of God in Jerusalem, and made havoc of the Faith as expressed in that church, for the Faith should find expression in believers being found together in subjection and obedience to their one Lord, being gathered together in churches of God. Great was the joy of the churches of Judaea over Paul's conversion and his preaching of the Faith; he says, "They glorified God in me."

74. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Eph.4.4>

75. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Col.1.18>

COMMENTARY ON GALATIANS

2

Gal.2:1¹,2²

“Then” of Gal.1:18³ and “then” of Gal.1:21⁴, and “then” of Gal.2:1⁵ are related. Paul went up to Jerusalem three years after his conversion, and then fourteen years after that he went again to Jerusalem, making seventeen years from his conversion. This latter going up is that referred to in Acts 15:1-6⁶: He does mention here his going to Judaea to the elders of the Judaeian churches with the relief which was sent by the church in Antioch. On this visit to Judaea Barnabas accompanied him (Acts 11:27-30⁷). In Acts 15:1-6⁸ Paul and Barnabas and certain others were appointed to go up to Jerusalem to the apostles and elders over the matter of circumcision which had been taught in Antioch by certain brethren from Judaea. That led to the matter of the gospel and circumcision being discussed by the conference of apostles and elders at Jerusalem and happily settled.

1. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gal.2.1>

2. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gal%202.2>

3. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gal.1.18>

4. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gal.1.21>

5. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gal.2.1>

6. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Acts%2015.1-6>

7. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Acts%2011.27-30>

8. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Acts%2015.1-6>

Here in Gal.2⁹, we read of another purpose of Paul going to Jerusalem, and that was to discuss this matter of the gospel and circumcision with those of repute in Jerusalem, who included James and Cephas (Peter) and John. Those of repute were reputed to be pillars. It is to be noted, that while the brethren appointed Paul and Barnabas, etc., to go to Jerusalem, Paul tells us in Gal.2¹⁰ that he went up by Rev.to lay before those of repute the gospel which he preached among the Gentiles. These two phases of his going up (1) by appointment, and (2) by revelation, and also his two conferences (1) between Paul and Barnabas and those of repute, and (2) the general conference of the apostles and elders, as is described, in Acts 15:6-21¹¹, should be carefully noted. Paul tells us that he took Titus, who was a Greek, with him; I have no doubt as a test case on this matter of circumcision.

Gal.2:3¹²

There seems little doubt, as I have suggested above, that Paul in his wisdom took Titus as a test case. Though Paul circumcised Timothy whose mother was a Jewess and his father a Greek, he did not do it with the object of perfecting his salvation by a Jewish rite. Timothy having begun in the Spirit was not by circumcision being perfected in the flesh (Gal.3:3¹³) and thus made a debtor to keep the whole law of rites and ceremonies (Gal.5:1-6¹⁴). Paul circumcised him “because of the Jews that

9. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gal.2>

10. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gal.2>

11. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Acts%2015.6-21>

12. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gal.2.3>

13. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gal.3.3>

14. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gal.5.1-6>

were in those parts” (Acts 16:3¹⁵), which means in effect, that the ministry of Timothy should not be hindered among the Jews by the fact that he, a half Jew, was an uncircumcised man, circumcision being held in such high esteem among them. Paul’s view of circumcision is clearly stated, “For neither is circumcision anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature (or creation)” (Gal.6:15¹⁶). The circumcision of Timothy was part of Paul’s avowed course of conduct in the work of the Lord: “I am become all things to all men, that I may by all means save some. And I do all things for the gospel’s sake” (1 Cor.9:22¹⁷,23¹⁸).

The issue is quite different in the case of Titus, which was: Would it be demanded that Titus, a man saved by grace without works, must be circumcised in order to be more truly saved? Note carefully what was being taught in Antioch by the brethren from Judaea: “Except ye be circumcised after the custom of Moses, ye cannot be saved” (Acts 15:1¹⁹). The test was passed successfully, for Titus was not compelled to be circumcised by the leaders in Jerusalem. The first round of the battle was won, that the truth of the gospel might remain in its purity as was taught by Paul, and also the other apostles. The decision of the council in Jerusalem is clear in regard to the men who came to Antioch from Judaea and taught the disciples that they must be circumcised if they would be saved: “Forasmuch as we have heard that certain which went out from us have troubled you

15. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Acts%2016.3>

16. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gal.6.15>

17. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/1%20Cor.9.22>

18. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/1%20Cor%209.23>

19. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Acts%2015.1>

with words, subverting your souls; to whom we gave no commandment” (Acts 15:24²⁰).

Gal.2:4²¹,5²²

We read of “false apostles” (2 Cor.11:13²³); of “false teachers” (2 Pet.2:1²⁴); of “false witnesses” (Matt.26:59²⁵; 1 Cor.15:15²⁶); of “false prophets” (Matt.7:15²⁷; Matt.24:24²⁸; 2 Pet.2:1²⁹), and here of “false brethren”, such, presumably, as posed that they were brethren, but had never known the new birth. They had been brought in by stealth and should never have been in the Fellowship at all. They were of the same sort as Paul referred to as “grievous wolves” (Acts 20:29³⁰). Their purpose was that of being spies, dangerous people to any community or nation. Their object was to spy out the liberty that believers have in Christ Jesus, and also to bring the saints into bondage to legal ceremonials. Paul and Barnabas would not subject themselves to these Judaizing teachers in their teaching of their mixture of law and grace, a mixture of Christ’s complete work of atonement with human works, not for one hour. Acts 15:2³¹ tells that “Paul and Barn-

20. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Acts%2015.24>

21. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gal.2.4>

22. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gal%202.5>

23. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/2%20Cor.11.13>

24. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/2%20Pet.2.1>

25. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Matt.26.59>

26. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/1%20Cor.15.15>

27. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Matt.7.15>

28. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Matt.24.24>

29. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/2%20Pet.2.1>

30. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Acts%2020.29>

abas had no small dissension and questioning with them.” What could Paul have said to the Galatian saints or any others if he had yielded an inch to the Judaizing teachers in Antioch? Nothing, save to confess his wrong in the matter.

Gal.2:6³²,7³³

Those who were of repute (Gk. dokimos, “proved, tried; approved after examination and trial”) were men of proved worth. What Paul is saying is not that he is casting any aspersion on the men of repute who had proven themselves, but he is holding a correct balance between men whose labours had been largely among the Jews, and his own work which had been largely towards the Gentiles, and also between workmen and the truth of the gospel. The approval of men may be fickle, but let us never mix that with the stedfastness of the truth of God, which, alas, is often sold for men’s adulation and rewards. Let us seek God’s approval, who, Paul says, accepteth no man’s person. It is our faithfulness and work which will commend us to God. Those who were of repute imparted to, or conferred nothing upon, Paul as the result of their conference, but they discerned the grace that had been given to Paul, that he had been intrusted with the gospel to the uncircumcision, even as Peter had been with the gospel to the circumcision.

First and foremost in this important matter of the gospel, and the place that circumcision had in the dispensation of law, and from Abraham’s time, it was necessary that the leaders in the

31. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Acts%2015.2>

32. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gal.2.6>

33. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gal%202.7>

work of God in that time should be of one mind in the Lord. It will be seen in the conference of the apostles, and elders afterwards, the salutary effect that this unity of mind between Paul and Barnabas and James, Peter and John had upon the conference. When leaders are divided, then woe to the people that they seek to lead! The difficulty was solved to the glory of God and the well-being of His people.

Gal.2:8³⁴,9³⁵,10³⁶

Here we have a happy ending to a most fateful discussion. The devil was foiled in his attempt to cause a rift among the apostles, and it was a good omen as to what would be the result of the conference of the apostles and elders. The leaders through wise consultation had saved themselves, in the over-ruling mercy of God, from dissension and disruption, for had they appeared in the conference of apostles and elders divided in mind a grave and serious situation would have arisen. Leaders should be careful to confer together so that they may reach oneness of mind. The leaders mutually saw the grace of God in one another and they gave to each other the right hand of fellowship that they each should go to their respective fields of service to which God of His grace had called them. The apostles were each concerned to attend to the needs of the poor.

Gal.2:11³⁷,12³⁸

34. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gal.2.8>

35. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gal%202.9>

36. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gal%202.10>

37. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gal.2.11>

38. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gal%202.12>

When did Peter come to Antioch? There may be a difference of view on this question, but I am of the opinion that it coincided with the time of the return of Paul and Barnabas to Antioch from their first missionary journey (Acts 14:25-28³⁹), during which journey the Galatian churches were planted. During the early part of his visit Peter ate as did the Gentiles, having been enlightened by the vision of Acts 10, that God had made all meats clean. He acted thus until the arrival of certain men from James, who in all probability are the men of Acts 15:1⁴⁰: "And certain men came down from Judaea," and so forth. One would hardly have thought that such a dominant and forceful character as Peter could be overawed and give way before the influence of those men. It just shows that the fear of man brings a snare.

