



New  
Creation  
Publications

**GALATIANS**  
a Commentary  
Geoffrey C Bingham

NEW CREATION PUBLICATIONS COMMENTARY SERIES

Other commentaries

Acts  
Galatians  
John  
Mark  
Ephesians  
I Peter  
Philippians  
Revelation  
1 Thessalonians  
Colossians  
Titus  
Hebrews  
Ecclesiastes  
Overview of Romans  
Introduction to Romans

[www.newcreation.org.au](http://www.newcreation.org.au)

# THE EPISTLE TO THE GALATIANS

By  
GEOFFREY C. BINGHAM

Published by  
NEW CREATION PUBLICATIONS INC.  
PO. Box 403, Blackwood 5051  
Adelaide, South Australia  
1982

THE EPISTLE TO THE GALATIANS  
Copyright © 1979, 1982 Geoffrey C. Bingham

First published 1979  
This Edition October 1982

National Library of Australia card number and  
ISBN 0 949851 84 1

Cover design by John Hinds  
Typeset by Lorrie Randall  
Printed by John Skewes at

*New Creation Publications Inc.*  
Coromandel East, South Australia

## CONTENTS

ABBREVIATIONS	(vi)
GENERAL INTRODUCTION	(vii)
INTRODUCTION TO THE EPISTLE	(viii)
The Relationship between Paul and the Galatians	(ix)
The occasion and purpose of the Epistle	(ix)
The Old Religion - The Law of Moses	(ix)
Some of the Basic Teaching of the Epistle	(xiii)
When was the Epistle Written?	(xv)
To Whom was the Epistle Written?	(xvi)
Teaching Divisions of the Epistle	(xvi)
ANALYSIS	(xviii)
COMMENTARY	1

**ABBREVIATIONS**

- A. Cole     ‘*Galatian*’ Tyndale Commentary
- Ridderbos   ‘*Galatians*’ New London Commentary
- Wm. Kelly   ‘*The Epistle to the Galatians*’
- Luther       ‘*The Epistle to the Galatians*’ by Martin Luther
- IVF ‘        *The New Bible Commentary*’ (IVF)
- J.F.B.       ‘*Jamison, Faussett & Brown*’ *One Vol. Commentary*
- N.E.B.       ‘*New English Bible, 1961.*’
- Lenski       ‘*The Epistle to the Galatians*’ (*Augsburg*)
- A.V.*        *English Authorised Version* (King James)
- Findlay Expositor’s Series ‘*Galatians*’

**GENERAL INTRODUCTION**

*to ‘New Creation’ Commentary Series*

The Commentaries which have been prepared, and which are in preparation for this series, are intended to be modest both in their material and format. There are reasons for this kind of production.

Although the first consideration is not that of cost we will, nevertheless, say that it is an important reason. Many books are made to be attractive, and welcome as this is, it adds to the cost. We have tried to keep the price within that range which makes it easy to purchase the volumes as they appear. Secondly, we make no claim to have produced a work of either great scholarship, or one for the meticulous exegete. It is for those whose time is limited in looking up many commentaries. We have done this work for them, and in that sense the Commentaries are the result of the fruits of other men’s labours, with a modest addition by the writers, who themselves gather impressions by the way and often even have helpful insights.

Those who use these Commentaries will not find them inspirational, for that was not their intention. They simply present valuable material and insights on the books with which they deal. Is it too high a claim to say that the material presented is worthy of trust, and should prove valuable to those who teach classes, groups, and who preach from pulpits and other places? We think they can be valuable, if not, always, wholly sufficient.

*The Editors.*

## INTRODUCTION

Rather than do a hasty sketch of the book, we shall spend quite some time on it. Our introduction shall be lengthy because we must get the background and spirit of it before we commence reading it.

### 1. The Relationship Between Paul And The Galatians.

This can be deduced from the Epistle itself.

#### (a) He had founded the Churches 1:8,9; 4:19.

His labour had been at cost - 4:11. From 4:13 it is obvious he suffered from some ailment. 4:14 shows they could have regarded him with disgust but they did not. Indeed they had received him as an angel of God, yes, even as Christ Jesus himself. We do not know what was the repulsive affliction - I perhaps an eye affliction.

#### (b) Many, if not most of the Galatians had been converted from heathenism.

2:5, 4:8, 5:2, 6:12 show that they had been idolaters. 4:13 shows that he had visited them at least once, if not more, and so, in accordance with Paul's customary teaching would have been well-taught. It is clear that although they are basically of Gentile origin, yet they have been given a good background of Judaism, probably because they were, at core, originally 'God-fearers'. If we understand the Galatian churches to

be those of Antioch in Pisidia, Iconium, Lystra and Derbe, then certainly they had training in Judaism as they had been linked with the synagogues.

### 2. The Occasion And Purpose Of The Epistle

We have to recognise that although the roots of Christianity are in Judaism, yet whilst retaining and using the old truth there is much that is new, and even more that *appears* new although it is consistent with the old' Christ, when he preached concerning the *new*, prophesied that the new wine could not be contained in the old bottles' He also said that no man having tasted the old straightway desires the new. Luke 5:36-39. Pentecost, both *symbolically* and *actually* introduced the *new*. Joel 2:28 - end, prophesied a new age.

Christ - Matt. 26:28 spoke of his blood being that of the New Covenant, thus linking his death with the Covenant promise of Jer. 31:31-34. This prophecy was linked with a number of other prophecies and they were linked with the promise of the Spirit - see Gal. 3:13-14. Christ, in Revelation 21:5 says that he makes all things new. This new ferment was most disturbing for it seemed to put an end to all the old. It seemed to cut across culture - see Gal. 3:28.

### 3. The Old Religion - The Law of Moses

Judaism was a religion of revelation. The Law had been given to them by revelation. When we read such Psalms as 19 and 119 we see how the law was held in esteem, and how loved. The festivals and customs, too were interwoven into the very fabric of living. When we also realise the great traditions and rabbinic school which had grown up about the Law, we realise that the idea of the Law being abrogated was not in the mind of the Jews

So much did they concentrate upon the law that year by year the material, commentaries etc. on it increased greatly. Even the disciples continued to go to the Temple, and it took an astute person like Stephen to see that the day and age of the Temple was finished by Christ. The Jews greatly feared any attack on the Law or the Temple, and indeed considered both to be the one, and according to the Revelation of God.

It took a clear mind like St. Paul's to interpret the Old Testament truly. Indeed if he had not been a scholar and a Pharisee it is likely he could never have understood the great change which had taken place ie. the difference between Law and Gospel, and their relationship one to the other. He saw that the prophecies pointed to an age when the Spirit would supplant the Law and when grace would grant great salvation - not the Law - and this both to Jews and Gentiles. However what Paul saw, few others saw. He himself says it was a revelation 1:11-15 and so others could not be expected to understand.

It is clear that Jesus himself, both by his life and teaching, indicated a new attitude or understanding of, Law. He did not despise the Law but showed that he had come to give salvation, and that only he could give it. He also had an attitude to the Law which differed to that of the conventional law-schools, cf. Matt. 23:1-4. Because they were afraid he would alter the approach to Law and the Temple they therefore crucified Him. He had high regard for the Law and had not come to destroy, but to fulfil it. Matt. 5:17-18. Although Jesus came to the Jews and ministered only to them, yet he ultimately had the Gentiles in mind, also. John 12:24f. Not only was his teaching such that would fulfil a *universal* need, but he explicitly indicated as to where the Gospel would be preached. See

Matt. 8:10-12, 21:43. His command was for a universal preaching of the Gospel, Luke 24:44-47, Mark 16:16 - end, Matt. 28:18 - end, Acts 1:8 etc. Paul had grasped all this, moreover he was personally taught by Christ. This teaching he had given to the Galatians. Let us say simply that Paul taught there was no salvation by the Law but only by grace. In the Epistle to the Romans he has given a beautiful rationale of the Law. He is not against the Law but against it as a means of salvation. He wants to teach the truth that forgiveness, justification and salvation are by the Cross, and the Cross alone. In addition God gives His Spirit as a Covenant gift so that life can be lived in the realm of the New Age, and in understanding of forgiveness, justification and liberty, and of the nature of God as love. This was his own experience. (i) In conversion he came to know Christ, Gal. 1:15-16. (ii) He was laid hold of by Christ, Phil.3:12. (iii) He was enlightened by Christ II Cor. 4:6. (iv) He was re-created by Christ II Cor. 5:17. (v) He was filled with the Spirit, Acts 9:17. All this led to his preaching the Gospel, Gal. 1:16.

In the Book of Acts we see the great struggle which went on because of those who were culturally, cultically, and legally minded to contain Christianity within Judaism. Certain problems presented themselves. Christ had prayed about them, John 17:20-22. To accept the Gentiles and to reject law would be to be rejected themselves by the Jewish nation - their people. It would result in their being cultural and religious outcasts - dishonoured. Also the Church was concerned to honour the Old Testament scriptures and truth. However grace broke through by a series of events. The Church accepted the Gentiles and the concept of grace.

Paul, after preaching grace, left his churches and went on to found others. Those in Galatia had been

born through much difficulty. However he had preached the Cross beautifully, Gal. 3:1-2, and his converts had received the Spirit, Gal. 3:2-5. After he had left them, Judaisers had come. They were heretics and alarmingly so, Gal. 1:7, 5:10, 6:12-13. They had taught that circumcision was necessary to salvation, 5:2, 6:12. They could not tolerate the liberty of the Gentiles in grace, obviously not knowing it themselves: Gal 2:4. They demanded maintenance of the Law of Moses or at least observation of days and years 4:10, cf. 4:21. These teachers claimed the name of Christ and to be preaching the Gospel, 1:6. Paul denies the claim of 'gospel' - 1:7. He also says that they act from false motives, and personal ambition 4:17, 6:12-13, and that they wish to escape the persecution caused by the offence of the Cross. ie. to maintain circumcision is that they do not seem different to the Jews.

These teachers had set out to cast doubt on Paul's ministry. They question his being as an apostle, so that Paul has to show his unique calling, ie. to the apostleship. 1:11-16, and the attestation of this apostleship by the other apostles who also agreed with his teaching - 2:7-10. Not only do the apostles agree with his teaching but they have to be rebuked by Paul himself, 2:11f, 6:12f. Paul cannot be said to be less than the apostles.

Another interesting point is the emphasis on *circumcision*. It seems that the visiting preachers are also saying that one needs *both law and grace*, ie. that there is need for circumcision to belong to the people of God. Paul's answer is that these circumcisers seek to escape the *offence* of the Gospel and the persecution that it brings. Paul says he suffers persecution because of his own teaching about not being circumcised. 'Would I go on suffering like this if it were not necessary'? he

asks. Theirs is the dangerous Gospel because it takes away the fullness and power of grace and brings believers back into law bondage. It makes the Cross of Christ of non-effect, Gal. 1:6-7, 2:21, 3:1-5, 5:10,11, cf. . 2:11-21.

Paul does not consider these matters unimportant. His Epistle is a hot polemic. He is fighting desperately for the freedom of his converts and in so doing for the Gospel itself.

#### 4. Some of The Basic Teaching of The Epistle.

##### (a) Grace is the Primary Determinant for All things .

In the Epistle to the Romans Paul writes to his readers and has all the time in his mind the relationship of law and grace. He is careful to explain how the law is not destroyed by grace, but rather, established by it. Although he does not go so deeply in this Epistle (Galatians) into the subject yet he does show that with the coming of grace, the former, and seemingly valid legal requirements which appeared to constitute true religion are no longer valid. The new life is its own law, shall we say, principle? Grace transcends law on every side, but it is that living grace in-poured by the Spirit. Indeed it is the new life of a new age. Note, however, that the true grasp of this is dependent upon another truth, equally one with grace, ie. the truth or principle of the Spirit.

##### (b) The Spirit Given Gift-Wise Keeps the Experience of Liberty

Gal. 3:13-14 is a vital passage. Paul shows that justification is granted to man in order

that he may receive the promise of the Spirit. This is no little promise. The kind of faith that enables us to receive the Spirit is spoken of in Gal. 3:1-6. The gift of the Spirit, for the Galatians had been accompanied by the working of miracles 3:5, but the faith was the same as that by which Abraham had been justified, 3:6. Abraham must have had the Spirit and Isaac is said to be born, or the son of the Spirit 4:29, as Ishmael is said to be the child of the flesh. When one receives the Spirit the following things happen: (1) One becomes a son of God ie. adoption becomes real through the presence of the Spirit who is really the Spirit of God's Son 4:6. One knows God to be the Father and one sees the bondage of law and one understands the meaning of liberty. (2) One is made (being made) perfect (mature) through the Spirit 3:1-5. (3) One is persecuted by the flesh or the son born after the flesh, 4:29. (4) Walking in the Spirit is the order of the believer, and it is the opposite to walking in the flesh which is walking 'law-wise', and results in the works of the flesh, 3:3, 5:16-21. (5) One goes on sowing to the Spirit, ie. there is no aspect of life which is not linked with the Spirit. Sowing to the Spirit results in everlasting life.