But who is this James whose shadow seems to be cast over the scene? He seems to be the same as the James of chapter 1:19, James the Lord's brother. He is mentioned in 2:9 also. Note how he is placed before Cephas in this verse, showing, I judge, his influence and prominence in Jerusalem. This perhaps arose from two reasons, (1) from his godliness and spiritual power, and (2) from the veneration in which he was held, being the Lord's brother. In any case, Peter knew how strong the believers of the Pharisees (Acts 15:5⁴¹) were in the churches in Judaea, and so he dissembled, acting hypocritically. Paul, however, saw the seriousness of the situation and acted heroically, faced the once bold Peter, and resisted him because he stood condemned. What of Papal infallibility in the supposed successors of Peter, in the light of

39. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Acts%2014.25-28>

40. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Acts%2015.1>

41. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Acts%2015.5>

Peter's act in Antioch? Even apostles could make great mistakes. We must distinguish between erring men and the inspired Scriptures, which is the only reliable guide: "Thy word is truth" (Jn 17:17⁴²).

Gal.2:13⁴³

The rift between Paul and Peter widened. Other Jews joined Peter and withdrew from the Gentiles, and even Barnabas, Paul's fellow-labourer, was carried away with their dissimulation. Was Antioch, the first church of God among the Gentiles, to be the battle-ground of Jews and Gentiles disputing about food, racial segregation, and legal rites and ceremonies, and the respective disputants to be led by the most outstanding of the apostles, Peter and Paul? We see how serious was the situation that sent Paul to Jerusalem, by revelation from the Lord, to keep division from wrecking the work of God in the new dispensation of grace.

Gal.2:14⁴⁴

Here was a question which was quite unanswerable by Peter. He had either to say that he was wrong in eating with the Gentiles or wrong in withdrawing from them. He could not be right in both. If he said that he was wrong in eating with the Gentiles, then what about the vision in Acts 10? And what about his defence in chapter 11 before them of the circumcision in Jerusalem as to his going into the house of the Gentile Cornelius? He would have had to turn his back on what these two chapters record. Then

42. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/John%2017.17>

43. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gal.2.13>

44. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gal.2.14>

again, was Peter going to compel the Gentiles to live as did the Jews? Here was Peter's dilemma. How Peter got out of his difficulty we are not told. The decision of the apostles and elders at Jerusalem settled the matter as to Jews and Gentiles in the same Fellowship and how they should dwell together. In reaching this decision Peter played his part well.

Gal.2:15⁴⁵,16⁴⁶

Even Jews by nature occupy no place of precedence above the Gentiles in justification by faith and acceptance with God. Both are sinners and ready to perish, and when saved, both are "fellow-heirs, and fellow-members of the Body (of Christ), and fellow-partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel" (Eph.3:6⁴⁷). In the past dispensation the Jews had a great advantage, for unto them were committed the oracles of God (Rom.3:1⁴⁸,2⁴⁹), and besides, what Paul said of them, in Rom.9:1-5⁵⁰, made them an outstanding people above all other nations. But all that is gone for the present. Here, in verse 16, Paul comes down with a sledge-hammer blow on Jewish pre-ference to justification by the works of the law, and it crumbles to dust. "A man is not justified by the works of the law, save (but only, RVM) through faith in Jesus Christ." The faith comes through the message of the gospel reaching the heart; "So belief comes of hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ"

45. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gal.2.15>

46. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gal%202.16>

47. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Eph.3.6>

48. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Rom.3.1>

49. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Rom%203.2>

50. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Rom.9.1-5>

(Rom.10:17⁵¹). Paul makes another sweeping statement, “Because by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified,” whether such be Jew or Gentile.

Gal.2:17⁵²

Here is a wholesome question for all who think that in order to be justified they must add their works to faith in Christ. If after they have sought to be justified thus, they find that they are still sinners and must keep on working themselves to perfect justification, then, truly, Christ must be, according to their view, a minister of sin, instead of a minister of righteousness. The question is, Is a believer justified truly and fully by faith in Christ alone, or does the work of Christ give only partial relief from sin, the believer having to do his part as well? Is the saving of a sinner the work of Christ and himself, Christ and he being the joint-saviours of his soul? Is Christ, after all His work in bearing our sins in His body on the tree, to be regarded as a makeweight to add to man’s own works? Ah, no, for “there is none that doeth good, no, not so much as one” (Rom.3:12⁵³).

Gal.2:18⁵⁴,19⁵⁵

Was Paul to return again to law-keeping to be justified? Though as touching the law he was found blameless (by men), yet his Pharisaic zeal found him persecuting the church (Phil.3:6⁵⁶). He

51. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Rom.10.17>

52. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gal.2.17>

53. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Rom.3.12>

54. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gal.2.18>

55. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gal%202.19>

was saved on the Damascus road while he was a blasphemer, a persecutor and injurious. Was he to return again to the law which through sin had slain him? (Rom.7:11⁵⁷). Was he to return to that which to the sinner was the ministration of death? (2 Cor.3:7⁵⁸,9⁵⁹). Was there ever a refuge for a sinner at mount Sinai as well as at mount Calvary? The one mountain says, Do! but the other says, It is done! The law enacted the full penalty for sin upon Christ when He died. He also died to sin and we died with Him. Thus Paul views his death in the death of Christ. The law has no claim on the dead. The dead are beyond the claims of law. Thus Paul says, "I through the law, died unto the law, that I might live unto God." There is no law that can give life, save the law of Spirit of the life in Christ Jesus (Rom.8:2⁶⁰).

Gal.2:20⁶¹,21⁶²

Here is true Christian living. Many rejoice in the fact that Christ died for them, but fewer rejoice in the truth that they died with Him. It is the carry-over of the old life into the new that leads to a perverted form of Christian life. Unless we see ourselves as Paul did, that Saul of Tarsus was dead, and Paul the apostle was alive, and that life was Christ living, shall we say, over again in that man, unless we have clear-cut theology, the old life will spill over into the new with all its old lusts and pleasures. Paul says

56. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Phil.3.6>

57. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Rom.7.11>

58. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/2%20Cor.3.7>

59. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/2%20Cor%203.9>

60. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Rom.8.2>

61. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gal.2.20>

62. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gal%202.21>

in chapter 6:14, "Far be it from me to glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world hath been crucified unto me, and I unto the world." Here is the chasm of death which cannot be bridged, and that form of death by crucifixion.

Not only was he crucified to the world; he was crucified as to his old man and consequently to sin. The old man finds his pleasure in the world, so the Christian who would find his joy in Christ must see how the cross has affected him, both in his person and in his environment. The Christ-life is a life of faith in the Son of God. Here is the mainspring of all, in the fact that the Son of God loved me, and gave Himself up for me. It is one of the sweetest and most intimate verses in the Scriptures. He sums up his resume of his defence of the gospel, that he did not make void the grace of God, for if righteousness is through the law, then Christ died for nought. If man could have saved himself by law-keeping, then the blessed Lord need never have come and died, but righteousness by law-keeping was far out of man's reach.

COMMENTARY ON GALATIANS

3

Gal.3:1¹,2²

Paul now turns from his outline of past controversies to the present state of the Galatians. He calls them thoughtless or senseless, and asks them who bewitched them, that is, deceived them by magical arts. Before their eyes Jesus Christ had been openly (Gk. *prographo*, *pro*, before, *grapho*, to write) set forth crucified. Paul's wish was that they should seriously answer his questions, "Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?" There can be but one answer – "by the hearing of faith." The scriptural answer is given in the inspired words of John, "This spake He of the Spirit, which they that believed on Him were to receive: for the Spirit was not yet given; because Jesus was not yet glorified" (Jn 7:39³). This is a most illuminating verse. It states two things, (1) that the Spirit was to be given to believers on the ground of faith, not through prayer or good works, and (2) that the Spirit was not to be given until Jesus was glorified. Thus no Jew however devout ever received the Spirit by law-keeping, nor did any believer receive the Spirit by the works of the law.

Gal.3:3⁴,4⁵

1. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gal.3.1>

2. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gal%203.2>

3. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/John%207.39>

4. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gal.3.3>

5. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gal%203.4>

Here Paul again alludes to their senselessness. Having begun in the Spirit, are they going back to the law, to its rites and ceremonies, which applied to Israel after the flesh? (1 Cor.10:18⁶). Were they going back to “(meats and drinks and divers washings) carnal ordinances, imposed until a time of reformation”? (Heb.9:10⁷). How slow men were to see and understand the dispensational change that had taken place! It shows how systematic religious instruction stubbornly resists divine revelation. The issue today between God and men is not the law, but the Christ. “What think ye of the Christ?” is the vital issue (Matt.22:42⁸). “Christ is all, and in all” (Col.3:11⁹). The day of externals belonged to the past; it is the cleansing of the conscience now, not the flesh; it is being made perfect in Christ, not in the flesh. It is the Spirit that quickeneth, the flesh profiteth nothing. Dead carnal formalities avail nothing. Had the Galatians suffered for their faith in Christ and their obedience to Him? Was that in vain? Would they again join hands with the Judaizers who were largely the cause of Paul’s sufferings and their own?

Gal.3:5¹⁰,6¹¹

Paul does not say that the miracles were wrought by the Galatian saints, but that they were wrought among them. He himself had healed the cripple at Lystra. Then he had himself been stoned and dragged out as dead, but he rose up and entered into Lystra,

6. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/1%20Cor.10.18>

7. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Heb.9.10>

8. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Matt.22.42>

9. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Col.3.11>

10. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gal.3.5>

11. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gal%203.6>

and the next day went forth to Derbe, which was indeed a notable miracle. How were these, and possibly other miracles, wrought? by legal works or by the hearing of faith? The answer is obvious. Faith is not guessing or trying, but is the result of revelation. Healers must know what persons are to be healed, and not act blindly, not knowing God's will. Where failure in healing takes place, the blame is put by the would-be healer in many cases on the poor sufferer and not on his own shoulders as responsible for deceiving the sufferer, who has looked in vain for the healing he earnestly desired. Abraham is a type of a true believer, and shows what faith is. God told him to look to the stars and tell the number of the stars, if he could, and God said to him, "So shall thy seed be." He believed the revelation of God, and so was justified. Faith rests on divine revelation, and if there is no revelation, then there is no faith.