#### (c) Faith is Central in the New Life .

The conflict throughout this Epistle is between faith and works. Works breed pride in man, but faith destroys pride . Man is dependent upon God. *Those of faith are the children of Abraham, 3:6-7.*  
Justification

cannot come from law but is of faith. No age-old system of law can save man. Man, having come to faith, is liable to revert to law again, or to be attracted by it: 2:11-14, and only the Spirit can keep one in the full flush of faith. Even the Spirit in addition to justification is received by faith.

#### (d) One Belongs, by Faith, to a Body

Paul does not conceive salvation, although personal as ever, as being simply *individualistic*. For one thing Paul gives great emphasis on us being either the sons of Abraham - born after the Spirit, or the sons of Hagar - born after the flesh. *We are in one of two systems. We are either of law or of grace. We are either the children of faith or of the law. We are under the servants of the house, or we are the sons of the house. We are the seed of Abraham or we are not. However if we have been baptised then we have put on Christ and we are corporately one.* Undoubtedly Paul does not here develop the concept of the Body and its members and their interdependency, but he does develop a high concept of their oneness in 3:26-29. Here there is neither Jew nor Greek, bond or free, male nor female. This is something high, unique in history. Gal. 5:13-25 is instruction on love together as a body of believers.

#### 5. When Was The Epistle Written?

Debated. Two views - North and South Galatian theories. Probably the South where he had gone. This is borne out by the fact that he mentions Barnabas who accompanied him on that journey' ie. Barnabas is known to them. Acts 13:14-21.

*Gal. 4:13* seems to suggest at least a second visit. *cf. Acts 16:1--4*. Probably then (Acts 18) he has gone on to Corinth and may have written from there in which case it may be his first letter (if the letter to the Thessalonians was not written before it .)

### 6. To Whom Was The Epistle Written?

Galatians were Celts, if those of South Galatia. Highly emotional, easily moved to oratory. *Gal. 4:15-18* shows how deeply they were affected. But can easily be moved by others too! *cf. Ch. 1, 3:15*. Also they fight among themselves *5:13-15*. Paul takes account of their *national* characteristics. *cf. Titus 1:12*. Paul loves them deeply.

### 7. Teaching Divisions of The Epistle.

- (a) *1:10 - 2:21*. In this Paul sets forth his own apostolic qualifications, because they have been challenged by the Judaisers. His reply is, (i) He has been called directly by God. (ii) He is independent of the Apostles. (iii) He had defended the Gospel of grace at Jerusalem. (iv) He had been accepted by the teachers there, and his teaching had been accepted as being the same as that of the Apostles. (v) He had had to rebuke even Peter and Barnabas.
- (b) *3:1 - 5:12*. This is the main material and argument of the letter. He shows the difference between the true Gospel and the Judaiser's heresy, which heresy he attacks. If one is a true child of Abraham then he seeks salvation not in works but by the law of faith . Paul teaches the true significance of law, and the freedom from the law, showing

how strange it is for the Galatians to fall away from the Gospel

(c) *5:13 - 6:8*. In this section Paul shows that freedom from law must not become an occasion for license - excesses. He discusses the life of freedom in great detail, and contrasts it with the works of the flesh. He warns them against false teaching, and appeals to them to remain true to the Gospel of Christ.

**ANALYSIS**

The Apostle Salutes His Galatian Converts 1:1 - 3.  
 Rescue from this Present Evil Age - 1:4 - 5.  
 Paul's indignation at Galatian fickleness - 1:6 - 9.  
 Paul Commences His Defence of His Apostolic Authority-  
 1:10-2:10.  
     (i) *The Gospel a Revelation* - 1:12 - 15.  
     (ii) *Christ is The Revelator* ~ 1:16 - 17.  
     (iii) *First Visit to Jerusalem* - 1:18 - 24.  
     (iv) *Second Visit - by Revelation* - 2:1 - 2:2.  
     (v) *Paul's Acceptance by other Apostles* 2:3 - 10.  
 Paul confronts Peter publicly for a Public Scandal - 2:11 - 13.  
 The Truth of the True Gospel - 2:14.  
 Justification the heart of the Gospel - 2:15 - 18.  
 The Cross is death to Law - 2:19.  
 Dead to Law - Alive to God - 2:20 - 21.  
 Paul reminds of the Powerful Initial Experience 3:1.  
 The experience of the Spirit - 3:2.  
 Beginning in the Spirit - Not by Law - 3:3 - 5.  
 Abraham and the Gospel to come - 3:6 - 9.  
 The Gospel of Faith - As against Law - 3:10 -12.  
 Christ the Curse - 3:13. Christ the Blessing - 3:14 - 15.  
 Law and Promise - Promise transcends Law 3:16 - 22.  
 Law brings to Faith and Salvation - 3:23 - 29.  
 The Time of Law - The Time of Infancy - 4:1 - 5.  
 The Time of Adulthood - Full Sonship - 4:6 - 7.  
 The Bondage of The Idol Gods - 4:8 - 12.  
 Paul reminds them of their former love for Him. 4:13 - 18.

Paul's present love for them - 4:19 - 20.  
 The Allegory of bondage and freedom 4:21 - 5:1.  
 Standing fast in the new liberty - 5:1  
 How to lose Liberty - By circumcision - 5:2 - 5.  
 The leaven of 'Law-Way' - 5:6 - 12.  
 True Liberty is the life of love - 5:13 - 14.  
 True Liberty is walking in the Spirit - 5:15 - 16.  
 Flesh conquered by the Spirit - 5:17 - 18.  
 Flesh - Apart from Spirit - Works - 5:19 - 21.  
 The Spirit - Apart from Flesh - Fruit - 5:22 - 23.  
 The Cross, The Flesh and The Spirit - 5:24 - 26.  
 The Life of the man of the Spirit  
     (i) *Care for Others* - 6:1 - 5  
     (ii) *Care for Teachers* - 6:6 - 8.  
     (iii) *Caring for All - God's People - All People* 6:9 - 11.  
 The last word on the enemies of the Gospel 6:12 - 15.  
 Commendation for the True Israel of God 6:16-18.

**COMMENTARY****CHAPTER ONE****The Apostle Salutes the Galatian Converts**

1:1 His meaning is that his apostleship is not derived from man, or even through man. Thus he refutes their attack on his *authority*. We cannot make just this claim. It may seem - ACTS 13:1f - that Paul had his authority from man, but not so. Dynamic ministry before this ... cf. *II Cor. 11:24f.* (many things preceding ACTS 13! ). He is saying that his apostleship is directly from Christ himself. *I Cor. 9:1 (Acts 1:21-23)* Judaisers silenced by this grand attestation - Father, Son, Resurrection ie. he, Paul an apostle of the *living Christ*. This risen Christ he has seen. Gal. 1:16, Acts 9:27; 22:8,18; 26:16.

1:2 Paul is not alone. Brethren with him. Affirmation. Possibly from Corinth. But note terse greeting. Not like others *Rom. 1:7, I Cor. 1:2, II Cor. 1:1, Col. 1:2* N.B. *churches* i e . not one.

1:3 'God the Father' 'the Lord Jesus Christ.' Significant words . Then 'grace' - ie. theme of the Epistle. Also 'peace.' Not mere salutation. Do they have these things?

**Rescue From This Present Evil Age.**

1:4 (i) *Son gives himself* John 10:17- 18' 14:3n 31, Gal. 2:20. Giving not one act, but reveals the nature of the Son. At very beginning Paul stresses the death of Christ.  
(ii) The purpose

of the death is to rescue us. 'Rescue mission'. If we were able - then question of his rescuing does not arise.

(iii) *Means of rescue*:- to give himself for our sins. Plu. 'sins' (cf. I Peter 2:24, John 1:29). Sins lay hold upon us, (*Psalm 65:3, 40:12-13*)'

(iv) *Present Evil World*; this is a big question, subject' In 6:14 Paul says we have died to the world. Here the Greek word is *aeon* and means 'an age'. This world has a *Leader*, Satan, (*II Cor. 4:3f, John 14:30, 12:31, 16:11, Ephes. 2:2*) and has *powers* (*Ephes. 6:10f, Col. 2:15, I Cor. 2:68*), and they also have control over man. The world has its own WISDOM, (*I Cor. 1:21-23, 2:6-8*). It is a vicious cruel system. For John's concept of it see (*I John 2:15-17, 3:1, 4:4-5, 5:4,19*).

(v) *All this is according* to the will of the Father, ie. He has willed His Son to die and to rescue mankind. See also (*Rom. 8:32, Isa. 53:10, John 10:17-18*). All these facts stated here by St. Paul, to them will bring back the full tide of St. Paul's teaching.

1:5 Paul, though 'hot' with zeal is yet able to praise God as he re-iterates the vast wonder of the Father's will.

### Paul's Indignation At Galatian Fickleness

1:6 After the brief introduction Paul gets busy with the main message. He cannot hide that which is burning in his heart. With other churches, Paul, in his letters, expresses gratitude to God for their gifts and life, but here Paul is amazed that they SO SOON have turned to another Gospel.

(i) *They have been called by the grace of God* (*II Thess. 2:13-14*) *Rom. 8:30, 53:11,24, I Cor. 1:9*, and called is a tremendous thing - the very activity of the Gospel, (*cf. Rom. 11:29*). Therefore to walk NOT according to this calling is a terrible thing. This calling is FROM CHRIST and

BY GRACE. Thus anything BUT grace is wrong.

(ii) It is a different kind of Gospel' This makes it dangerous no doubt, but Paul who was himself opposed to the Gospel, originally, has come to see its meaning, its glory, and its beauty, so that he cannot understand how anyone can be drawn to another Gospel (cf. 3:1-5) . N.B. 'Unto another Gospel' has the idea of 'into' ie. 'being involved in'.

1:7 'not that there is another Gospel'. In fact their 'gospel' is not worthy of the name of Gospel ('Good News') for it is 'bad news'. It is a mixture of law and grace. These Judaisers do two things (a) They confuse the Galatians' (b) They deface (pervert) the Gospel. This latter is equivalent to blasphemy. (*Luke 16:15 cf. 18:13f*) . Who are these people? Answer' Judaisers' The mixture of law and grace destroys the wonder of grace' It confuses' Yet the law admixture certainly has an attraction, because this 'gospel' still seems Christ-centred' These troublers are also trying to make a schism see 5:10' They can not abide the liberty of the brethren. see 2:4. Ultimately their idea is to completely destroy the Gospel -- as Paul preaches it.

1:8 Of course no angel from heaven would preach such a Gospel. (If he had said 'an angel' then it might have meant a fallen one) but Paul is deliberately taking an extreme. He is not just reviling. He is in dead earnest. Anything which takes from grace is reprehensible. A man will actually be accursed -- not by St. Paul but by the nature of his evil. That is, God does not stand by idly when His whole nature is brought into disrepute, YOU CANNOT PLAY WITH THE STRUCTURE OF SCRIPTURE AND ESCAPE.

1:9 'As we said before'. Is he referring to

verse *eight or a* time when he - and perhaps Barnabas have already warned them against such things? Anyway the re-iteration is strong, N.B. They had *received* the Gospel. They are reminded of this fact.

### **Paul Commences His Defence of His Apostolic Authority.**

1:10 At this point Paul begins to defend his apostolic authority. He is a SLAVE of Christ. He cannot please men -- ARE THERE ANY EVIDENCES THAT HE SOUGHT TO DO SO? -- he must please God. If he had pleased men he would not have suffered persecution. NOTE THEN THE CONCEPT OF SLAVE. May not please himself. How often he must have wanted to turn back from that *hard* way.

1:11 '*According to man*' 'not in human style at all'. Note 'brethren' -- to catch them up into the past -- their thrilling times as they had shared the Gospel. *Real* brethren.

(i) The Gospel is not in human *style*, ie. you cannot find *human* thought and ways as such .

(ii) It does not originate from humans - otherwise it were no Gospel. It is of divine origin. Danger of philosophy - man's thoughts etc.

'*Which I preached*' Aorist - past, completed. You saw me preach it (cf. Gal. 3:1) with tremendous power. Assess it. Could I have originated such a Gospel?

### **(i) The Gospel A Revelation**

1:12 (a) Not *from man*, ie. PAUL DEPENDENT UPON NO ONE ELSE (N.B. We cannot say this, although we have the New Testament by which to examine any other's utterance of the Gospel.) (b) But by *REVELATION*. ie. the truth was *unveiled*, *REVELATION*. That which does not (cannot) normally come into man's mind. Indeed 'human' thinking rejects such teaching. *Certainly* such ideas would never come into the minds of *Jews*, ie. 'Gospel' ideas, cf. I Cor.1:23. *Manner of Revelation* ie. '*Taught by Christ*'. By some it is thought:

(i) Paul actually received the teaching from others but Christ was pleased to open it to him. (*I Cor. 15:3*).

(ii) Paul actually received the revelation by *seeing* Christ. The teaching he had already 'received' in seeing and hearing Christians made this all intelligible, and in seeing Christ everything fitted together e.g. Stephen's speech. The Old Testament then would suddenly become intelligible, especially to him a Pharisee.

(iii) Christ actually appeared to him and told him the details and meaning of the Gospel. cf. *Acts 26:15--23* etc.

All these views hold a truth and may not be mutually exclusive. The sum of them

all seems that Paul is saying this sort of Gospel does not come ‘naturally’ to man (as against the Judaisers) and its truth comes only from *knowing* Christ, and that very *knowing* ultimately is a revelation, (cf. I Cor. 7:10, \* 11:23\* 15:3-8, I Cor. 9:1).

1:13-14 In these two verses we see Paul showing that he was very much a JEW and at that a strictly ORTHODOX Jew’ Never a schismatic but always orthodox (613 Pharisaic commandments). (cf. *Phil. 3:4-6*) . He wants to convince them that he is no less zealous a Jew than the Judaisers. These are not telling the Galatians (Gentile converts) anything of what Paul was ignorant. The PROOF of this is that he (Saul) had persecuted the church, ‘beyond measure’ ie. VIOLENTLY, (cf. *Acts 24:9-11*) .

1:15 We must bear in mind that Paul is proving his *authority*. Whilst refuting the attack on his authority, he shows that God has had a hand even over his (Saul’s) bigotry. He shows His grace (a) By separating Saul from his mother’s womb (claiming what Jeremiah claimed - Jer. 1:5) and (b) CALLING him by His grace. We see here the doctrines of predestination and calling. However Paul does not take up these doctrines philosophically, but simply shows that BY THEM the Galatians must respect his teaching, because of his calling.

### (ii) Christ is The Revelator

1:16 In *verse twelve* Christ is the *revelator of the Gospel*. In *verse sixteen* God is the *revelator of Christ*. This means that God moves out to capture Paul -- who are the Judaisers to oppose him? ‘Reveal His Son *in me*’ (a) SON. Not Jesus, but the SON (MESSIAH) relationship.

The Son of God: this (Christological explosion) takes place in Saul. He understands the concept of SON-FATHER. We cannot here explore it but see briefly - Ephesians. (b) The PURPOSE of this revelation was ‘to preach among the Gentiles’. ie. the Galatians *must listen*. Paul had done this - but not so the Judaisers! N.B. Preaching amongst the Gentiles was a *high* and almost unique concept. ‘flesh and blood’ (cf. MATT. 16-17), he KNEW the Gospel, no need for confirmation.

1:17 ‘apostles *before me*’, this assumes the present apostleship. He became an apostle at that time. N.B. not *before* in order or place. N.B. He had *seen* the risen Lord, (I Cor. 9:1, 15:8.) ‘confer’ of the previous verse means ‘consult, ask advice’. So doing would have called a rebuke from the Apostles themselves who knew what revelation meant. “BUT” ie. ‘to the contrary’.

‘I went away into *Arabia*’ Why? For three years? cf. Acts 9:20-25; it was three years from the time of going to Arabia. He may or may not have been there all that time. Did he preach the Gospel cf. ( II Cor. 11:24f)? Anyway his ideas ‘sorted out’. This is the way revelation becomes real.

### (iii) First visit to Jerusalem

1:18 ‘I went up to Jerusalem’ Why? He HAD to go from Damascus. *NOT to seek an attestation* (fartherest from his mind). Notice the *THEN I* went etc. ie. after three years. Here Paul simply says he ‘remained with him’ No ‘conferring’ whatever ‘

1:19 Meets James: N.B. James the Apostle selected first for death. Seems to be replaced by James brother of Jesus (Acts 12:17,

15:13, 21:18, Gal. 2:9,12) who is the leader of the Jews. This too is an unconscious attestation. James and he meet - there is no division. Indeed the question is not raised, as in any case Paul is not yet known as a preacher amongst the Gentiles.

1:21-24 These verses show that Paul was not rejected by the churches - indeed to the contrary. Acts 9:27-30 show how he came up and 22:17-21 show that the Lord himself told him to depart from Jerusalem. The churches praised God for what Paul was, and was doing - there is no sense of rejection here, but only glad acceptance. So the first chapter finishes with Paul's attestation.

- (a) From God
- (b) From Christ <sup>4</sup>
- (c) From experience
- (d) From the brethren

None of them doubt his apostleship. The churches 'glorify God in Paul' - that is quite a lot!

## CHAPTER TWO

- Paul's Apostolic Authority (Continued)

### Introduction.

Paul is continuing, to assert his apostolic authority and to insist that no one ever called it in question. Nor was his doctrine ever called in question. To the contrary he challenged the doctrine of even Peter and Barnabas.

#### (iv) Second Visit – By Revelation

2:1 'Then fourteen years after . . . 'Some commentators think this may have been Acts 11:27-30

(which see) and is called the 'famine' visit' Others think it may have been the visit of ACTS 15. Some think these two were the one. This seems impossible, however. The fourteen years after means fourteen years after the three years in Arabia and Damascus' 'Then' (V.1) can carry the idea of more than one before. If Paul had gone up in the famine situation it is doubtful that Peter would have been in Jerusalem (see Acts 10 and 11). It seems better then to parallel this visit with the one to the Council, ie. ACTS 15.

'Titus'. Is not mentioned in Acts. (but see II Cor. 2:13f, 7:6, II Tim. 4:10, Titus 1:4). Barnabas of course is known to these Galatians and Acts 15:2 shows that he with Paul was 'appointed' to go to Jerusalem .

2:2 '*And I went up by revelation*'. How was this? Is Paul not appointed? 'Revelation' may mean that God had spoken through the prophets (as perhaps in Acts 13:1f) or had privately assured Paul he should go. However Paul's great point here is that he was not summoned. Deliberately shared his belief with the 'influential' men of Jerusalem. Note 'that Gospel which I preach amongst the Gentiles'. It is not the 'Gospel' as such, but the Gospel as it relates to Gentiles as it invites them in etc. This may well have been part of the Revelation, and is why Paul 'conferred';

Part of the reason probably was that they might understand the truth, even get new insights as to the 'Gentile Gospel'! *Perhaps it was with a view to the Council discussion*. He wanted the leaders to know just how he approached the matter so that they might not be misled. '*run in vain*' does not mean 'preached wrongly' but 'have all my work cancelled by a wrong decision', ie. 'I talked so that they would understand, and I might not be regarded out of the stream. There is no talk here of his compromising,

or being corrected in his ‘gospel’.

**(v) Paul’s Acceptance by Other Apostles**

- 2:3 ‘*compelled to be circumcised*’ The whole matter of Paul’s ‘Gentile Gospel’ pivoted around this fact of circumcision. If Titus were compelled to be circumcised then it would mean the ‘Gentile Gospel’ was cancelled. Law (ceremonial) would now take its demands and grace be destroyed. At this point we must examine 3 aspects of law, especially the Law of Moses. (a) *Law Ceremonial* - fulfilled and vindicated by Christ - cf. *Rom. 3:31, 10:4* (b) *Law Judicial or Penal*. Again Christ has borne this penalty. *Rom. 3:21-26*. (c) *Law Moral*. This is never abrogated cf. *Rom. 7:22*. etc. Here the necessity to have Titus circumcised means Christ has not fulfilled the law in every way. In other words there is still condemnation if circumcision is needed. ‘*Being a Greek*’ If Titus had been a Jew then there would have been a cultural demand, as with Timothy - see *Acts 16:1-3*.
- 2:4 ‘*False brethren*’ We see here the Judaizing movement. Paul calls them ‘false’ because they were not true brethren - not warmed by grace. They would have destroyed the *liberty* cf. *11 Cor. 3:17f* of the believers. cf. *5:1-4\**. Notice that this liberty is *in* Christ Jesus. Paul 4 views with horror being taken back into *bondage* - HE KNOWS THE TERRIBLE SLAVISHNESS OF LEGALISM. *NO* the true Church at Jerusalem does not compel legalistic observance - that shows it, too, was a church of grace. Of course it must have suffered many of these pressures.
- 2:5 The pressure must have been strong. Legalism has a lethal (deadly) power. *We*

*could recast the verse this way, ‘false brethren who did not like the liberty of “no circumcision” tried to force Titus’ circumcision but the leaders did not allow them to force circumcision.’* Paul’s opposition was firm. He indicates that he opposed the Judaisers so that the Gospel *at Galatia* (and indeed in all the Gentile world) might ‘continue’. It was on their behalf Paul was fighting for freedom - to protect and confirm the truth.

- 2:6 In verses 6 to 10 Paul makes it clear that the *leaders* of the church reached this clear conclusion - that Paul was absolutely right in what he was doing amongst the Gentiles’ In *verse six* Paul shows that the ‘influential ones’ are with him’ He does not say ‘apostles’ for that would seem to be giving them a status as against his own. Paul *knows* the Gospel and is not beholden to any man of any ‘standing’.
- 2:7 ‘*when they saw*’ It is clear now that Paul is accepted as ‘the apostle to the Gentiles’ by the leaders - probably Peter, John, James the brother of Jesus. This is something which puts the Jerusalem and Galatian Judaisers out of countenance. After all it was Peter who had brought the Gentiles into the Church (Acts 10 and 11). Now it is made clear that Paul is given the whole over-sight of the Gentiles
- 2:8 We must remember that Paul is still vindicating himself as an accepted leader. He can now make the *practical* claim that God has worked *powerfully* in him. This claim rests on the facts.
- 2:9 We do not know whether this was before the Council or after, or even during its deliberations - whether private or public but the ‘right hands of fellowship’ means in fact total

acceptance and on the basis of equality. All this establishes Paul's claim that his ministry was not unorthodox but fully attested by others although (see V.1) he does not really need such attestation, himself.

2:10 This verse is most interesting. It shows something of social concern especially for the brethren, the church at Jerusalem had been poor - see *Acts 2:45, 4:32f.* see also *11:27f.* Now the church at Antioch is helping. This *mutual* help would be a great means of cementing the friendship between Jews and Gentiles - through the exhibition of tenderness. See II Cor 8:14 for condition of Jerusalem church. We might note that Palestinian conditions were not those of affluency.

#### **Paul Confronts Peter Publicly For A Public Scandal**

2:11 At this point Paul takes a further step' Before this he had asserted that there was an equality with the apostolic body' Now he says - far from needing their attestation - he is in the position to rebuke one of them. When did Peter come to Antioch? We do not know, but we do know that he had been there for some time. See Acts 11:19-30, shows the Gentile origins of the church' We do not know whether this incident is before the Council or after' It does not matter' We would expect Peter not to be vacillating, but he is' The word '*withstood*' here is translated '*resisted*' because Peter has (perhaps unwittingly) made an attack upon the Gospel. This resisting of Peter destroys the concept that any Apostle was, of himself, infallible. It was the Gospel which alone was infallible. All of this gives point to Paul's insistence upon apostolic authority being in reference to the *Gospel*, and not to *position*.

Notice Paul does not accuse Peter, but resists his attack. There is nothing legalistic in all this.

2:12 The attack on the Gospel is clear. Peter eats with the Gentiles - probably in the Lord's Supper which was associated with the common meal - or love-feast. When one or some come from James - that is they are of James' circle Peter desists from eating. We cannot conclude that James was of this opinion. *Acts 15:24* shows that whilst some came from 'us' (James) they did not have his approval for their attitude. Paul gives clearly Peter's reason for separating himself '*fearing them which were of the circumcision*'. Here Paul indicates the dread power of legalism to grip man's spirit like a terrible vice.

2:13 '*the other Jews*' ie. of Antioch's church. This makes the position dangerous. It is an attack upon (a) Grace (b) Liberty (c) The whole fellowship of the Church. Barnabas is also moved. How fierce must have been the occasion. Only Paul seems (being a Jew) solidly based upon the revelation of grace. We might even say that the whole future of the Gospel hung in balance.

#### **The Truth of The True Gospel**

2:14 Paul does not refer to any Jerusalem edict. He refers only to the (innate) *truth of the Gospel*. It is amazing that Peter had not thought of the dreadful consequences his act could have. In this lies his wrongness. Whilst Paul could have spoken with him privately, the matter had gone beyond that. It was a public scandal. The elements were clear. Peter had lived as a Gentile. Now he changes. Expects the Gentiles (being Christian) to live as Jews. If this was the occasion of the Lord's Table then the thing was a dreadful

scandal. If we are clear-sighted we can see that Paul was not simply attacking Peter but *the Judaizers behind Peter*. They are those of V. 4 who are come to ‘spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus.’

### Justification The Heart Of The Gospel

2:15-16 These two verses have to be put together. Paul is really saying ‘All right, we are Jews; that is not Gentiles’ Judaism considers the Gentiles to be as dogs - sinners and shameful. Yet we who are Jews know that the law cannot save us - that is why we needed Christ. Everything for salvation is in Christ, and not at all in the law’. His real point is:- ‘If we have to be justified by faith - then let it be by faith. Law is outside the matter altogether. If it is outside the matter altogether, then leave it there - forever. Impose nothing of this upon Gentiles. Law can do nothing.’ ‘Now’, says St. Paul ‘is not this utterly inconsistent? “not *justified by the works of the law*”’. In looking at Paul’s argument we should not miss the substance of it. Cannot a man be justified by the law? e.g. *ROMANS 10:5* ‘the man which doeth these things shall live by them.’ cf. *Romans 7:10* ‘commandment ordained to life.’ Paul makes the distinction of ‘righteousness’ in *Romans 1:17* and *3:21*. In *3:19f* and *4:15* he shows the law can only bring death and judgment. In *Romans 8:2* it is ‘the law of sin and death’ ie. responsible for sin and death as in *Romans 7:11* sin uses the commandment to slay. So in v.16 he makes it clear ‘by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.’ cf. *Romans 10:1-4*, cf. *8:1*. What does it mean to be justified? Answer: ‘accounted righteousness, have one’s sins accounted as having been judged, be acquitted from charge and accusation.’ cf. *Romans 6:7* ‘He that has died is justified from sin.’ In referring to law

*Paul is speaking of Psalm 143:2. The Way of justification is faith, belief in Christ. It is belief in that work which has been finished, but which justifies.*

2:17 ‘If while we seek to be justified’. Paul is speaking particularly of Jews. He is saying that our abandonment of law as a means of justification means that we - as any Gentile - are also shown to be sinners. Surely this downgrades the law - has it accomplished nothing? Are Jews any better than Gentiles? Is this not wrong? Does it not so lower law that we make it nothing? Might we not go on to that dread heresy - antinomianism? Does not faith in Christ then really make Christ one who makes us sinners seeing we cannot be justified by law - apart from it? Paul does not give a theological answer here. He simply says ‘Perish the thought! ‘ (not “God forbid! “ No Jew would dare address God in this manner: “May it not be” is the true translation.)