Gal.3:7¹²,8¹³,9¹⁴

Note that it is not "children" of Abraham, as in the AV/KJV, but "sons". Children are simply such as are born, but sons implies a likeness to the parent as well as birth. Abraham had many children by Hagar and Keturah, but he had one son of promise, Isaac, who bore a likeness to his father in faith and obedience. Note that in Lk.16:25¹⁵: Abraham is made to say, in both AV/KJV and RV "Son, remember," whereas the correct translation is, "Child, remember." See RV marginal reading. The rich man bore no resemblance to Abraham, though he was a descendant

12. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gal.3.7>

13. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gal%203.8>

14. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gal%203.9>

15. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Luke.16.25>

of Abraham. Paul gives personality to the scripture, as though it saw and spoke. The whole of the Scriptures is a divine message to man; the whole of its prophecies and promises were known to God long before they were written. Known unto God are all His works “from the beginning of the world (from eternity)” (Acts 15:18¹⁶, AV/KJV).

The blessing of the Gentiles, that is, the nations, is promised in the blessing of Abraham, “In thee shall all the nations be blessed,” that is, all the believers of the nations, as is evident from the following verse. “So then they which be of faith are blessed with the faithful Abraham.” “The faithful Abraham” does not refer here to the obedience of Abraham to the commandments of God as to his walk, but to the fact that he believed God and was blessed and justified. It is more closely rendered, according to the truth that Paul is setting forth here, as “the believing Abraham”.

Gal.3:10¹⁷

Many people think that they can pay off God with good works for the evil that they have done, and also that paying their debts to men is paying their debt to God. Does any man fulfil the law’s demand, “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself”? This answer to the Lord by a lawyer was right, and he was told, “Thou hast answered right: this do, and thou shalt live” (Lk.10:27¹⁸,28¹⁹). The case of those

16. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Acts%2015.18>

17. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gal.3.10>

18. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Luke.10.27>

19. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Lk%2010.28>

who fail in these two commandments of the law is hopeless. The sinner is dead through his trespasses and sins (Eph.2:1-5²⁰). Consequently the sinner is cursed by the law which he has broken, so that there is no relief in turning to a law which has already cursed him. "All have sinned" (Rom.3:23²¹), therefore all are under the curse.

Gal.3:11²²,12²³

To be justified in the sight of God, is the opposite of what James deals with in his epistle (Jas.2:14-26²⁴), where he shows that justification by works is before men, by ministering to the need of the needy. Here Paul speaks of Abraham being justified by faith, in that he believed God and it was reckoned to him for righteousness. Abraham believed God in the darkness of night, and, besides, no one saw the action of his heart but God. In contrast, he was justified by works in broad daylight on mount Moriah, an act which any one nearby could have seen, and which we may see to this day, in that he offered up his son Isaac. Faith can be shown to men only by the works that we do. We can only demonstrate our faith by our works. What Paul is dealing with in the verses above is what takes place in the sight of God and not of men. Thus Abraham was righteous through his faith, and Hab.2:4²⁵ also says that a man is just by his faith; he is just through what Paul

20. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Eph.2.1-5>

21. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Rom.3.23>

22. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gal.3.11>

23. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gal%203.12>

24. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/James.2.14-26>

25. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Hab.2.4>

calls, the “justification of life” (Rom.5:18²⁶). The law could not make the dead sinner to live (Gal.3:21²⁷).

Gal.3:13²⁸,14²⁹

Here is the hope of believing sinners who are cursed by the law and bruised by the fall. Christ has redeemed such from the curse of the law. He became a curse for (Gk. *hyper*, over, in a substitutionary sense) us, that is, Christ became a curse for those who were cursed. He became a curse by dying upon a tree (Deut.21:22³⁰,23³¹). Thus, not by law-keeping, in which there is no hope of salvation for the sinner, but by One who took man’s place in death, by dying on the tree, the blessing of Abraham in Christ Jesus flows out to the Gentiles who were far off, and to the Jews who were nigh. The promise of the Spirit is not some promise made by the Spirit, but by faith we receive the Spirit who was promised. He is called “the Holy Spirit of promise” (Eph.1:13³²).

Gal.3:15³³

Paul here lays a premise for his argument which follows, that even among men, when once a covenant is ratified, it is estab-

26. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Rom.5.18>

27. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gal.3.21>

28. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gal.3.13>

29. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gal%203.14>

30. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Deut.21.22>

31. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Deut%2021.23>

32. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Eph.1.13>

33. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gal.3.15>

lished as an instrument of authority by which the covenanting parties are bound. If this were not so, how would mankind run its affairs? Organised society and human life as we know it would become impossible.

Gal.3:16³⁴,17³⁵ God, who promised to Abraham in Ur of the Chaldees that in him all families would be blessed (Gen.12:3³⁶; Acts 7:3³⁷), began to speak to him of his seed when he was seventy-five years of age (Gen.12:4³⁸,7³⁹), when he entered Canaan. This promise relative to his seed was repeated again and again; and, in Gen.15⁴⁰, God entered into a covenant with Abraham based on the promise of Isaac, in whom the seed of Abraham was to be called (Gen.17:19⁴¹; Gen.21:12⁴²). Isaac is a type of Christ. God speaks of Isaac being Abraham's only begotten son (Heb.11:17⁴³; Gen.22:2⁴⁴). Abraham had many sons born after the flesh, but he had only one son, Isaac, born after the Spirit (Gal.4:29⁴⁵), who was also born through faith, for "by faith even Sarah herself received power to conceive seed when she was past

34. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gal.3.16>

35. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gal%203.17>

36. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gen.12.3>

37. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Acts%207.3>

38. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gen.12.4>

39. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gen%2012.7>

40. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gen.15>

41. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gen.17.19>

42. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gen.21.12>

43. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Heb.11.17>

44. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gen.22.2>

45. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gal.4.29>

age, since she counted Him faithful who had promised” (Heb.11:11⁴⁶).

Abraham too “wavered not through unbelief, but waxed strong through faith, giving glory to God” (Rom.4:20⁴⁷). The seed of Abraham, the men of faith, spring from one Seed, which is Christ, the Antitype of Isaac, the Seed in whom all nations were to be blessed, and who would possess the gate of His enemies (Gen.22:17⁴⁸,18⁴⁹). The promise confirmed by the word of the oath was not disannulled by the giving of the law. The hope of the world is in the covenanted promise made to Abraham, and not in the law as given by Moses.

Gal.3:18⁵⁰,19⁵¹,20⁵²

What was the law? It was not a means of life, but a rule of life. It could not give life, but it showed the way, and was indeed itself the way, in which God’s people should walk. “Blessed are they that are perfect in the way, Who walk in the law of the LORD” (Ps.119:1⁵³). The law was given to Israel to teach them how to walk before the LORD. The law, which demanded obedience and holiness, could never clear the guilty and the ungodly. The statute of heaven was, “The wages of sin is death,” and death only

46. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Heb.11.11>

47. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Rom.4.20>

48. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gen.22.17>

49. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gen%2022.18>

50. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gal.3.18>

51. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gal%203.19>

52. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gal%203.20>

53. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Ps.119.1>

could meet the law's just demands. Thus it was, that "apart from shedding of blood there is no remission" (Heb.9:22⁵⁴). Only by the penalty being borne by another could the sinner be forgiven and his sin covered.

The law was added because of transgressions till the Seed (Christ) should come. It was given to keep the natural seed of Abraham walking in a proper way, and every transgression of it received a just recompense (Heb.2:2⁵⁵). It was ordained through angels. The same word is used in Acts 7:53⁵⁶: Some give "promulgated" for "ordained", which may give the correct thought, bearing in mind the words of Heb.2:2⁵⁷, "For if the word spoken through angels proved steadfast," which is a reference to the giving of the law. Note, too, the words of Moses, in Deut.33:2⁵⁸, as to the giving of the law. A mediator (Gk. mesites, from mesos, middle) is a middle-man, one who comes in between. Such was Moses; he came in between God and the people of Israel. "The law was given by Moses; grace and truth came (became) by Jesus Christ" (Jn 1:17⁵⁹). Moses was the mediator of the old covenant; Jesus Christ is the Mediator of the new (Heb.8:6⁶⁰; 12:24⁶¹). The Lord is the sole Mediator between God and men (1 Tim.2:5⁶²).

54. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Heb.9.22>

55. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Heb.2.2>

56. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Acts%207.53>

57. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Heb.2.2>

58. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Deut.33.2>

59. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/John%201.17>

60. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Heb.8.6>

61. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Heb%2012.24>

62. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/1%20Tim.2.5>

Gal.3:21⁶³,22⁶⁴

The law cannot be against God's promises. If it were so, God would be a God with a double mind, making promises, and then later rendering them of none effect by the law. God is a God of truth, and His word is truth. It is only blind men who find contradictions in the Bible. The Bible is not self-destructive by being divided against itself. The law filled its place and was suited to the work for which it was given. The apostle sets forth the matter of life that was at stake. "For if there had been a law given which could make alive, verily righteousness would have been of the law." The law could not give life; it was a rule of life, not a means of life, as we have before said. No flesh could be justified by the law, for by the law cometh the knowledge of sin (Rom.3:20⁶⁵). All mankind are shut up under sin by the Scriptures. The law barred and bolted the door to keep the prisoners, the law-breakers, in. Is there hope for mankind? There is, but not in man himself by law-keeping, but in a promised Saviour, "the Seed of the woman," and "the seed of Abraham." The promise is given by faith in Jesus Christ to those who believe. The slave to the law grinds at his weary task and is no nearer to the realization of his hopes at the end of the day than he was at the beginning, but the believer by one act of faith accepts the promise.

Gal.3:23⁶⁶,24⁶⁷,25⁶⁸

63. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gal.3.21>

64. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gal%203.22>

65. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Rom.3.20>

66. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gal.3.23>

67. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gal%203.24>

68. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gal%203.25>

It was not faith that came, but the Faith, that is, the whole body of divine doctrine applicable to this dispensation. It is called, in Jude 1:3⁶⁹, “the Faith which was once for all delivered unto the saints.” The faith answers in this dispensation to the law in the past. Heb.11⁷⁰, and many other scriptures, show that faith (subjective), that is, to believe God, existed from the days of Abel, but “the Faith” (Faith objective) was given, which is the revealed will of God for New Testament times. Paul says that “we” (the Jewish people) were kept in ward (Gk. *phroureo*, to be guarded or watched by a keeper) under the law, shut up (Gk. *sunkleio*, from Sun, with, and Gk. *kleio* to close, to shut up a person) unto Faith which afterwards was to be revealed.

“So that,” says Paul, “the law hath been our tutor (Gk. *paidagos*, from *pais*, a child, either male or female, Gk. *agogos*, a leader) to bring us to Christ. (“A pedagogue, a person, usually a slave or freeman, to whom the care of boys of a family was committed, who trained them up and formed their manners, attended them at their play, led them to and from the public school, and when grown up became their companion, noted for their imperiousness and severity.”) Such was the law, and the object was, that being led to Christ they might be justified by faith. The law cannot justify, but Christ can. Thus those that were brought to Christ were no longer under a tutor, the believer had reached the Divine Master.

Gal.3:26⁷¹

69. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jude%201.3>

70. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Heb.11>

71. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gal.3.26>

Those under the law are viewed dispensationally as in their minority, as children under a pedagogue, whereas those who are believers in Christ Jesus are sons, persons who have reached their majority, and are free from the restraints and strictures of a pedagogue (the law).

Gal.3:27⁷²

The baptism here is similar to that of Rom.6:3⁷³, where we are told that baptism into Christ Jesus is baptism into His death; it is baptism in water and not baptism in the Spirit, which latter baptism is into life, into a living union with Christ the Head of the Body. Baptism into (Gk. *eis*) Christ is like Israel's baptism in the Red sea, when they were baptized unto (eis) Moses. Here in the above verse it is the putting on of Christ, as though one would clothe oneself with Christ. (Gk. *enduo*, to put on clothing). Baptism is a public act of putting on Christ.

Gal.3:28⁷⁴,29⁷⁵

Oneness in Christ Jesus precludes national, social, sexual, differences. Greek and Jew were sons of God, as were slave and freeman, man and woman. In that divine oneness resulting from faith in Christ all human distinctions which have often meant much in this life are entirely gone. Also by baptism a slave put on Christ as well as his baptized master. A baptized woman puts on Christ as does a baptized man, and in the case of Greek and

72. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gal.3.27>

73. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Rom.6.3>

74. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gal.3.28>

75. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gal%203.29>

Jew it was the same. The determining factor is, Are we Christ's by right of purchase? (1 Cor.6:20⁷⁶; 1 Cor.7:23⁷⁷). If so, then we are Abraham's seed, according to faith, and heirs according to promise. "It is not the children of the flesh that are children of God; but the children of the promise are reckoned for (a) seed" (Rom.9:8⁷⁸).

76. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/1%20Cor.6.20>

77. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/1%20Cor.7.23>

78. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Rom.9.8>

COMMENTARY ON GALATIANS

4

Gal.4:1¹,2²,3³

Child (Gk. *nepios*) here means a child in law, one who is a minor; in our day this means one under twenty one years of age. Children and slaves, in one sense, differed nothing in their legal status, both were in bondage to human institutions. The heir was not free in his minority, but was under guardians and stewards, managers of the household. The Jews are viewed as infants under the rudimentary teaching of the law in which there was incompleteness and imperfection. The demands contained in the moral law were what God required of all men (Rom.3:19⁴), save in the matter of the Sabbath day. It was the A-B-C of instruction, yet like the A-B-C, it formed the base of the advanced and complete knowledge of the New Testament. Besides, the ceremonial side of the law had a shadow of the good things to come. As the law was a tutor to bring the Jew to Christ, so also the law was his guardian to protect him and keep him from falling into evil.

Gal.4:4⁵,5⁶

1. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gal.4.1>

2. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gal%204.2>

3. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gal%204.3>

4. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Rom.3.19>

5. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gal.4.4>

6. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gal%204.5>

A day of redemption from the bondage of the law was in view in the Old Testament. Peter described this bondage, when he defended the gospel before the council of apostles and elders in Jerusalem, as a yoke which neither the fathers nor they were able to bear (Acts 15:10⁷). This redemption from the law is a phase of redemption to the Jewish people, for though the Gentiles were under sin and needed to be redeemed from sin's bondage and penalty, they were not under law necessitating redemption from legal bondage. God sent forth (or out) His Son. From whence was He sent forth? The Lord answers this in a number of places. He said, "For I am come down from heaven, not to do Mine own will, but the will of Him that sent Me" (Jn 6:33⁸,38⁹; see also Jn 13:3¹⁰; Jn 16:28¹¹).

Verse 4 above, with many other scriptures, completely destroys that heresy, that the Lord did not become the Son of God until He was born of the virgin Mary. This error is a fearful blunder in the interpretation of the word of God; nothing can be worse than to deny the divine and eternal Sonship of our blessed Lord. He was the Son of God before He was sent forth from God. The object of the sending forth of the Son of God as given here was that the redeemed sons of Israel might receive the adoption of sons. The adoption here is different from that of Rom.8:23¹² and Eph.1:5¹³, which will take place when the Lord comes again,

7. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Acts%2015.10>

8. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/John%206.33>

9. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jn%206.38>

10. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/John%2013.3>

11. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/John%2016.28>

12. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Rom.8.23>

when the redemption of the bodies of the saints will take place. Here in Galatians, it describes the position of sons in contrast to believers in a past dispensation under the law, when the believers who were heirs differed nothing from those who went through the routine of legal observances as slaves at their tasks. In the dispensation of grace believers are viewed as having reached their majority, and they are viewed dispensationally as being placed as sons. Referring again to the sending forth of the Son of God by God, it will be seen that the sending forth is prior to the Lord's birth; the One who was sent forth by God was His Son, and He came into view on earth when He was born of a woman, born under the law.

Gal.4:6¹⁴,7¹⁵

As the Spirit was the Spirit of God and also the Spirit of the Son of God prior to being sent forth, so also was the Son the Son before God sent Him forth. But whilst God sent forth His Son who was born (or became) of a woman, He sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts. In the one case it was "incarnation," in that the Son of God became Man, in the other it was "immanence," in that the Spirit came to dwell in our hearts. In incarnation it is not the Son of God dwelling in a Man called Jesus, but that the Son of God became Man; Jesus Christ was and is one Person, not a Divine Person and a human person. The personality of Jesus Christ was one.

13. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Eph.1.5>

14. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gal.4.6>

15. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gal%204.7>

It is not so in the coming of the Spirit, who came to dwell in the hearts of all the redeemed, so that in each believer there is his own person and also the Person of the Holy Spirit dwelling in him. Notice the difference from Rom.8:15¹⁶, “Ye received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.” Here, in Galatians, it says, “God sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, Abba, Father.” We cry, in Romans, but it is the Spirit that cries in Galatians. Thus the Jewish believer was no longer a bondservant under the law, and the Gentile believer no longer a bondservant to sin. They were sons, and being sons were heirs, God being their Father.

Gal.4:8¹⁷,9¹⁸,10¹⁹,11²⁰

It is important to observe, in verses 1 to 7, the use of “we,” as applied to the Jews, and of “ye” as applied to the Galatians, whether Jews or Gentiles, and to all believers. For instance, “We also, when we (Jews) were children, were held in bondage,” and so forth; and “that He might redeem them (the Jews) which were under the law”; and “because ye are sons,” and so forth. In verse 8 Paul alludes to the Gentile believers of Galatia, and writes of their bondage, not under the law, but to the idols which they served in times past, which by nature were no gods.

Were these one-time idolaters to turn from the freedom with which Christ had made them free to a Jewish system of dead

16. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Rom.8.15>

17. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gal.4.8>

18. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gal%204.9>

19. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gal%204.10>

20. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gal%204.11>

forms and an external religion, a system which was beggarly and afforded no spiritual life, a system like that in which they once were enslaved? The law might indicate days other than those of the heathen, days of abstinence or feasting, but the observance of these, the spiritual meaning of which had been fulfilled in Christ (Col.2:17²¹), was but bondage to weak and beggarly rudiments, a religious system short of spiritual power, for Christ who was set forth in these things typically had come. These observances had become like bodies without souls, chaff without wheat, and husks without kernels. In view of the Judaizing tendency Paul was afraid that he had bestowed labour on them in vain.