2:18 ‘If I build again’. Undoubtedly Paul is speaking hypothetically. In fact he is softening it a little for Peter. Peter had ‘broken down’ the law concept, by eating with the Gentiles. Law ceremonial was not significant salvation-wise. Now if he (Peter, Paul) gives insistence upon the law he is building up again the idea that salvation does depend upon it. ‘I make myself a transgressor’. This could have two meanings (i) I transgress in doing this - for it is wrong - it is against faith. Or, (ii) I have been transgressing all the time in eating with Gentiles. For, at last I am coming out of this sin, but my coming out proves my being a transgressor!

### The Cross Is Death To Law

2:19 ‘For’ ‘I through the law died to the law’.

The law slays me it does not bring to life. The law demands my death - and gets it! The law demands so high a moral life (nothing could be higher! ) that when I see it I am cast down, doomed, slain. The law shows me I cannot attain it. I have to be dead to law or I am destroyed. Law-way cannot save me - it is impossible. Only faith-way can save me (cf. Romans 3:27-31). Law demands my death - and gets it! Paul undoubtedly remembers his 'death' when he sees Christ on the road to Damascus, and realises his depth of sin cf. Rom.7:9 - 'alive apart from the law once'.

#### Dead To Law — Alive To God

2:20 The last half of nineteen 'that I might live unto God' is the clue for this verse. He cannot live unto God until slain by the law, and he is slain for this purpose. The law must do its work - it does. Paul is crucified with Christ. We must look at this clearly. This is not (primarily) a mystical experience. Christ's death is his. Not in *time is* he crucified with Christ, but in *accounting*. The death the law demanded Christ has died. Of course this death strikes death to the hopes of law doing anything - and thank God it does - for that way is terrifyingly hopeless! It strikes death to human endeavour - works. But it satisfied the law, conscience and God. All fear of law is destroyed. Only the way of faith exists faith in the Son of God. Paul constantly lives in that faith - and so no going back to law - to eating with Jews only! Law cannot reach out to grasp the mind. From now on it is a *faith-life*. Those who say that Paul means an inner moral crucifixion of the 'old nature' do not look to the context. Paul is referring to a substitutionary sacrifice - 'the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me'. It is a work for me on the cross that is accounted to

me, and only in this sense can I say I have died with him; whilst undoubtedly there is a moral response - and whilst sin is struck at (self-effort, flesh-works, works-righteousness) and killed, yet not in a mystical but a psychological sense. Anyway *He loved me* - how can I then build the things again which I destroyed - go back to law. To Law? Away with the thought!

2:21 'I do not frustrate the grace of God' not make null and void. Of none effect. It is clear that Paul is still on the law-works and faith-righteousness debate. To do what Peter did is not just to give into a cultic demand, but to deny the whole of the work of the Cross. This is a grave indictment, and must have cut Peter deeply - who could never forget the terrible occasion (cf. I Peter 2:24). Paul makes it clear - if righteousness comes by law, then there was no point in Christ's death - none at all. He would have had no need to have died with Christ, nor would Christ need to have died for him. This is a terrible indictment. Paul set out to vindicate his apostolic authority and puts the truth of the Gospel clearly.

## CHAPTER THREE

### Introduction.

We must remember that there is no hiatus between chs. 2 and 3. In one sense Paul has finished his argument. He has shown them that it is faith and grace, not law and bondage. Paul leaves Peter and the others, and is no longer concerned

with his own apostolic authority. He is seeking to remind them of their own experience. Further he will remind them that the doctrine of justification by faith begins at Abraham, who in a sense (strictly speaking) was not a Jew. He contrasts Abraham and Moses, faith and law, justification and penalty, liberty and bondage. He will show them the wrongness and danger of returning to law, after having lived under grace.

### Paul Reminds Of The Powerful Initial Experience

3:1 ‘O foolish Galatians!’ Use of vocative sparing in Greek so emphatic here. *foolish* ie. ‘not using your minds’ ‘stupid’. It is incredible that such foolish waves of ‘understanding’ should sweep across the church, yet they do this from time to time, viz. at present. So some of the things that are said by theologians today. ‘Galatians’. Paul does not use the warm term ‘brethren’. At the same time not cutting, but urgent. ‘Who hath bewitched you?’ Paul cannot believe one could be so easily deceived unless there is a bewitchment. It is true of course that law has a dread fascination, and also appeals to the ego of man - he can do something! Nevertheless the arguments they have heard *have been couched fascinatingly*. ‘before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been openly set forth crucified among you’. ‘openly set forth’ really means ‘has been proclaimed’ (cf. I Cor. 1:21) meaning that you have truly known Jesus, and seen him in the truth of the Cross. ‘before whose eyes would indicate the graphic way in which Paul had preached (cf. Acts 20:27,31). They had no excuse - *they had seen the Cross*, ie. understood its message. (NB. ‘That you should not obey the truth’ is not in the ancient MS. but the point obtains, nevertheless - not to follow

grace is to disobey the truth).

### The Experience of The Spirit

3:2 ‘This only would I learn of you’ an ironical, yet positive way of teaching. Paul is pointing them back to their *experience*. Receiving the Spirit was obviously clearly defined (cf. Acts 19:1-7 - disciples without the Spirit). *They had received the Spirit*. How? By ‘the hearing of faith’. This really means ‘faithful, or believing hearing’. If coupled with ROMANS 10:14-17 we see (a) Faith is brought to action or being by the Word preached (b) This faith is active in obedience, ie. *in accepting*. Acts 2:38, 9:17, 10:44-46 etc. show us this principle. The *opposite is* ‘the works of the law’. The Galatians *had not been “under the law”* (the law they are now trying to obey) *nor* had the Spirit come through this source. (cf. 2:16) . *Law* of course (especially to the bewitched man) is that which he can do - cf. Luke 16:15. It is interesting that Paul takes as his launching point ‘receiving the Spirit’. He is setting out to contrast two aspects or ways of living (a) In the Spirit (b) In the flesh (ie. by law).

### Beginning In The Spirit - Not By Law

3:3 ‘Are ye so foolish?’ Paul cannot conceive of them abandoning a life in the Spirit for one of the flesh (ie. human drained of the Divine), ‘*having begun in (the) Spirit*’. Perhaps better ‘having begun in Spirit’ or having begun in *spirit*. The emphasis is to a life that is spiritual (of the Spirit) rather than the other. *are ye being perfected?*’ No! The power has *gone*. What maturity? They have gone back - they are

out of the realm of the Spirit. This is a special life lived which takes a man on 'to maturity' (cf. Hebrews 6:1, I Cor. 2:6f), What will the end be - by flesh? cf. Gal. 6:7-8. This is a dread thought. The realm of the flesh is human wisdom - lack of divine truth (cf. I Cor. 2:13).

3:4 'Have ye *suffered so many things* in vain?' 'Was all your experience to no end?' ie. they had either suffered physically for and by reason of their new faith (cf. I Thess. 1:6) and this would be vain if they went back to law - *to no purpose*; or it means (NEB) they had had this experience of the Spirit to no purpose as now they had rejected this (wonderful) life. 'if it yet be in vain' ie. Paul cannot believe they would wish to lose all - nor will he let them do so.

3:5 '*He .. that ministereth to you the Spirit*'. The word 'ministereth' is 'supplieth' for which see Phil. 1:19. God (or Christ) furnishes the Spirit - there is no need for them to do anything. In fact it is a present tense (continuous) as is 'worketh' - so that there is no need for them to do any works (certainly not of the law). What does He work? Miracles! (dunameis). *Acts 14:3* refers to dunameis done when St. Paul was present. It seems however that continuing evidence of the Spirit is even now amongst them (cf. Hebrews 2:3-4). That is, the Spirit is working among them as a result of the message Paul had given - do they need more proof of the rightness of the message? This is practical proof. God is blessing!

#### Abraham and The Gospel-To-Come

3:6 '*even as Abraham*' A new element is introduced - Abraham. At first the reason

is not apparent' It is obvious, however that Abraham must have loomed large in the teaching of the Judaisers' Just as in Romans 4 Paul sets the Jewish fears at rest concerning the 'novelty' of his theology, so now he takes Abraham to introduce the doctrine of justification (right standing) to the Galatians. However there is a point to be noted 'even as Abraham believed' - that is the kind of *faith* which obtained the Spirit, is *justifying faith*, not another kind (different kind) of faith. More than this, Abraham could not have justification (let alone the Spirit! ) without *faith*' Gen. 15:6 indicates nothing of law! This faith *alone* justified Abraham. He was the Father of the faithful. It must be 'Like father; like son!'

3:7 '*Know ye therefore* "' Paul's 'know' or 'knowing' are famous. These are 'musts'. It is clear that a child (descendent) of Abraham will be as Abraham was. How was he? Gen.15:4,5 and other passages show he believed his children would be numberless, and in his seed would all the families of the earth be blessed. Rom. 4:13-23 shows he believed in the God of resurrection (cf. Hebrews 11:19) John 8:56 avows he saw the day of Christ and rejoiced. Paul means his children will take the 'faith-way' and not the 'law-way'.

3:8 '*Now the Scripture ..*' ie. the Word of God or God. 'would justify the heathen (Gentiles) through faith' . . . Paul is making it clear that *Genesis 12:3* was (a) The Gospel and (b) The way Gentiles were to be saved. Abraham was a prophet (Gen.20:7). Abraham had heard this *gospel*. The *blessing* (cf. v.14) is opposed to the 'curse' (vs.10,13). Receiving this blessing is by *faith* not law.

3:9 Only the *faith-way will* bring blessing.

### The Gospel Of Faith - As Against Law

3:10 ‘.. as many as are of the works of the law.. ‘Paul has not dealt with the matter of *law*. This he must do to satisfy Jews. The Jew looked on those ‘without law’ as deficient, indeed unclean. Paul plunges in by quoting Deut. 27:26 (LXX). He is saying that a man committed to do the works of the law is cursed if he fails. *That is what law does for you!* No man is justified by law.

3:11 follows on naturally. Here Paul quotes Habakkuk 2:4 ‘the righteous -- from faith shall he live’ or ‘he shall gain life who is justified through faith’. The contrast is the ‘proud’ and the ‘trusting’.

3:12 Here Paul quotes Leviticus 18:5 ‘You shall therefore keep my statutes and my ordinances, by doing which a man shall live in them.’ *‘by doing which’* is the natural order by which the natural man lives. That is one must complete *all* these works *then* he will live. Faith brings life immediately as one is justified, ie. *placed beyond judgment*. Constant doing brings the tension of the *curse*.

### Christ The Curse

3:13 ‘... the curse of the law’ . The terrible fact of the curse faces the Galatians (and us!) . How can they avoid it? Is faith just an easy way concocted by Paul’s rabbinic method of reasoning? No, it is *through Christ*. (i) Christ hath redeemed .. (‘bought back’). (ii) To do this Christ ‘becoming a curse on our behalf’ frees us from the curse. The thought is terrible to contemplate - paralleling II Cor. 5:21 - ‘He (God) made him sin ..’ Only here can faith find its true

basis. NEB says ‘becoming for our sake an accursed thing...’ Deut. 21:23 really means ‘a hanged man is accursed by God’. The hanging is not the curse - it is the sign of the curse. The *curse* is a terrible thing - it is the *curse of God*’ Only here can we see the evil of man and his sin which demands the terror of the curse. This prevents us from taking a light view of sin or God’s wrath. See Acts 5:30, 10:39, 13:29, I Peter 2:24. The ‘tree’ of course is the Cross. Without this sign the cursedness of Christ would not have been apparent.

### Christ The Blessing

3:14 *‘That the blessing of Abraham.* . ‘ This is undoubtedly justification, forgiveness, regeneration. The first ‘that’ conditions the second ‘that’, ie. the promise of the Spirit - or better -the ‘promised’ Spirit (cf . Luke 24:49, Acts 1:4, Acts 26:6, Heb. 9:15). ‘through faith’ see verse two - justification and the Spirit are by faith. All of this was inherent in the promises made to Abraham ‘

3:15 ‘... *But a man ‘s covenant*’. Paul is now on a new line’ He is out to speak of *covenant*’ This is a tremendous theme’ He is going to contrast it to law (v’ 17f) His real question is:- ‘Does the law, coming later than covenant, outmode or annul promise?’ The answer is ‘No!’ ‘ In this verse there is a play on words with *covenant* which here is agreement and rather a one-sided agreement’ The ‘one-party guarantee’ is all on God’s side’ Whilst the response of obedience is demanded, yet it is not as one of *works*’ The validity of the agreement is God’s taking of the initiative. Again he says, ‘No man disannulleth’ - meaning that nothing that follows can cancel (e.g. law)

‘and no man addeth thereto’ which means that nothing following can add to what has been agreed, ie. Law can add nothing. Paul has made his point - the time of agreement, and the matter of the agreement stand permanently. Paul has gone right back beyond law-way to establish faith-way.

#### Law And Promise - Promise Transcends Law

3:16 This verse now follows naturally. The promise was made (a) To Abraham (cf. Gen.13:15, and 17:8), and (b) To the ‘Seed’. This seed in Gen.13:15 and 17:8 is the singular, but a collective as over against an individual singular. However Gen.22:18 has a clearly individual singular. The sense is clear. The ‘Seed’ will be singular, though in the Seed will be blessing. See also Gen.21:12 for a parallel.

3:17 This also follows clearly. The law came 430 years after the promise. The period 430 years is (Ex. 12:40) the time Israel was in Egypt - yet the promise was not simply to Abraham but to Isaac and Jacob, and if the promise to Jacob approximates to the period commenced in Egypt then the number of years is fair enough. However Paul’s point is that the law comes so much later - and in what way can it affect promise. Incidentally here both ‘covenant’ and ‘law’ are without the definite article ‘the’.

3:18 ‘inheritance’ here means, really, ‘enjoyment or appropriation of inheritance’. Abraham did not - as regards time - enjoy the inheritance. If the law coming later was a condition, then it was completely outside Abraham’s orbit. The ‘promise’ was no promise if it concealed a condition from Abraham. It was not *the* promise made to Abraham, This then, puts law outside the

question altogether.

3:19 What is the purpose of law? Paul must answer for this for any good Jew, otherwise law seems to be ‘outlawed’. He says there are two reasons (i) ‘For the sake of the transgressions’ ie. to ‘bring out fully and clearly what they were - the transgressions.’ This is seen by looking at Romans 5:20 and 7:13. Sin lies, as it were, concealed, until law ‘incites’ or ‘brings out’ (but only) what is there. As the sun shines on the bog, so the vileness and putrefaction is made known and as the stick disturbs the lion to infuriation, so is the nature of sin made known. Romans 4:15 gives the point perfectly - ‘The law worketh wrath’. ‘Till the seed should come to whom the promise was made’. Paul’s points here are (i) The ‘seed’ v. 16, is Christ. That is until Christ should come - the thought being that the law was - in this manner - until then. (ii) The coming of Christ did away with the necessity for the law - after this manner, ie. all who are ‘of the seed’ or ‘in the seed’ (‘in Christ’ - ‘joint-heirs etc.’) do not need the law. Condemnation by the law has been finished by this “Seed” - in the Cross - by the taking of the curse. ‘ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator’ - See Acts 7:38, Heb. 2:2, see Deut. 33:2. The *mediator* was Moses. The *glory* of the giving of the law (Deut. 33:2) is not in doubt, but the greater glory is when the grace-promise is direct, to Abraham and the Seed. This is the burden of *Verse 20*. That is *law* demands a mediatorial situation - it is not direct. In the giving of the promise, however, no mediator intervened. The nature of law demands mediation. The nature of grace-promise requires no mediation. *Conclusion* - the promise is superior to law, and in no wise dependent upon it .

3:21 Are law and promise antitheses? Are they each against the other? Not at all. This is impossible - it is GOD's Law! No, their function and purposes are different. If there had been *law* (no article) which was life-giving the promise would be unnecessary. Face the facts there is no such law. THE LAW CANNOT MAKE ALIVE! It can only outline the obstinacy of man. Note that it is righteousness which (by inference) makes alive! 'by the law' here means 'derived by means of the law'.

3:22 Note the 'but' giving us contrast. It is the Scripture (not the law alone) - see V.8, meaning 'God's recorded will'. See Deut. 27:26, Rom. 3:9-18 etc. Note the '*all*' (Rom. 3:9) which includes Jews and Gentiles (the Judaisers cannot escape this logic. ) The Scripture puts us all in a prison house. The word 'included' means 'locking up, keeping in detention'. Sin then is the jailer, in that its power and the curse makes it impossible for man to know the freedom of salvation (see Ridderbos ad.loc.) God's purpose, by the law however was not just to gaol men, as such, but to set them up for 'faith-way' - showing them their need, when they had exhausted the dread possibilities of sin and law. 'That the promise by faith of Christ Jesus might be given to them that believe'. This indicates that law-possibilities are exhausted, and now the conditions are made so that faith is necessary. It is faith in Christ Jesus, as against faith in law. Believing is by man, with the heart, but the object of faith is Christ Jesus.

#### Law Brings To Faith - And Salvation

3:23 The thought is simply strengthened here. By the law were we kept in condemnation ('kept in ward') until *the faith* should come. The

'before' is all that was man's condition until the *faith* should come. Man was not allowed, either, to find any other way (there is no other way! ) but 'faith way'. The faith then might be called 'faith-way', 'the principle of faith as against the principle of law', 'the (Christian) faith', i.e. the Gospel. 'afterwards be revealed' meant that the faith-epoch was different to the law-epoch.

3:24 Lenski translates 'schoolmaster' as 'slave-guardian' Note the 'has been' (A.V. 'was'). That is, its function is fulfilled. The *pedagogue* who was generally a slave who watched the child, and took him into situations which trained him, never letting him be free *of himself*. The law, then, still keeping the (now) young man in bondage, nevertheless leads him to Christ. This means that the *final* function of the law is to lead to Christ. The law is by no means negative. Its *purpose* is to lead us to justification by faith. How different to the concepts of the Judaisers and the deceived Galatians. Back to law, can, at the most, bring them back to the way of justification by faith! *Romans 10:4*.

3:25 Now that faith has come - where does the law stand? It has fulfilled its function. To go back to it is ridiculous.

3:26 '*For ye are all sons of God*' Not *children (tekna)* but sons (*huioi*). Notice (i) *ALL* i.e. Jews or Gentiles. No difference - law, or no law. (ii) The means - Not law but faith' (iii) 'In Christ Jesus'. The terrible slave-guardian has dissolved. A new, gracious, free situation has arisen they are sons of God!

3:27 'for' - this is the explanation. 'as many' the actual number baptised (the whole church) were baptised in connection with Christ

have actually ‘put on’ Christ. That is they have been clothed with Christ Himself cf . Isaiah 61:10 cf . Judg. 6:34, Luke 24:49. In fact they have put on the whole new situation identified with Christ. A new life, a new economy, a new way.

3:28 We see now, what the Judaisers have really been attacking (perhaps unconsciously) and that is the very nature of the Church. In demanding law-observance, they have been trying to take the Galatians back into an old *qahal* (Jewish congregation) situation, and deny them the *ekklesia* (Christian church) situation. The *law* made its demands for a *Jewish* people (congregation). The situation of (putting on) Christ, demands no discrimination. All have sinned. All are needy. All put on Christ (faith-way) by faith. All are equal. Differences of race etc. have no place here. Already Paul says they who have faith are one with faithful Abraham, and indeed are his children (3:7-9). Of course distinctions naturally remain e.g. male and female, but so far as law and grace are concerned none whatsoever.

3:29 This follows on naturally sealing Paul’s argument which commenced at verse six. In union with Christ, the Seed, they are Abraham’s seed. Law (however it may have entered to fulfil a function) has not abrogated or superseded the promise. Now it is seen fulfilled through union with Christ by baptism. Here they may rest content. Notice however the mention of inheritance. This would have referred, firstly to the inheritance of Canaan. Here, however it refers to the whole or salvation in general. Those who were to be blessed in Abraham were to enter into that inheritance by virtue of being his offspring.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### The Time Of Law The Time Of Infancy

4:1 Paul taking the word ‘heir’ from ch. 3:29 uses it to teach another truth. A child may be an heir, but although all is his it is no good to him until he is grown. Those who have control of him up to this point have more freedom, in a way, than does he. He is a ‘minor’, and there is not much joy in being a minor.

4:2 ‘The time appointed by the father’. In the illustration this may mean a time set generally by law - ie. ‘coming of age’, but probably Paul means his father has set this in his will. We are not told who the tutors are, but probably refer back to the bondage of the law - the pedagogue .

4:3 Paul applies the illustration. We too, he says, were under similar bondage to ‘the elements of the world.’ Some think these were the angelic powers. Whilst the law was given by angels (3:19) perhaps the meaning here is simply ‘the elementary things of the world’ or the ‘ABC’ of the world. It must mean however that in this state men were living under a bondage because of immaturity, and certainly this was the case with such as the Judaisers and also the idolaters cf. *Col. 2:20ff*. It may well be, of course that as in Gal. 1:4 man is under the world and its world-powers (cf. *Col. 2:15*) by law-principles, so these ‘elements of the world’ are powers that keep unredeemed man in bondage. However Paul’s point is that we *were* under bondage.

4:4 ‘But’ - Paul is making a contrast. The *temporary* period has passed (whether

under Jewish law, or Gentile idolatry bondage). ‘When the fullness of *the* time was come’ ie. this refers (i) To God’s time in history - the time He had before determined, and the time just when the hour was ripe. (ii) It refers to the time of ending the bondage of the minor (under law). There is no sense that *we* had grown, but only that He had appointed this time. ‘*God sent forth His Son*’ the verb here is *exapostello*. 40 times in John He speaks of being *sent*. Here it is ‘sent forth’ ie. out of the Father. From one place to another. He had been with the Father I Cor. 8:6, II Cor. 8:9, Phil. 2:6, Col. 1:15). ‘*made of a woman*’ - the thought is amazing. He Who was God, did not cease to be God but ‘added’ humanity to Himself. ‘made under the law’ or ‘becoming under the law’ - which means that He became subject to law as was man. Without doing so he could not redeem. He is fully man, to save man. There is, then, in this verse a certain reference to Gen. 3:15 ‘the seed of woman’ Who becomes so to crush the serpent’s head.

4:5 ‘*To redeem them that were under the law*’ cf. 3:13. Paul has shown us how - ‘by becoming a curse for us’. The great result of this is ‘that we might receive the adoption of sons’. What does this mean? NEB has ‘the status of sons’. It may technically mean ‘adoption of sons’ but not as in English. Here it must mean ‘reach maturity’ ie. the ‘fullness of sonship’. No longer a minor but a mature one. One is not this until he is *out of law*. If the father were there he would say ‘Thou art my son, this day have I begotten thee..’

#### **The Time Of Adulthood - Full Sonship.**

4:6 ‘And because you are sons’. This must have come with a pang to the Galatians.

They ARE sons. Not minors. Not under law. They have received the Spirit, but they have only received this Spirit because they are sons (cf. 3:1-2). This proves their sonship - their freedom from law. ‘God hath sent forth the Spirit - again ‘*exapostello*’. ‘Out from Himself’ He is the Spirit ‘proceeding from the Father’ (John 15:26). The true Father sends. (The illustration dies somewhat here of the absent father of the will.) We must see that in Rom.1:4, 8:15; Ephes. 1:5 this concept of ‘adoption of sons’ or ‘sonship’ is of a high order, and one to delight the heart of the redeemed person (cf. Ephes. 2:14-18). When does the Father send? The answer is clear when we are sons. Each son has this Spirit. The Spirit is ‘the Spirit of His Son’ - What does this mean? The Spirit Who dwelt in His Son, Who is sent by the Son, John 16:7 the Spirit Who knows His Sonship, the Spirit Who communicates to us such Sonship. In Romans 8:15 we cry ‘Abba!’ (Father) by this Spirit - as did Christ - see Mark 14:36. Here it is the Spirit Who cries. He is intimate in communicating to us the being of sons. ‘Abba-Father’ is a tender filial cry. It is the relationship of a Son to the Father.

4:7 Paul drops the word ‘ye’ and uses ‘thou’ This is the(individual) slave of verse 1. He is no longer such - under bondage, but is a mature son - and an heir. Heir again refers back to 3:29, and to the fact that both Jews and Gentiles are heirs, through Abraham of God’s promises. Again Paul has destroyed the concept of law being needed for so rich a relationship with God.

#### **The Bondage of The Idol Gods.**

4:8 Paul now turns to the former pagans amongst the members of the Galatian church. He reminds them forcibly that they had been under deep bondage, and service to the many

gods they had believed. These gods were not gods in the sense that they could be compared to God. They were not *by nature* gods. cf. I Cor. 12:2.

4:9 ‘After ye have come to know God’. cf. Rom. 1:19-21 and the terrible state of idolaters. To come to know God, through Jesus Christ - John 1:18, 14:6, Acts 4:12 - is a rich and glorious experience. Paul pauses however - and then tells them it was God who knew *them*, that is God moved out to bring them to Himself – cf. Rom. 8:29, Amos 3:2, Hosea 13:4. He brought them to be - His sons, for He is only known as sons come to know a father (Here through *the Son* - John 14:6; Matt’ 11:25f)’ *‘How turn ye to the weak and beggarly elements?’* The contrast between God’s (sonship) liberty and the bondage of the gods is strongly self-evident. The elements of legalistic (Jewish) worship are comparable to former idolatrous bondage when compared with the glory of liberty. ‘Law-way’ is grimly pathetic against the beauty of ‘grace-way.’