Gal.4:12²²,13²³,14²⁴

Paul now turns from expounding the doctrine of justification, in which he alludes to events not elsewhere given in the New Testament, to become a pleader with the Galatian churches. He pleads with them to be as he is, a Jew of the strictest kind, who had, through divine revelation, given up entirely the shadows of the law for the Substance, rites and ceremonies for Christ. He was as they were, for they too had given up their past religious employments for Christ, whether these were according to the law of Moses or according to heathenish religious rites. He besought them to be as sincere in their love toward him as he was toward them. He revived their memory of past events, how that because of (Gk. *dia*, through) an infirmity (or weakness) in his flesh he

21. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Col.2.17>

22. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gal.4.12>

23. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gal%204.13>

24. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gal%204.14>

preached the gospel to them at the first. What was this infirmity or weakness?

Some have said that it was his eyesight, which had been damaged by the glory of the Lord, a light above the brightness of the sun, at the time of his conversion. Others have thought that it was the result of the stoning that he received at Lystra, where was one of the Galatian churches. Though it is not wise to be dogmatic on the point, I nevertheless favour the view that he is alluding to the consequences of the stoning at Lystra. This weakness is thought to be the “thorn in the flesh” (2 Cor.12: 7²⁵), the messenger of Satan to buffet him. The Galatians did Paul no wrong, for that weakness might have been a temptation for them to despise and reject him; instead they received him as if he had been an angel or even as the Lord Himself. What an entering in he had had among them at the first!

Gal.4:15²⁶,16²⁷

Gratulation, rendered “blessedness” in AV/KJV (Gk. *makarismos*, happiness, blessedness, see its use in Rom.4:6²⁸,9²⁹), describes the happy state of those past days, when so affectionate had the Galatians been to Paul, that, if possible, they would have plucked out their eyes and given them to him. The first love of those early days had cooled down; the devil, the sower of discord, had gained an entrance among them through the Judaiz-

25. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/2%20Cor.12.%207>

26. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gal.4.15>

27. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gal%204.16>

28. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Rom.4.6>

29. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Rom%204.9>

ing teachers; and instead of love to Paul reigning in the hearts of the Galatians, he asks, “Am I become your enemy, because I tell you the truth?” It was as though the story of Eden were enacted in Galatia. There the hearts of Adam and Eve were turned away from their loving Creator through Satanic lying. Such is the effect of lying, men accept error for truth, pain for pleasure, and sorrow for joy.

Gal.4:17³⁰,18³¹

These Judaizing teachers were most zealous and persistent in their attentions to the Galatians, but, alas, it was in no good way. Their purpose was to turn them away from the gospel which had been preached by Paul, from justification by faith, and freedom in Christ, to the condemnation and bondage of the law. They were bent on shutting them out from the blessings that they had in Christ (Eph.1:3³²) to a system of abject poverty and beggary, of putting dead works in the place of the work of Christ. Who can despise the work of those who seek others in a good matter, whose feet are beautiful upon the mountains, as shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace? (Isa.52:7³³; Eph.6:15³⁴). How Paul would have appreciated the attentions of such as truly sought the good of the Galatians whilst he was absent from them! but the work of these false teachers he greatly deplored and feared.

30. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gal.4.17>

31. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gal%204.18>

32. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Eph.1.3>

33. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Isa.52.7>

34. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Eph.6.15>

Gal.4:19³⁵,20³⁶

The pangs and throes of child-birth, as of a travailing woman, were upon Paul again. His heart was filled with anguish over his little children who were so dear to him. His agony was until Christ should be formed in them, until that shape, indicative of the nature which was in them through the new birth, was seen in them, a form not blurred by slavery to a lifeless system of external religious observances, but Christ formed and seen in them. How he wished to be present with them, to change his voice, from that of a clear expounder of the gospel, to that of a loving parent towards his offspring! for he was greatly perplexed about them.

Gal.4:21³⁷,22³⁸,23³⁹

The law, or the book of the law, is the first five books of Moses. Here Paul refers to the book of Gen.as forming part of the law. The Galatians, who erroneously and absurdly desired to be under the law, are asked to hear what the law said. He points to the fact that Abraham had two sons, Ishmael and Isaac, the one, the son of Hagar, the young female slave; the other of Sarah the free-woman. Each son took his character from his mother, and in these sons we have the flesh and the Spirit contrasted, the law and the promise. The one was born in the ordinary course of carnal nature, the other born through promise by the miraculous intervention of God.

35. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gal.4.19>

36. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gal%204.20>

37. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gal.4.21>

38. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gal%204.22>

39. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gal%204.23>

Gal.4:24⁴⁰,25⁴¹,26⁴²

Here we have Hagar, Sinai, and the earthy Jerusalem, contrasted with Sarah and the heavenly Jerusalem. An allegory is a story in which the literal meaning is not followed. All Jewish people who were not believers in Christ seemed blind to the covenant of the promise which found its base in justification by faith, in Gen.15⁴³, and adhered to the covenant of works made at Sinai with Israel after the flesh. They were like Ishmael, born in bondage, children of a covenant to which all were bondservants. In contrast to this are those that are born from above (Jn 3:3⁴⁴, RVM), the Jerusalem above being the mother of all such; these are in the enjoyment of new covenant blessings. Such received not the spirit of bondage again unto fear, but the Spirit of Adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father (Rom.8:15⁴⁵). In the verses above we have the old and new covenants contrasted, and freedom and bondage.

Gal.4:27⁴⁶

In this passage from Isaiah we have one of those scriptures which will have application to Israel in the day of their restoration in heart to the Lord, when they will enter into the blessings of the new covenant, applied to the work of God in our day, when

40. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gal.4.24>

41. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gal%204.25>

42. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gal%204.26>

43. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gen.15>

44. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/John%203.3>

45. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Rom.8.15>

46. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gal.4.27>

even now believers are in the blessings of that new covenant. Of old, first Hagar bore her son, and first the old covenant bore its children unto bondage. Later Sarah became the mother of Isaac. Sarah the barren woman, type of the new covenant, is to have more children than Hagar, and the new covenant to have more children than the old. This is to be a cause of rejoicing. Isaac means “to laugh”, and Sarah said, “God hath made me to laugh; every one that heareth will laugh with me” (Gen.21:6⁴⁷).

Gal.4:28⁴⁸,29⁴⁹

Paul describes the mocking of Isaac by Ishmael, on the day that Isaac was weaned, as persecution. It was a day of feasting and laughter for many, but a day of grievous distress for Isaac. Such too was Calvary for the Lord, a day of persecution and sorrow, but Calvary has been the cause of feasting and gladness for many. “Our joy to His sore grief we trace.” Those who are children of promise, who are born after the Spirit, suffer the same treatment as Isaac and the Lord suffered at the hands of those who are born after the flesh. Here are two opposites which ever clash, because their natures are diametrically opposed. They that would live godly in Christ Jesus, according to the new nature within, shall suffer persecution (2 Tim.3:10-12⁵⁰). There can be no evading the issue. The four hundred years of the affliction of Abraham’s seed begins with the persecution of Isaac (Gen.15:13⁵¹;

47. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gen.21.6>

48. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gal.4.28>

49. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gal%204.29>

50. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/2%20Tim.3.10-12>

51. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gen.15.13>

Gen.21:9⁵²,10⁵³). The four hundred and thirty years till the giving of the law begins in Gen.12⁵⁴ (Gal.3:17⁵⁵).

Gal.4:30⁵⁶,31⁵⁷

Whatever may be said about what some have alleged, Sarah's feminine animosity to Hagar and her son, we are left in no doubt that what she said to Abraham was the mind of God: "Cast out this bondwoman and her son: for the son of this bondwoman shall not be heir with my son, even with Isaac," for God said to Abraham, "In all that Sarah saith unto thee, hearken unto her voice; for in Isaac shall thy seed be called" (Gen.21:10-12⁵⁸). This is a standing witness to the fact that actions according to the flesh ever bring sorrow. There must be complete severance between flesh and spirit. We need to cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit (2 Cor.7:1⁵⁹). Believers are not children of a handmaid (the old covenant), but are children of the freewoman (the new covenant).

52. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gen.21.9>

53. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gen%2021.10>

54. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gen.12>

55. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gal.3.17>

56. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gal.4.30>

57. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gal%204.31>

58. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gen.21.10-12>

59. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/2%20Cor.7.1>

COMMENTARY ON GALATIANS

5

Gal.5:1¹

This verse, as shown in the RV, should have been in chapter 4: It is the conclusion of the apostle's allegorical argument. Christ has made believers free from all moral and ceremonial law-keeping in order that they might be justified by faith. The requirement of the law as to its moral statutes comes after justification, not to perfect the work of Christ in the justification of the believing sinner (Rom.8:4²; Rom.13:8-10³). Love God and love your neighbour is the meaning of the whole law and the prophets (Matt.22:37-40⁴). Such a law man naturally cannot keep. Hence we must turn to One who kept the law perfectly, so that He might be a sacrifice for law-breakers. The Galatians were not to allow themselves to be held and coerced into a yoke of bondage.

Gal.5:2⁵,3⁶

Paul after his lengthy digression returns again to the matter of circumcision with which he was dealing in chapter 2: The issue which was joined in Antioch was finally settled regarding the Gentiles at the council of apostles and elders at Jerusalem (Acts

1. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gal.5.1>

2. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Rom.8.4>

3. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Rom.13.8-10>

4. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Matt.22.37-40>

5. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gal.5.2>

6. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gal%205.3>

15). Circumcision was the first rite in the experience of the males of the children of Israel, for they had to be circumcised the eighth day (Lev.12:3⁷); Gen.17:10-12⁸). Paul says, in Rom.2:25⁹, “Circumcision indeed profiteth, if thou be a doer of the law; but if thou be a transgressor of the law, thy circumcision is become uncircumcision.” Circumcision and law-keeping stood together; there could be no adding of circumcision to faith to make salvation more secure for the believer. It was not an adjunct of faith. It was either that the circumcised person kept the whole law, which meant going to Jerusalem at the appointed seasons and engaging in the services proper to the law, or being a new creature in Christ, and, as such, free from the law, so far as salvation by free grace, and through faith, is concerned. The bane of many religious systems is this poison of Judaism with its teaching of faith and works as necessary to salvation. A person in bondage to such systems can never know the glorious truth of – “by grace have ye been saved through faith” (Eph.2:5¹⁰,8¹¹).

Gal.5:4¹²,5¹³

“Severed” is, in my opinion, not a suitable word to be used here for the passive form of Gk. *katargeo*. The marginal reading of the RV is better (Gk. “brought to nought”). A person once united to Christ by faith in the matter of salvation, and justified by faith,

7. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Lev.12.3>

8. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gen.17.10-12>

9. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Rom.2.25>

10. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Eph.2.5>

11. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Eph%202.8>

12. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gal.5.4>

13. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gal%205.5>

can never be severed from Christ, but by turning to a system of works for salvation can be brought to nought, made useless, and unproductive; because Christ and His finished work are deemed to be only partially profitable to them; such must also work for his own salvation. Consequently they are fallen from that grace in divine salvation which is through God's free grace. This is one of those places where the Revisers, in my opinion, would have done well to let well alone.

The AV/KJV says, "Christ is become of no effect (or profit) unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law." This is better than the RV rendering. "The hope of righteousness" is not the hope of having righteousness sometime in the future, but is the hope that the righteousness already possessed engenders in the believer's heart. It is similar in meaning to "the hope of eternal life", in Tit.3:7¹⁴, which is not the hope of obtaining eternal life, for the believer is already in possession of eternal life. It is that hope that eternal life begets within through the Spirit's power. "That, being justified by His grace, we might be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life." All believers are saved, not by hope, but in hope, that is, in a state of hope. (See Rom.8:24¹⁵,25¹⁶).

Gal.5:6¹⁷

14. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Titus.3.7>

15. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Rom.8.24>

16. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Rom%208.25>

17. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gal.5.6>

Paul says, in Rom.2:28¹⁸,29¹⁹, that “circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, not in the letter”; he says also that “neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh.” The LORD said through Jeremiah, “Circumcise yourselves to the LORD, and take away the foreskins of your heart” (Jer.4:4²⁰; see also Deut.10:16²¹; Deut.30:6²²). The heart must be circumcised and the flesh cut away, which is ever antagonistic to God; self-love being its chief characteristic. Believers are not now in the flesh, but in the Spirit (Rom.8:9²³), having been “circumcised with a circumcision not made with hands, in the putting off of the body of the flesh, in the circumcision of Christ” (Col.2:11²⁴). In Christ Jesus, in this new relationship, the old marks in the flesh by which men were segregated are done away; now it is faith working by love.

Gal.5:7²⁵,8²⁶,9²⁷

“Hinder” (Gk. anakopto) means “to beat back, to check, to impede.” Here Paul draws a comparison between the Christian race and the runners in the stadium. The Christian race must be run like all races, according to the rules of the course, that is, accord-

18. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Rom.2.28>

19. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Rom%202.29>

20. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jer.4.4>

21. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Deut.10.16>

22. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Deut.30.6>

23. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Rom.8.9>

24. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Col.2.11>

25. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gal.5.7>

26. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gal%205.8>

27. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gal%205.9>

ing to the truth. The persuasion to which the Galatians had in part yielded had not come from Him who had called them in the grace of Christ (Gal.1:6²⁸). Even a little leaven of this different gospel, that of faith and works, would in time leaven and embitter all. It would sour and corrupt the whole gospel, and in consequence corrupt the Galatians. The damage that corrupt teaching can do is appalling. Paul uses the same words regarding leaven in writing about moral sin, in 1 Cor.5:6²⁹.

Gal.5:10³⁰,11³¹

Paul was persuaded and remained persuaded in the Lord concerning the Galatians that they would remain of the same mind, despite the effect of the Judaizing teacher who had sought to subvert them by his teaching of hand-made circumcision in the flesh. Paul said that this teacher would bear his own judgement, divinely inflicted, whoever he was. As to himself, if he still preached circumcision as he had done in his old Pharisee days, why was he persecuted? There would be no persecution, but instead there would be adulation for him from the Jews. But when Paul was converted his preaching of Christ and Him crucified was to the Jews a stumbling-block (1 Cor.1:23³²), and then fell upon him reproaches and persecutions manifold. The cross of Christ gives to man in the flesh not so much ground as the sole of his foot would cover to stand before God. "Because by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified" (Rom.3:20³³). The cross cut

28. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gal.1.6>

29. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/1%20Cor.5.6>

30. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gal.5.10>

31. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gal%205.11>

32. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/1%20Cor.1.23>

across all the supposed spiritual blessing that the Jew thought that he had in the flesh, whereas it is the Spirit that quickeneth, the flesh profiteth nothing (Jn 6:63³⁴).

Gal.5:12³⁵

The well-being and peace of His people is precious to God. Did not the Lord speak trenchantly about such as caused others to stumble, when He said, “Whoso shall cause one of these little ones which believe on Me to stumble, it is profitable for him that a great millstone should be hanged about his neck, and that he should be sunk in the depth of the sea”? (Matt.18:6³⁶). False teachers (2 Pet.2:1³⁷) and heresies (1 Cor.11:19³⁸) are permitted by God amongst His people, betimes, to test His saints as to whether they will hold fast to the truth or not. “Unsettle” of the RV and “trouble” of the A.V, mean “to disturb the mind of any one.” To cut themselves off means to leave the Fellowship.

Gal.5:13³⁹,14⁴⁰,15⁴¹

Freedom has often been misused, and the freedom of believers under the new covenant has been by some turned into licence

33. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Rom.3.20>

34. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/John%206.63>

35. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gal.5.12>

36. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Matt.18.6>

37. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/2%20Pet.2.1>

38. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/1%20Cor.11.19>

39. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gal.5.13>

40. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gal%205.14>

41. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gal%205.15>

and loose living. The flesh is ever ready to take advantage when and where it can. It is ready to enthrall those, who are liberated from legal bondage, in the bondage of carnal disorders. The liberated believer is to learn the law of love, which is the true mark of discipleship (Jn 13:34⁴²,35⁴³). Love is the fulfilment of law (Rom.13:8-10⁴⁴). The flesh turns men to spiritual cannibalism, to bite and devour one another, until all community life is broken up and dissolved. What hopeless misery is involved if Paul's words are not heeded.

Gal.5:16⁴⁵,17⁴⁶

“Walk” here bears the same meaning as in many other parts of Scripture; it describes the whole deportment and behaviour of a person. If our behaviour is the result of instruction and quickening of the Spirit, then we shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh. But against the control of the Spirit over the believer there is the lust of the flesh, which lusteth against the Spirit. This desire of the flesh to dominate and destroy the believer's life is opposed by the Spirit, who would control the life of the believer to the glory of God. Thus these two minds, the mind of the flesh which is death, and the mind of the Spirit, which is life and peace (Rom.8:6⁴⁷), ever oppose each other in the believer. The work of the Spirit is that the believer may not do the things that he would. Were it not for the Spirit, the flesh would work many disorders in the be-

42. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/John%2013.34>

43. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jn%2013.35>

44. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Rom.13.8-10>

45. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gal.5.16>

46. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gal%205.17>

47. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Rom.8.6>

liever's life. We are indebted to the Spirit for every good thought, and for every work of goodness that we have ever done. Nothing of good arises from the flesh.

Gal.5:18⁴⁸

Dispensationally the believer is not under law; "We are not under law, but under grace" (Rom.6:15⁴⁹). But for this fact of the dispensational change to be translated into actual practice in every-day living, it is necessary for the believer to be led by the Spirit, that is, his life is to be regulated by the Spirit, the Spirit giving the needful direction and power to follow in the way of His choice. There is no need of "Thou shalt," and, "Thou shalt not"; the Spirit, through the Scriptures He has inspired and by His gentle touches deep in the secrets of human consciousness, gives all necessary guidance to the spiritually minded believer. The Spirit leads those who are sons of God (Rom.8:14⁵⁰).