4:10,11 In verse ten Paul is appalled that they should observe days and months (ceremonials of festivals, seasons etc.) and years (such as the sabbath and jubilee years). This unnecessary subjection to ceremonial makes Paul fear all his labour has been for nothing (cf. II Cor. 6:12). I Cor. 9:19-22 shows Paul can understand those who *need* to do such things, but the point here is not ceremonial as such, as whether they are justified by law or grace. Surely he has made ‘grace-way’ clear enough to them!

4:12 This verse means: - ‘I beg of you to become as I am now (not under law) for I became as you were (not under law), You did not do any wrong to me then - do not do so now.’

### Paul Reminds Them Of Their Former Love For Him.

4:13 Having reminded them of the fact that they had accepted him as he was (had done him no harm) he now reminds them more deeply of a *personal relationship*. He speaks of an *infirmity of the flesh*. Infirmity can mean a bodily weakness, or a sickness. Conjectures are that he had a fever in the lowlands of Perga and came to the cooler heights for healing. For some verse 15 shows it to be an eye-complaint - whilst others think of the stoning of Lystra. II Cor. 12:7 has been translated as ‘a stake thrust into my body’ - as though indicating great pain. We cannot determine what it was, but it seems that it could have made them (or others) despise him, and they did not.

4:14 ‘My temptation’ means in fact ‘your temptation’ that is when Paul appeared in the condition referred to they were tempted to despise him - but they did not! Sickness has from time immemorial been ascribed to angry deities. However they had accepted him *as* an angel of God, indeed as Christ, the Son of God Himself - and this in accordance with Matt. 10:40 - ‘he that receiveth you receiveth me’ Paul must have conveyed God’s glorious grace gloriously’

4:15 Paul asks, ‘on what then did you congratulate, or bless yourselves?’ He means - you felt yourselves to be deeply blessed. Why? You seem to have forgotten that joy and blessing. He goes on to say ‘You would have (if possible) given your eyes for me.’ Whilst some think Paul had an eye-complaint, the sentence simply means they would have made the highest sacrifice for him - in love.

4:16 If Paul had ‘gone along’ with them, they would have thought him good and gentle.

It is only because he loves them that he opposes the present teaching.

4:17 This verse seems complicated, but simply means ‘They are so seeking you, but in such a way as to make themselves exclusive - by teaching the law which you feel you have to follow. Once you feel you have to follow it, then they withdraw, and you are bound to follow them, and be under obligation. Law makes them exclusive, and so desired, because you do not wish to be excluded’.

4:18 Paul’s meaning is ‘It is not a wrong thing to be sought after when the motive is right, and to respond to that right affecting of you (He might have said ‘You easily go down to *anyone!*) but you ought to be stable on this score when I am not with you (ie. don’t be easily affected by anyone and everyone).

#### Paul ‘s Present Love For Them

4:19 ‘*My little children*’ - It is here a change comes. Paul has been arguing, as it were, logically - now his warmth floods in. He has at the most called them ‘Brethren’ - now he asserts his father relationship. Indeed too it is, in a flash, a mother relationship. He suffers birth pangs for them to be born another time spiritually. He has already had these pangs (No one who ministers the Gospel may escape them), and it is unnatural for a child to be born twice - after this manner. the imagery changes, and in fact a new *reality* appears. He aches for them to have Christ formed in them ie. for them to ‘catch the shape of Christ’. What he means in practical fact is that they do not catch the shape of law,

and legalistic justification, but the glory of Christ’s grace, and be moulded by that’

4:20 Paul wishes he could be with them at the very moment of writing’ He is deeply moved, and they would see that depth of feeling’ He cannot of course be with them or he would be talking not writing. He is sure that if he were present, the inflections of his voice would convince them not only of his love, and yearning, but of the great truths he had brought in love. The word ‘doubt’ is better translated ‘perplexed’. They baffle him; he finds it difficult to understand their shifting from the Gospel. Undoubtedly too, in the phrase ‘change my voice’ there is an element of sternness. He is not going to compromise.

#### The Allegory of Bondage And Freedom

##### Verse 21 to Ch. 5 v1

The pattern used in this section is what is called ‘rabbinnics’ or the rabbinical way of argument’ This, undoubtedly the Judaisers have also used, and Paul gives them a strong issue of the same kind of reasoning’ In Matt’ 22:41-46 our Lord met the objections of His opponents by going beyond their type of argument, and meeting it on a deeper level (Cole ‘Philippians’, Tyndale Com’ p.128).

4:21 The allegory that Paul uses needs to be understood in brief before we examine it verse-by-verse. It is this:- Of Abraham children were born. One child (Ishmael) was born of Hagar, and one (Isaac) was born of Sarah. Hagar (her child is of the flesh) represents *law* ie. Mt. Sinai, ie. the covenant of law. Sarah represents the grace-covenant. Her child was of the Spirit. Present Jerusalem (Hagar, bondage, flesh) is law. Heavenly (above) Jerusalem is freedom . Sarah was

mocked for being barren, but is fruitful, but is the most fruitful. Conflict is inevitable between the two brethren - ie. those of the promise (grace - children) and those of the *law-covenant* (law-children) who are fleshly.

In verse 21 Paul again confronts his listeners. So they want the law? Then let them see what law really is. In fact he has shown them from other angles - let them now see it from the angle of Judaisers - persecutors of the free! The Galatians were not in the difficulty of the other Jews who had read the Law with a veil - See II Cor. 3:14,15. However they will have to *re-see* the law - and Paul will show them.

4:22 There can be two sons of one father - ie. both of Abraham, yet the *mother* determines the result.

4:23 'After the flesh' probably does not mean 'in a fleshly manner', but simply 'in the natural way'. Of course we can see that there was human thinking in both Abraham and Sarah of seeking to get a son without trusting God's previous promise of innumerable seed. However Paul is simply saying that Ishmael came by human generation, but Isaac was planned (promised) by God .

4:24 *Allegory* means 'Narrative description of a subject under guise of another suggestively similar'. An allegory, then *proves* nothing, but makes certain *principles* clear. So here. Paul is saying there are two covenants. One is to do with Sinai - it brought bondage - and to the *Jews*. 'gendereth to bondage' is 'giving birth into slavery'.

4:25 Paul allegorises Mt. Sinai (giving the law) to correspond with present Jerusalem, which is *under law*. This (Sinai-Jerusalem) is

(was) at the present in slavery with her children. Hagar was a *slave*, and technically her child (children through Ishmael) would be slaves. Paul however is referring to actual law (covenant) bondage under which the Jews (allegorically Hagar's children) were now actually suffering.

4:26 'Jerusalem which is above'. By this time the prophets had made of Mt. Zion something more glorious than the (exiled) Jews' defiled and crushed city. They looked to the Messianic age when all would be revived. If this thought were taken through it would be seen that this city (Mt. Zion) had already come into being. Messiah has come. Whilst this city approximates to the church (Sarah allegorically) the main point is that she is *free*. Then Paul stresses 'she is the mother of us all'. That is, he compares 'law-mother' with 'grace - mother'.

4:27 Paul takes Isaiah 54:1. If we look at its context we see it follows the triumphant death and resurrection of the Messiah (Suffering Servant of Isaiah 53.) Whilst this was not applied (in context) to Sarah, yet it is applied to desolate Israel, and defeated (seemingly) Jerusalem. It is this Jerusalem (not present 'law-wise' Jerusalem) which is to bear. 'Bearest not' means 'sterile' 'travailest not' means 'not in pangs of child-birth'. Sarah, then (ie. Jerusalem above) has *more* children than Hagar (law-wise, present Jerusalem). In fact the Gentiles by this time had outnumbered the actual Jews and were increasing. Paul is showing that law is (comparatively speaking) sterile, and grace is fertile.

4:28 Paul uses the word 'brethren' to include them in Sarah's progeny, and not to thrust them into that of Hagar. Taking up the story of Isaac he includes them (see 3:29) in the promise.

They are not ‘after the flesh’.

4:29 Now Paul closes in with his argument. He has been using the allegorising method with effect. He has arrived at his point - ‘If we are born after the Spirit, and they (of Jerusalem-Sinai) after the flesh then you can remember the conflict between Ishmael and Isaac, Gen. 21:9). They can now draw their own conclusions. As in Romans 8:5ff we see that the *flesh is* incorrigible (unable to be obedient) so the *flesh* must persecute *that of the Spirit*. Rabbinic tradition on Gen. 21:9 says that Ishmael mocked by shooting arrows at Isaac - but not without deadly intent. The phrase ‘born of the Spirit’ can be seen to parallel with ‘born of promise’ (verse 23). Grace, promise, Spirit are all the one.

4:30 Paul first shows the ruthlessness of Sarah (Jerusalem above) against the ‘flesh-principle’. Gen. 21:11f shows how Abraham would have protected him. God however would not allow this. Sarah was right. The Galatians then, must cast out the ‘children not of promise but of flesh’. They must reject the law-principle. Grace-principle cannot co-exist with law-principle.

4:31 We are *free*. That is our birthright. We cannot share it.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### Standing Fast In The New Liberty

5:1 If v.1 does not belong directly to the section above, then at least it can be used as a fine conclusion. Where the slave-children seek to persecute the free-children they must resist. They must not give away their freedom. They must stand fast in their liberty.

The verse says ‘For freedom Christ freed us’. ‘Christ sets us free to be free men.’ cf. Psalm 126:1f. II Cor. 3:15-18 speaks of (a) Liberty. (b) Progress in liberty. Ultimate liberty we see in Rom. 8:18f. Paul is warning them against ‘the yoke of bondage’ ie. the law. See also Acts 13:38,39; Acts 15:10. What have we been freed from?

- (i) Subservience to the law (3:13, 22-25, 4:1,2,21-31).
- (ii) Curse of the law 3:13.
- (iii) Spiritual powerlessness of the law to redeem 3:21, cf. Rom. 8:3. (iv) Spiritual ‘deathness’ of law II Cor. 3:6,17.

Having been freed from guilt, domination, fear, judgement we are now free. This freedom is itself a power to go on in obedience ‘according to the Spirit’ Rom. 6:7 cf. 7:6.

### How To Lose Liberty - By Circumcision!

5:2 Paul, see 5:11, 5:12f, gets to the heart of the matter. To him circumcision is a ‘something-nothing’. It is *nothing* if it is only a matter of culture and not of doctrine. If it represents - in practice - ‘law-way’, then it is a *something*, and at that a dangerous something. Note Paul’s emphasis ‘I, myself say unto you ..’ This is the apostle, the one in authority. Christ has made us free - circumcision is a denial (and rejection) of his action in freeing us.

5:3 Paul shows how this is so. Circumcision brings us fully under law. The word ‘again’ shows Paul has testified this fact to them previously. See Acts 16:4,5. It is certain that Paul would have made these things clear. Note ‘every man’. Paul is now particular. Whilst a ‘group’ might go into this together, yet *each* man is under law. Of course they would not get circumcised unless they thought it were necessary - that is they think their justification is not complete without it. But obeying one part of law obligates them to all parts - the entire law, there Christ means nothing - the law everything.

5:4 ‘become of none-effect’. This is used in Rom. 7:2 - ‘be freed from the marriage bond’. But its best translation is ‘severed’. That is circumcision severs us from Christ. Paul is blunt - those who *would be* justified by law - have severed themselves from Christ, from grace, from true justification. Paul puts it terrifyingly ‘Ye are fallen away from grace’. ‘Fallen away’ is used for the falling out of a flower, to lose one’s grasp of a thing. Grace-principle is life-principle. Death by law closes about again. Grace nullified 2:21, is grace grasped only to be lost.

5:5 This is a pivotal verse. The little word ‘for’ gives a contrast to those fallen from grace. The ‘we’ means true believers, and perhaps Paul encourages by including the Galatians. ‘Through the Spirit’ is perhaps a stronger translation than warranted. ‘in Spirit’ is perhaps better. The Spirit has worked, convincing of the true doctrine (and need for) justification. He maintains that confidence. It is ‘by faith’ we wait, or ‘out of faith’. That is faith has so worked that we have no doubt. That we *are* justified is shown in Rom. 5:1, 8:1 etc. The ‘hope of righteousness’ is not a desire or wishing for it. The *hope is* outside of

us, that is there is no doubt about it. Hope, in New Testament language is a ‘fixed certainty’. The Spirit, and faith have made this hope so real that we wait patiently not doubting. See Rom. 8:24f. Galatians who have given away to other (law) arguments are denying the work of the Spirit and faith. The word ‘hope’ has a certain emphasis on the day when the justification will become abundantly clear. However it will not just happen on *that* day. We do not wait for justification, but for its hope, ie. . fulfilment .