Gal.5:19⁵¹,20⁵²,21⁵³

The flesh is that fallen nature which all men naturally born inherit through birth. The works of the flesh are manifest in the lives of all men who have not known the saving power of God's grace, and, alas, the works of the flesh are all too evident in the lives of believers. Who is free from the baneful presence

48. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gal.5.18>

49. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Rom.6.15>

50. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Rom.8.14>

51. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gal.5.19>

52. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gal%205.20>

53. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gal%205.21>

of the flesh within his flesh? None! We need to be clear on this matter of the use of the word “flesh” in the Scriptures. (1) “Flesh” signifies all persons of the human family (Zech.2:13⁵⁴; Acts 2: 17⁵⁵; Rom.3:20⁵⁶, etc.); (2) it signifies the physical structure of the human body (Rom.7:18⁵⁷; 2 Cor.4:11⁵⁸; Gal.2:20⁵⁹, etc.); (3) it signifies the fallen sinful nature of all human beings (Rom.8:4⁶⁰, 5⁶¹, 8⁶², 9⁶³, 12⁶⁴, 13⁶⁵, etc.). The Lord came in the likeness of, but not in, sinful flesh, when He, the Word, became flesh. He was not a partaker of original sin as we all are (Rom.8:3⁶⁶; Jn 1: 14⁶⁷). (4) Flesh also signifies one’s blood relations (Rom.11:14⁶⁸; Rom.9:3⁶⁹).

Paul gives a list of the works of the flesh, which is not complete, for he said, “and such like”. Fornication heads the list, the first of

54. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Zech.2.13>

55. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Acts%202.%2017>

56. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Rom.3.20>

57. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Rom.7.18>

58. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/2%20Cor.4.11>

59. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gal.2.20>

60. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Rom.8.4>

61. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Rom%208.5>

62. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Rom%208.8>

63. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Rom%208.9>

64. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Rom%208.12>

65. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Rom%208.13>

66. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Rom.8.3>

67. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/John%201.%2014>

68. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Rom.11.14>

69. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Rom.9.3>

man's immoral members (Col.3:5⁷⁰). Fornication, uncleanness, and lasciviousness are members of the same unclean family. Idolatry and sorcery or witchcraft are born of the same mother; both are cheats which prey on the simple and such as are willing to be deceived. Enmities, strifes, jealousies, wraths, are another family which are real disturbers of the peace. They are for ever stirring up strife, and are never better pleased than when things are in commotion and confusion. Factions, divisions, heresies, envyings are four close relatives, which have caused many a headache and heartache to God's servants and God's people, and have left the children of God scattered in all communities in Christendom. Drunkenness and revellings are two sorts which are a disgrace to any community. Paul says that he told the Galatians before, and tells them now again, that such as practise such things cannot inherit the kingdom of God, that is, God's rule among His gathered people.

Gal.5:22⁷¹,23⁷²

How contrary to the hideous works of the flesh and of darkness (Eph.5:8-12⁷³) is the fruit of the Spirit and of the light! Here is the behaviour of the inhabitants and citizens of heaven who walk in the light where there is no darkness at all. This list is headed by love, the greatest of all Christian virtues, without which we are nothing. Close on the heels of love follow joy and peace, twin sisters who reflect their happy contentment on their faces, before whom frowns and frets will disappear. Longsuffering comes next,

70. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Col.3.5>

71. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gal.5.22>

72. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gal%205.23>

73. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Eph.5.8-12>

upon whose quiet and patient countenance may be seen that holy resignation to the will of God, learned in days of hard experience. Then four excellent virtues appear in sight; they belong to the same family, and closely resemble each other. What gracious virtues they are! – kindness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness. Their hands are gentle as those of the Man of Sorrows Himself. We have all heard of the meekness and gentleness of Christ (2 Cor.10:1⁷⁴).

Faithfulness never fails to be at her post of duty. She never allows slackness or carelessness to stain her comely dress. Then last of all comes temperance, a relative of faithfulness, ever alert, and disciplined, whose ensample all may copy to advantage to their present and eternal good. Such then are the virtues which comprise the fruit of the Spirit, against which there can be no law, for there can be no law against being and doing good.

Gal.5:24⁷⁵

It should be noted that it is not they that are in Christ Jesus, but they that are of Christ Jesus. It is not hair-splitting to emphasize the difference, for it is possible for such as have been created anew in Christ Jesus (Eph.2:10⁷⁶; 2 Cor.5:17⁷⁷) to fall a prey to the flesh, as witness the man of 1 Cor.5⁷⁸, and to fall a prey to the flesh in other ways (1 Tim.1:18-20⁷⁹; 2 Tim.2:16-18⁸⁰).

74. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/2%20Cor.10.1>

75. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gal.5.24>

76. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Eph.2.10>

77. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/2%20Cor.5.17>

78. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/1%20Cor.5>

79. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/1%20Tim.1.18-20>

But in contrast, we are told that they that are of Christ Jesus have crucified (a past action done by themselves) the flesh, which is not equivalent to what Paul says of himself, in Gal.2:20⁸¹, “I have been crucified with Christ,” something which was done to him, not by him.

Gal.5:25⁸²,26⁸³

No one can doubt that we live by the Spirit, for we have been born of water (the word, see Jas.1:18⁸⁴; 1 Pet.1:23⁸⁵; Tit.3:5⁸⁶) and the Spirit (Jn 3:5⁸⁷,6⁸⁸), therefore as the Spirit gave us life, the Spirit should equally give us power to walk. James asks the question, “Doth the Spirit which He made to dwell in us long unto envying?” (Jas.4:5⁸⁹). The answer is, No! Envy is, as we have already seen, a work of the flesh. Vainglorious (Gk. kenodoxia, from kenos, empty, containing nothing, doxa, glory) is empty glory, no better than soap bubbles, which soon burst, leaving a few drops of soapy water. Such is vainglory. While it lasts it has a provocative effect, causing revulsion in the sober-minded, and envy on the part of the thoughtless.

80. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/2%20Tim.2.16-18>

81. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gal.2.20>

82. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gal.5.25>

83. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gal%205.26>

84. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/James.1.18>

85. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/1%20Pet.1.23>

86. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Titus.3.5>

87. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/John%203.5>

88. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jn%203.6>

89. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/James.4.5>

COMMENTARY ON GALATIANS

6

Gal.6:1¹

The work of restoring saints who have erred is not easy and should be undertaken by the spiritual and the meek. Paul does not indicate how or what trespass has overtaken the man, but it is for the spiritually minded to find out the cause and, if possible, to extricate him from his difficulty. One would think that the elders would do this spiritual work, though he does not specify elders here, but spiritual ones. The restoration is to be done in a spirit of meekness, that is, gentleness. A spiritually sick saint needs care as a weak patient at a nurse's hands. Those who do the work of restoration are to bear in mind that they also can be tempted, and that what they are doing for someone today they may require someone to do for them tomorrow. Sometimes the nurse is laid down with the same disease as the patient that she nurses.

Gal.6:2²

The Lord is the great Burden-bearer; "Surely He hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows" (Isa.53:4³). But when He bore our griefs, the Jews thought Him to be stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted, as He hung on Calvary. As to Burdens (Gk. baros "a heavy weight, anything grievous and hard to be borne"), Paul

1. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gal.6.1>

2. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gal.6.2>

3. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Isa.53.4>

says, in Rom.15:1⁴, “Now we that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves.” Overseers are exhorted to “encourage the fainthearted, support the weak” (1 Thess.5:14⁵). Such exhortations are within “the law of Christ”.

Gal.6:3⁶,4⁷,5⁸

There is ever the danger that we have a much higher estimate of ourselves than others have of us. Paul says, in Rom.12:3⁹, “For I say, through the grace that was given me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but so to think as to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to each man a measure of faith.” Both faith and grace are given according to the measure of the gift of Christ (Eph.4:7¹⁰). Let us each imitate the apostle, who, despite his great and manifold gifts, thought of himself as less than the least of all saints (Eph.3:8¹¹). May we each seek to assess our own work as to what God has accomplished by us, and it may have a humbling effect on our minds. If we glory we can only glory in respect of our own work and not that of another. We have each a small part to play, and a burden to bear. Burden in verse 5 should not be confused with that of verse 2: In verse 5 the Greek word is *phortion*, “A load, burden, i.e., principally spoken of a ship, freight, lading,

4. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Rom.15.1>

5. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/1%20Thess.5.14>

6. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gal.6.3>

7. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gal%206.4>

8. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gal%206.5>

9. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Rom.12.3>

10. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Eph.4.7>

11. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Eph.3.8>

cargo.” This word is used by the Lord, in Matt.11:30¹², “My yoke is easy, and My burden is light.” We are each fitted to bear a burden, and let us each have grace to bear it. phortion is not a heavy weight like baros of verse 2:

Gal.6:6¹³,7¹⁴

Though Paul lived in complete dependence on God, working with his hands as necessity demanded for the support of himself and others (Acts 18:3¹⁵; 1 Cor.9:6¹⁶,11¹⁷,12¹⁸,15¹⁹,18²⁰; 2 Thess.3:8²¹,9²²), yet he taught the saints, as here, the responsibility they had toward those who were whole-time ministers of the word of God. He also taught them their responsibility to the poor (1 Cor.16:1-6²³), and also to owe no man anything. He was a man who, though he bore the greatest of responsibilities, even the care of all the churches (2 Cor.11:28²⁴), yet there was none who enjoyed more freedom of spirit from dependence on men and earthly things. The matter of communicating, of sharing, of

12. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Matt.11.30>

13. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gal.6.6>

14. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gal%206.7>

15. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Acts%2018.3>

16. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/1%20Cor.9.6>

17. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/1%20Cor%209.11>

18. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/1%20Cor%209.12>

19. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/1%20Cor%209.15>

20. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/1%20Cor%209.18>

21. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/2%20Thess.3.8>

22. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/2%20Thess%203.9>

23. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/1%20Cor.16.1-6>

24. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/2%20Cor.11.28>

having fellowship together, was nevertheless precious to him, as it was to his Master, who shared with His own both of the abundance of His spiritual things and of His earthly provision. Let none who may be afflicted with parsimony think that giving to God is loss. It is sowing seed, and as the faithful God causes the farmer's seed to grow, and to fill his broad acres with smiling grain and his barns with abundance, even so will He give to those to reap a rich harvest who sow to the needs of others. "He that soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he that soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully" (2 Cor.9:6²⁵). God will not be mocked.

Gal.6:8²⁶

It is well to put our flesh under strict rationing, for in it dwells no good thing. Abstinence from many things to which the carnal mind would incline us will be found to be for the betterment of spiritual life. Let us be sparing in sowing to our own flesh, so that there may not be a heavy crop of weeds. But in contrast, let us sow abundantly unto the Spirit of the things that are necessary for the carrying on of the Spirit's work by the servants He uses. We shall not in consequence look back on what we wasted on ourselves, but we shall be conscious of an increase of life, even eternal life, an increase and enlargement of the life which is even now ours as a gift (Rom.6:23²⁷), even an abundant life (Jn 10:10²⁸). The narrow gate and the straitened way lead to life now, as well as by and by. Human flesh hates this straitened way; those

25. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/2%20Cor.9.6>

26. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gal.6.8>

27. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Rom.6.23>

28. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/John%2010.10>

who tread it are restrained and restricted in their appetites, but such a way leads the believer to life, abundant life, eternal life.

Gal.6²⁹:9,10

Here is a strong word of encouragement to all sowers of good deeds; such are not to be weary or to lose heart in their work, because when the season comes round they shall reap, but they must not faint, become exhausted or despondent between the sowing and the reaping. If there is no sowing there will be no reaping. As the season or occasion offers itself we are to work good towards all, but especially towards the household of the Faith, such as are seeking to hold the Faith and to practise it together. This household does not include all believers.

Gal.6:11³⁰

The Greek word *gramma* (letter) used here may mean a letter or character of an alphabet. It may also be an account or bill (Lk.16:6³¹,7³²), an epistle or letter (Acts 28:21³³; 2 Cor.10:10³⁴), Holy Scripture (2 Cor.3:6³⁵), learning (Jn 7:15³⁶; Acts 26:24³⁷). What is Paul referring to when he speaks of – “with how large

29. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gal.6>

30. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gal.6.11>

31. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Luke.16.6>

32. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Lk%2016.7>

33. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Acts%2028.21>

34. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/2%20Cor.10.10>

35. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/2%20Cor.3.6>

36. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/John%207.15>

37. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Acts%2026.24>

letters I have written” and so forth? Does he mean that he wrote the letter to the Galatians in very large letters, large alphabetical characters, or is he referring to another letter or letters besides this one which he had written to the Galatians? We know of no other letters which he wrote to the Galatians. I do not see the force of his referring to the large alphabetical letters, if this is what is meant, except it be, as some have averred, because of his weak eyesight. Whatever be the meaning, he, in writing to the Galatians, did not use an amanuensis; he wrote the epistle with his own hand. Such a handwritten letter would have an added value to those who received it. This letter is not a large letter when we compare it with the preceding letters to the Romans and the Corinthians.

Gal.6:12³⁸

A fair show means a fair countenance, to have a good appearance. Those of the circumcision were interested in the flesh, not the spirit. The cross gives no standing to the flesh. The cross is the end of the flesh; hence it was that those who gloried in the flesh, and sought through circumcision to perfect the flesh, which could never be perfected, escaped the offence and persecution of the cross.

Gal.6:13³⁹,14⁴⁰

Here Paul emphasizes what he said in the previous verse about a fair show, a mere outward appearance, for such as received cir-

38. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gal.6.12>

39. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gal.6.13>

40. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gal%206.14>

cumcision did not keep the law. Their circumcision was a sham, for Paul said, in Gal.5:3⁴¹, “I testify again to every man that receiveth circumcision, that he is a debtor to do the whole law.” The object of these, the concision (the cutters) (Phil.3:2⁴²), was that they might glory in the flesh of those that they had circumcised. Paul in contrast gloried in the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ. Circumcision was a cutting of the flesh which was to have an inward effect on the person circumcised, and was intended in its true meaning to lead the circumcised person to obedience to the law of God. The cross is in the reckoning of God, and should be of ourselves, the end of the old man, and should also cut us off from the world by death. The cross saw the death of Saul of Tarsus, and the rebirth of Paul the apostle.

Paul saw the world as a scene of ruin; its charms, friendships, riches and honours, he disdained; its reproaches and hatred he brushed aside; he turned from it as from the painful exhibition of a crucified malefactor. The world was crucified to him. Equally so Paul was crucified to the world. The world as a system dominated by the evil one had no place for him, as it had no place for his Lord. The world has no place for the living believer whose life and testimony condemns it. It will welcome the believer who is dead spiritually and give him a place, and he may give some pleasure to the men of this world, as did Samson of old when he made sport for the Philistines. Paul believed in the one hope for the world, and God has one hope for men, and that is Christ, there is no other – Christ now in grace, by whom alone men may be saved; Christ in judgement when He comes back to this world

41. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gal.5.3>

42. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Phil.3.2>

to put things which are far wrong to right. Let the believer live the victorious life, as outlined in Phil.3: 10-12⁴³.

Gal.6:15⁴⁴,16⁴⁵

Neither circumcision nor uncircumcision is anything in this dispensation of grace. The great and all-important thing is whether we have been created anew in Christ Jesus. All true believers are new creatures in Him. At the time of the new birth a more important form of circumcision took place, even that of Col.2:11⁴⁶, “in the putting off of the body of the flesh, in the circumcision of Christ.” Peace and mercy be upon such as walk by the rule that they are “created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God afore prepared that we should walk in them” (Eph.2:10⁴⁷). Such can appreciate that “the old things are passed away; behold, they are become new” (2 Cor.5:17⁴⁸). “The Israel of God” is not the Jewish people, but the divinely gathered people of God of this dispensation. “Israel” was applied first to one whose natural powers were exhausted, one whose leg had shrunk and was useless for wrestling.

Such was Jacob as he clung weeping to the Man he had wrestled with throughout the night (Gen.32:24-32⁴⁹; Hos.12:3⁵⁰,4⁵¹).

43. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Phil.3.%2010-12>

44. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gal.6.15>

45. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gal%206.16>

46. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Col.2.11>

47. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Eph.2.10>

48. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/2%20Cor.5.17>

49. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gen.32.24-32>

50. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Hos.12.3>

The lame and humbled wrestler was exalted to be a prince of God. The Israel of God is a people whose strength is not in the flesh and whose glory is not there, but in the Mighty God of Jacob. “I love Thee, O LORD, my Strength. The LORD is my Rock, and my Fortress, and my Deliverer; My God, my strong Rock, in whom I trust; My Shield, and the Horn of my salvation, my High Tower” (Ps.18:1⁵²,2⁵³) May it be that God’s Israel today will find their strength and glory in Him also, and not in the flesh.

Gal.6:17⁵⁴

Paul’s battle over circumcision was finished. He has left on record by the pen of inspiration a treatise on faith and rites, on promise and law, on circumcision and the cross, in the language of combat and entreaty, which has cleared up this matter for all honest people. But though circumcision, like the giant Goliath, received its death blow, the Philistine law-keepers still gather to do battle with the Israel of God. Let us go forth undismayed with our battle-cry that faith alone in Christ saves and justifies the believing sinner. The proofs of this shocking enmity of the Judaizing circumcisers were to be seen on Paul’s body, as brands which he calls “the marks of Jesus,” not that there were marks on Paul’s hands and feet similar to the nail-prints the Lord bore. Jesus too bears the marks of Jewish hatred. It was for Jesus’ sake that Paul so served and suffered.

51. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Hos%2012.4>

52. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Ps.18.1>

53. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Ps%2018.2>

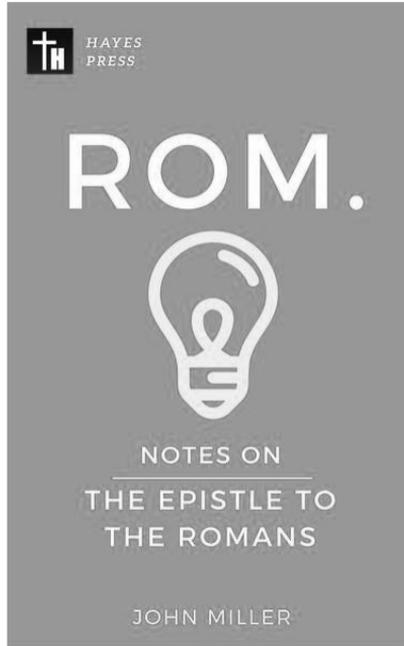
54. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gal.6.17>

Gal.6:18⁵⁵

Here ends the conflict, and here the hand of grace is raised in the closing salutation to his dear Galatian brethren. They were ever dear to him, for from his mouth they first heard the story of the cross. He uses the endearing term, brethren. They were brethren, begotten of a common Father whose saving grace they had each and all known.

55. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gal.6.18>

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