### The Leaven Of ‘Law-Way’

5:6 A verse over which there has been much controversy. What Paul is saying is this, ‘Circumcision can do nothing for you - but put you under law - deny the principle of faith by which you are justified. On the other hand ‘uncircumcision’ (ie. not getting circumcised) can *of itself* accomplish nothing’. A parallel to this is I Cor. 8:8 ‘Food will not commend us to God. We are no worse off if we do not eat, and no better off if we do’. Circumcision itself is irrelevant. The real thing which matters is *‘faith which worketh by love’*. It is around this that the controversy has raged. Notice that Paul has said ‘in Christ Jesus’. This places the situation in Christ. For believers it is *‘faith which worketh by love’*. Paul does not mean as some claim (i) Love is infused in us by God. (ii) This leads to the working of faith. He means that faith is active in (and through) love. Faith, however, *always precedes* love. Faith consists of *knowledge*, assent and trust. However faith is not without obedience, ie. in trusting and obeying. - his aspect is worked in love (cf. I Thess. 1:3, James 2:20-26). Of course this *‘faith is* opposed to *‘law* (circumcision) which does not work by love, but by legalistic pressure. Faith works in

the glow of love but is not ‘wrought’ by love.

5:7 Paul reminds them of their good running - as athletes they were pressing in - outstretched, then someone cut across them. How come? The reminder of having done well is a good device. (cf. I Cor. 9:24-27, Phil. 2:16) . ‘not obey the truth’. This means to live in the faith of the Gospel. Cf. Acts 6:7, Rom. 1:5, 10:17, 15:18 etc.) To go back to law is to disobey the truth.

5:8 *‘persuasion’* This is a sinister word, as though something has crept in to change them. Christ has not caused this!

5:9 I Cor. 5:6; technical use of yeast is of evil - eg. the Passover. It was a pervasive persuasive influence! So is law-way ever. The church can soon be corrupted, as the minds of persons within it. The effect of ‘yeast’ is seen in the sects. A ‘little’ is *far too much*. It is not a case of ‘an unusual’ but of a destroying power of evil.

5:10 Paul really does trust them - have ‘confidence’ in them, and probably on the grounds that he has again made clear to them the Gospel, drawn them back from ‘bewitchment’ and is certain that they will reject error. Whilst this makes them free, the one (or ones) troubling them is doomed to judgment.

5:11-12 Paul makes it quite clear that he does not preach circumcision. The Judaisers *have* to preach it in order (i) To maintain ‘law-way’. (ii) To escape persecution by the Jews (non-Christians). The moment circumcision is dropped the Jews will bitterly persecute. That is why Paul is persecuted. The offence of the Cross, I Cor. 1:18,23, will only cease when circumcision

takes its place again. Seeing *faith-way* is offensive to the religious (those taking ‘law-way’) there will always be an offence. Paul is the stronger, accepting the offence of the Cross. *verse 12* is a passionately strong verse suggesting something more than circumcision - emasculation. Such a thing, was done by raving pagan priests in unnatural passion. If you insist on circumcision as against faith, then you might as well not stop at circumcision. If these Judaisers would mutilate the Gospel, their own mutilation ought to follow.

### True Liberty Is The Life Of Love

5:13 This verse really starts a new section. In v.1, Paul has insisted they use their liberty. Having spoken again of the danger of law, and Judaisers, he now comes back to the *life of liberty*. This is not an easy life. Liberty must not be mistaken for license. We are *free* only to *serve*. cf. Rom. 6:17-19, 7:6. Perhaps there are two thoughts here (i) Some Galatians - perverting Paul’s gospel of liberty *are* being ‘anti-nomian’ and so giving grounds for the Judaisers to insist on law. (ii) Others are refusing liberty on the grounds that it is lawless. We dare not be without liberty; but must learn to live with it. Liberty, wrongly understood can give opportunity to the flesh. That is *not* Christian liberty. The true liberty is to ‘by love serve one another’. The flesh does not want to do this - it serves only itself. ‘By *means of love slave for one another*’ is not just talk. cf. Phil.2:4; Rom.12:3 etc.

5:14 Lev. 19:18 - an ancient summary, cf. Matt. 22:38f; Luke 10:25ff. cf. Matt. 19:19, 7:12; of the law, is true love. Paul is courageous - in an Epistle directed against legalism he still holds high the law. He cuts the ground from Rom.12:3

under any accusation of antinomianism. Let us not bypass the richness of love, as it is in the true law.

### True Liberty Is Walking In The Spirit

5:15 Paul may not mean here that they are biting and devouring. However he sees what license can cause. At the same time it may be there is uneasiness and guilt in the churches because they have begun to move away from the source of peace, and security - justification by faith. Be that as it may, the picture is of scavenging dogs around an eastern city, lips drawn back, teeth bared, snarling, snapping, then tearing each other to pieces. It is dreadful to contemplate but can happen as a result of the *leaven of evil*. Later we see in the list of the works of the flesh the terrible works of rivalry, jealousy, factions, wrath, divisions. These things come from the flesh. They had run well.. what now hinders them ?

5:16 The answer to this ‘going on in the flesh’ lies in a Spirit-controlled life. We now may be said to have reached the heart of the Epistle. To walk in the Spirit is what is required. What does *walk* mean? It is a manner of living - of life. It is a progressive thing - going forward. The verb *peripateo* means ‘to walk about’. Let all your walking be a Spirit-led walk. We have now come to the point where (even more than in 3:2-5) we have to see what is Spirit and what is flesh. Verses like Ephes. 5:18, Rom. 12:11, Phil. 1:19, Ephes. 6:18, Jude 20 all indicate there is a life which is either ‘in spirit (Spirit)’ or ‘in flesh’. Rom. 8:5-8 shows that the flesh is incorrigible. It is ego-seeking, self-extending. It is man-against-God. It is Capital ‘I’. In this Epistle it is the ‘law-way’ instead of the ‘faith-way’. Here the flesh

has ‘lusts’ or ‘cravings’. This is not a weak thing, but a terrifyingly powerful thing. Paul is saying there is ‘spirit-life’ or ‘flesh-life’.

### Flesh Conquered By The Spirit

5:17 Here is a terrible warfare. Flesh is incorrigible, spirit (or Holy Spirit) will not submit to flesh. Flesh craves for that which is for itself; spirit for that which is of a Spirit-life. The conflict is terrible, and the ‘*so that*’ shows us that this conflict prevents us doing what we would, or reaching that we would. The *will is* there to do what is right - but the *power is* lacking because of the flesh’s power. We see in Rom. 7:14-25 that indwelling sin is powerful, and the will, of itself, can accomplish nothing.

5:18 This leads us to the true experience of victory. Walking (being led) by the Spirit does not allow law to have any sway. Law and flesh are bed-fellows. Where the law is, flesh flourishes. You are in freedom, liberty. cf. II Cor. 3:17. When one is not under law one is in love, in liberty, in sonship, in forgiveness, and in all of these because of the Spirit. Flesh then has no power - for the curse, the pain, the shame of guilt is all gone. The spirit soars to its natural world. The excitement of fleshly things is not desired to cover the depression of the curse. We seek God’s great things.

### Flesh - Apart From Spirit - Works

5:19 ‘The works of the flesh are manifest’ ie. ‘public’. They are seen and recognised. ‘Works betray and advertise their source’. (Lenski). They soon become apparent. You can

not hide these. See also I Cor. 6:4-10, Rom. 1:18-32. Both these passages show us the origin of sin - ie. the life of the world. The works of the flesh are viciously powerful - more powerful than man's ability to control them. The three in V.19 are 'unchastity, unnatural vice, sexual excess'. These three are connected with sex and seem so powerful as to plunge man down headlong into destruction .

5:20 *Idolatry* and magic (witchcraft) are the first two mentioned. Whilst linked with Paul's age we need not pretend that these will be relevant only to that age. They are on the increase in the world today. The remaining 'enmities, strife, *jealousy*, anger, rivalries, divisions, sects' are too terrible to contemplate against the basic required unity of all mankind required - let alone that of the Body of Christ. It is right to pause here and to enquire into the basic cause of these. Flesh is responsible of course, ie. man-for-himself. Yet his insecurity can be traced back to law-way -- see I Tim. 1:8-10. Flesh is incorrigible - it hates the law, and perversely defies it - gets a fearful satisfaction in disobeying. It is however the division of mankind which is wrong. See its opposite in 3:26.

5:21 '*Envyings, drunkenness, revellings and like things* (all that sort of thing)' (not 'murders' as in AV) have a peculiarly modern ring. They were probably connected with pagan worship orgies. Many Christian churches in other lands are today faced with the temptations of joining in the festivities of pagans. However not one of these 'works' of the flesh really needs to be expounded -we know them all! However what continually concerns Paul is the number of believers who have the illusion that one can indulge in these things and still possess salvation. So see I Cor. 6:9f, Gal. 6:7,

Ephes. 6:6f etc. Paul has already told them, and now tells them again that those who 'practise' or 'perpetrate' such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God. *Kingdom of God*. 'Inherit' is a thought going back to ch. 3 and culminating in 4:7. We are heirs to the kingdom. cf. I Cor. 6:9, Ephes. 5:5. Paul has already told them, Acts 14:22, that it is through tribulation we enter the kingdom. Now he points to the *coming* kingdom. Flesh cannot inherit that kingdom.

### The Spirit - Apart From Flesh - Fruit

5:22 No doubt 'fruit' which comes naturally and easily as compared to 'works' which demand labour and effort. Whilst the 'fruit of the Spirit' is not effortless - in that moral growth and character development is demanded, yet there is nothing of that dreadful tension associated with evil works. The Spirit produces - it is *His* harvest. Note the word 'fruit' or 'harvest' is not fruits in the plural. We cannot '*walk in the Spirit*' or *be led by the Spirit*' ie. live life in the Spirit, and *not* produce a harvest. However, basically the *harvest* of the Spirit is from the *seed* of the Gospel cf. 6:7-8. *Works of the flesh* are perverse and wrong use of gifts of God. The *harvest is* right use and exercise of the benefits of the Gospel (through the Spirit).

1. **LOVE** (Agape). See 1 John 4:8-10 God is love, and produces love (I John 4:19) . Love revealed at the Cross (Gal. 2:20) produces love in us - flooded into us by the Holy Spirit (Rom.5:5). This love, possessed through the Spirit surpasses knowledge, Ephes. 3:19. Greater than faith or hope I Cor.13:13, it binds all in perfect harmony, Col. 3:14. All must be done in accordance with it - I Cor.16:14. Seen first in the church, Ephes.1:15; Col. 1:4; I Thess.3:12; it

is shown to all men, I Thess. 3:12. Notice that the response to God's love (the Gospel) brings love as a portion of the harvest.

2. **JOY.** *Is* directly linked with salvation - the 'joy of salvation'. (verb 'rejoice' 72 times, noun 'joy' 60 times in N.T.) See also Luke 19:6, I Thess. 1:6, Acts 8:8,39, 13:48. Gospel is always truly received with joy. Contrasts with the gloom of judgment, legalism of law.
3. **PEACE.** Has two aspects (a) Reconciliation with God (and so, man). (b) An internal response to forgiveness, justification. Calmness and tranquility come from 'no condemnation' - basic serenity .
4. **LONG-SUFFERING.** *Patience* but under deliberate attack and provocation. It is the basis of forgiveness, Prov. 19:11, of humility Eccles. 7:8, of fellowship Prov. 15:18, of wisdom Prov. 14:29. God is long-suffering - see Exodus 34:6, Ps. 103:8, 86:15. It is salvation II Peter 3:9,15. Christ so suffered - I Tim. 1:12-16. It leads to salvation Rom. 2:4-5. The peace of God, wrought by love, induces a state of preparedness to suffer I Cor. 13:4, II Cor. 6:6, I Thess. 5:14 etc .
5. **KINDNESS.** A special word in the O.T. has the sense of gentleness and patience - the opposite to 'high-handed'. We are inclined to think of God as severe in judgment - but Ps.119:39 says 'kind in judgment'. God shows His kindness in nature Ps. 85:12, 104:28, and in historical events Ps.145:7. It leads to repentance Rom. 2:4, cf. Tit. 3:4, and is an incentive to spiritual progress - I Pet. 2:3. We are enjoined to this kindness - Ephes. 4:32. Again it is a fruit of the Gospel - peace of mind, and so kindness to others.
6. **GOODNESS.** seems closely allied to kindness. It is the opposite to evil. It is deeper than kindness, being akin to love. It is *action* beyond attitude. Satan is called the *evil one* - he

does evil. God does good. For difference between righteous and good see Rom. 5 : 7 .

7. **FAITH.** A better translation is *faithfulness*, ie. loyalty and steadfastness, both to God and man - in relationships. It implies dependability. Cf. Titus 2:10. Christ is spoken of as faithful - Rev. 1:5, 19:11, Heb. 2:17, 3:2,5 etc. We are called to such - I Cor. 4:2, (stewardship) Matt. 24:45, 25:21 etc.
8. **MEEKNESS.** Opposite to pride, and at the same obedience to the will of God, see Matt.11:25-29 . It is the mark of the spiritual man, Gal.6:1 cf. James 1:21. To be obedient - Titus 3 : 2 .
9. **TEMPERANCE.** Self-control. We control ourselves under the discipline of love (the Spirit) cf. Titus 2:11. See Acts 24:25, II Pet. 1:6,I Cor. 7:9. In I Cor. 9:25 he who seeks for mastery practises temperance. See also Titus 1:8. Here it is especially linked with sex - as against the work of the flesh. It is absence of excesses. The law is not against these virtues. Indeed he who walks by the Spirit fulfils the law, and so does not come into *conflict* with it. The requirement of the law is continually being met.

#### The Cross, The Flesh And The Spirit.

5:24 'They that are Christ's'. This refers to *persons*. They are those who are walking in the Spirit. This verse must be understood at this depth. The *Cross* has put an end to all flesh life. (i) It has taken away the power of guilt. (ii) The life-line of flesh (self-life) has been cut. Those who are *in* Christ cannot abide *flesh-life*. They *see* - by faith - the act of the Cross is killing the flesh. They, in their wills - consent to that. The lordship of flesh has been broken. There is a consent of the *will* to this death.

‘Faith sees it there, and faith leaves it there’. (*Findlay. Expositor’s Series, ‘Galatians’ ad. loc.* ) Their relationship with this has been broken. ‘Have crucified’ is better ‘did crucify’ - ie. a past act *on our part*. ‘Affections’ - *passions* which operate in man even though he does not will it (*Mullers ad. loc.* ) ‘Lusts’ = *desires* or longings (cf. V.17) . We must never let these two have such a resurrection that they will again control us. However the meaning of the whole verse is that the *relationship* with the whole system and area of flesh has been severed, and the *life and walk of the Spirit* now fills the entire focus of the believer.

5:25 Paul now draws the threads together of his whole comparison of law and grace, of flesh and Spirit. ‘*If we live in the Spirit*’ - the ‘if’ is not that of doubt, but rather means ‘because’. The Spirit is the new principle of freedom, II Cor. 3:17. We have crucified the flesh life - then we are done with it, and let us live as those done with it! It is only the life of the Spirit. Thus it follows naturally that we will walk in the Spirit. His is a *new* manner of life. It takes *new* walking. By the Spirit of sonship, and sons are led by the Spirit, Rom. 8:14. Notice that the thought here is corporate ‘us’ - it is walking in line, in file, keeping one behind the other and being of necessity in the one step.

5:26 Probably this verse is connected with the section below. To be desirous of vain (empty) glory, to provoke and to envy are (V.20) works of the flesh. We are done with these.

## CHAPTER SIX

### The Life Of The Man Of The Spirit

#### ( i ) Care For Others

6:1 If V.26 of ch. 5 is linked here then it means that one who is overtaken in *this kind of fault* (as in V.26, vainglorious, provocative, envious) ought to be dealt with by the spiritual brother. However it may mean any kind of ‘fault’ or ‘trespass’. This is thought to be something which suddenly overtakes a person. Sin done wilfully, or ‘with a high hand’ cannot be dealt with in this way. Experience shows us that some are overtaken - surprised by a sin. ‘*Ye which are spiritual*’ it is not difficult to understand who these are. They are those who walk in the Spirit. It does not mean that some are highly exalted above others. Anyone who has the Spirit is ‘spiritual’, but more so those who walk in the Spirit, positively. (See I Cor. 3:1-3 ‘*sarkinoi*’ or ‘carnal’ in a good sense). *How to restore* is not told. The spiritual one will know. ‘the spirit of meekness’ ie. ‘gentleness’. No pride; no harshness. ‘Considering thyself’, cf. I Cor. 10:12. No pride in one’s own ‘not falling’. Some sins are such that we can fall into them also.

6:2 The words ‘burden’ of V.2 and V.5 are different. Of V.2. is a *shoulder-load* whereas V.5 is of a lighter nature. It may mean we help the brother who has stumbled with guilt, but probably means the vast burden a believer may find he has from time to time, and when he needs help from another. To do this is to love, 5:14.

6:3 If the reference is to 5:26 then it means a self-inflated man is nothing. He cannot deceive others into thinking he is anything. The

man who will not help his brother is self-centred, not fulfilling the law of love. Note the ‘for’ which links V.3 with V.2. ‘Deceiveth himself’ . This is the theme of sin’s deceit again pointed out.

6:4 If a man is not vainglorious, empty, self-conceited; if he helps another; if he lives humbly; if he produces fruit - then he has reason to be joyful - not otherwise!

6:5 What a man must bear, he ought to bear! No room for laziness. We are due to do that which is *our* duty.

### (ii) Care For Teachers

6:6 The meaning is clear. In these times of the apostolic age teachers were always helped by their pupils because they gave their time to preparation and teaching, and had no time to earn. The pupil in the secular situation quite happily helped - why any less in the teaching of the Gospel? Paul never sought such for himself, but he had an eye to the needs of others.

6:7 It is better not to connect this with V.6 as some do. V.6 has been sandwiched in between other ideas. In V.7 Paul returns to his conclusions on ‘spiritual things’. The choice of the life of the Spirit is mandatory - they *must* live the life of the Spirit. The principle of sowing is here enunciated. We might add that *there is nothing that is not sown*, ie. either good or bad. There is nothing that is sown that will not have a harvest - of some kind! To sow is to do, to act, to think. However the burden of the verse is ‘be not deceived; God is not mocked’. You can get away with *nothing*. See also 5:21, ICor. 6:9f etc.

6:8 The flesh ‘area’ is that of corruption. No thought, glance, action of this area can be either static or be transmuted into that which is spiritual. Its ‘harvest’ will be woe, misery, unhappiness, despair, remorse. The opposite to this is sowing to the Spirit. The *fruit of the Spirit* we have already seen - love, joy, peace, etc. Eternal life is just this - in quality. We need not be concerned with the *time - duration* concept of eternal, at this point. Parallel thoughts are seen in John 4:13, I Cor. 3:11-15 cf. II John 8, II Cor. 5:10, Phil. 3:10-14. We can say that this sowing is deliberate, ie. cf. Rom. 13:14, we can plan ahead for the flesh. We can also ‘plan ahead’ for the Spirit (spiritual life) . Rom. 8:12,13 make it clear that we are not indebted to the flesh to live after the flesh. The new man in Christ has a natural ‘bent’ towards the things of the Spirit.

### (iii) Caring For All - God’s People – All People

6:9 ‘well-doing’ ‘doing what is good’ that which is beautiful. It means the opposite to ‘to weary’ or ‘to give into evil’. It is a fight for the good (ethically) and an overcoming of the evil. To weary is to become slack, to give up the struggle. Paul’s picture is of the farmer who presses on to receive his harvest. Many a slip twixt the sowing and the reaping can take place. However there are two motivations for continued ‘well-doing’:- (i) The harvest *will* take place. Rewards are a motive in the New Testament and not an unworthy one (cf. refs. above - V.8). (ii) It will take place in ‘due’ time, ie. at the correct time, ‘the proper season’.

6:10 The ‘opportunity’ surely is the time between the *working for* the harvest, and the time *of* the harvest. We have an interim which is a privilege, in which we can work. The

word ‘good’ here is different to that of V.9. As in 5:22 - ‘goodness’ means something above the (so called) technical demands of the law. It is not only goodness in *attitude* but in *practice*. Whilst this is to be generally towards all men, it is to be particularly towards the ‘household of faith’. These are those who by faith (see 3:26f, 4:6f) have been born into the family of God. There is a household of God. See Ephes. 2:19 where the same word (*oikeious*) is used. The ‘therefore’ of this verse shows that it is connected with the working for the harvest. Whilst there must be no exclusivism in doing good to any one person, yet there must be a clear desire to build up the family of God - this is what matters. It is linked with the harvest. The concepts of adoption, sonship, brotherhood, and Fatherhood are of the very essence of the Gospel. It has been suggested that this may also refer to the assistance of the saints who are poor. Probably, however it is not confined to this matter .

6:11 There are two possibilities here (i) That Paul used an amanuensis (scribe) which was a common practice, and so at this point wrote in his own hand - actual letters which were large because of his (perhaps) damaged hand, or perhaps eye-ailment, or (ii) He wrote the entire letter by hand in large script, so that it would be understood to be his. It does not much matter - Paul authenticates the letter at this point. V.17. ‘stigmata’ may refer to fresh wounds (received at Philippi?) in which case this may have affected his writing. See also I Cor. 16:21ff, Col. 4:18, II Thess. 3:17.

### **The Last Word On The Enemies Of The Gospel**

6:12 Paul returns to the attack. Paul has

dealt effectively with the wrongness of their doctrine and action; now he wishes to deal with their motivation. It is, bluntly put, selfish. The meaning is clear that the Judaisers will have nothing of persecution, and especially that which comes from avoidance of circumcision, or the law in any of its details. The book of the Acts of the Apostles makes it clear that the struggle to admit Gentiles without circumcision was not simple. It meant the Jewish section of the church would be persecuted by the Jews if they refused to insist on circumcision. (See Acts 13:45,50, 14:2,5,19, 15:1f etc.) By showing the other Jews that they had led (Christian) Gentiles into circumcision, the Judaisers were deflecting attacks from themselves, such as Paul had continually known. It is clear that the ‘Cross of Christ’ does not demand circumcision (V.14), but is itself the vital power for redemption, without the aid of circumcision. Indeed this is the *offence* of the Cross - that it is grace, grace, and all of grace. Cf. I Cor. 1:21-23, Gal. 5:11.

6:13 Paul points out that the Judaisers (not the ‘Judaised’) themselves do not have a serious reverence for the Law. They are not meticulous in their observance. To save their skins, and to be thought something, they go hunting those whom they may cause to be circumcised. Their motive on any level is not pure. In another sense they glory in the ‘outward’ (the circumcised flesh), for there is no inward change or transformation, in which they might glory. Indeed they do not wish so to do.

6:14 To glory in the Cross is to glory in a criminal’s gallows - which is both foolish and irrational. Paul knows this, but also knows that God’s ‘rationality’ lies in the Cross. He has no other point of glorying (boasting). Others boast in circumcision - he boasts in the Cross. The world

(here, *kosmos*) is the same as in 1:4 (*aeon*) that system of evil, epitomising the rebellion of all evil. The Cross has incredible dynamic. It crucifies the world. The world is judged (cf. John 12:31, 16:11). Paul is crucified to the world. The ‘flesh’ dependence upon ‘self’ to accomplish salvation (as with the Judaisers) is now rejected. The judgment of the world, and man has taken place at the Cross. Paul is liberated from both. Free to be in Christ, through the Cross.

6:15 It is not then, a question of circumcision. Let him not boast (who is circumcised) in circumcision; neither let him boast (who is not circumcised) in non-circumcision. Neither saves; only grace. Out of the Cross emerges a different person, *a new creature*. cf. 5:6, I Cor. 7:19. This new creature (*ktisis*) - cf. II Cor. 5:17 - is linked with the Cross. In the power of the Cross (I Cor. 1:18) that moral and spiritual image of man which has been defaced by sin, is now renewed by forgiveness, justification, regeneration. There will be a new creation (new heavens, new earth) and that is future (cf. Rev. 21:1-5, Mark 14:25, II Pet. 3:13) but in this only the ‘new creatures’ shall live. This is why Paul boasts in the Cross, and in nothing else.

#### Commendation For The True Israel Of God

6:16 ‘*As many as walk according to this rule*’. . The verb to walk is the same as 5:25. It can mean to ‘hold with’ or ‘agree with’. The ‘rule’ (‘canon’) Paul has just stated of the Cross, and so the redundancy of circumcision is really the powerful principle of grace. Those who walk according to this will have their lives shaped by it at every point. Paul invokes peace and mercy upon them (it comes by grace) for they are walking in true

conformity. ‘The Israel of God’.. This is, at first a difficult phrase to understand. It means clearly that Paul has, by it, excluded the Judaisers. They are not the true Israel. Who then are the true Israel? The answer is - those who walk by this rule - ie. of grace. This does not exclude all who have ever done so, or will do so. Nor does it (deliberately) narrow it down just to the Christian Church, although this is the logical conclusion of what Paul says. The point of this benediction is that it excludes Judaisers. The whole problem of the Church and Israel is not raised here. Paul deals with it effectively in Romans 11. There is a well known Jewish prayer (*Shemoneh Esre*) ‘Grant peace, and salvation, and blessing; grant favour grace and mercy to us, and to all Israel, thy people’. This indicates that ‘as many as walk’ *and* ‘the Israel of God’ does not necessarily mean two groups of people.

6:17 Paul considers the matter closed; he will neither worry over it, nor will he be further troubled. He expects the matter is closed for them too. They accept his authority and direction. He has been ‘troubled’ as the Epistle shows. The scars or ‘stigmata’ are on him. We need not think of them as the mystical marks of Christ’s suffering, but as those inflicted upon him for Christ’s sake. II Cor. 11:23-28 makes it clear that Paul suffered many times. Up to the writing of this letter many of these things must have happened. The Judaisers bear no stigmata, and are afraid to do so. Paul has ‘proved’ himself by these scars. Whilst Paul does not here say so, it is clear that suffering is part of his life and doctrine, II Cor.4:10, Phil . 3:10, Rom . 8:17, II Cor . 1:5, Col .1:24 etc. Arguments against him collapse. Suffering proves the validity of his ministry. It is of the very essence of the Gospel.

- 6: 18 Paul's moving benediction is at the heart of the matter. The grace of which he has so powerfully spoken. It is 'the grace of the Lord of us - Jesus Christ'. Its origin lies in those three powerful words. Its seat is 'your spirit', ie. in the depths. Not grace theologically grasped, but, even deeper, experimentally lodged, and known. A fitting close to an Epistle, the heart of which is 'the grace of God'.