

## CHAPTER III

### GALATIANS 1:11-2:21 PAUL'S VINDICATION OF HIS GOSPEL MINISTRY

#### A. INTRODUCTION.

The importance of Paul to biblical Christianity is monolithic while, humanly speaking, his written contribution is both substantial and essential. What Moses was to the Law of Mount Sinai, Paul is to “the ministry of the Spirit” and “the ministry of righteousness” (II Cor. 3:8-9). There are two great objective testimonies to Jesus Christ, the Gospels and the Epistles of Paul. Deny the truthfulness of the Gospel record of Jesus Christ, as liberalism does, and you still do not explain the origin of Paul’s faith in a supernatural Christ. Paul teaches more about the purpose of Christ’s death, burial, and resurrection than any other human author of Scripture.

##### 1. Controversy concerning Paul is at the center of church history.

The crucial debates of church history about Christian doctrine have most often revolved around Paul’s teaching. J. Gresham Machen puts it this way: “[T]he great revivals [notably of the eighteenth century] were revivals of Paulinism. Protestantism [hence surely the Reformation]—in its practical piety as well as in its theology—was simply a rediscovery of Paul.”<sup>1</sup>

##### 2. Controversy concerning Paul is second only to Christ.

For the true disciple of Christ, such as Paul (Phil. 3:8, 13-14), there is a cross to be carried (Acts 9:15-16; 14:22), especially with regard to association with the most controversial person in human history (Matt. 16:24).

##### a. He was strenuously assailed during his lifetime in person, authority, and doctrine.

- (1) He is said to encourage licentiousness by nullifying the Law of Moses (Acts 21:21, 27-30; cf. Rom. 3:31; 6:1-2, 15; Gal. 2:17).
- (2) He is called “a real pest,” one who “stirs up dissension,” “a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes,” who “desecrates the temple” (Acts 24:5-6).
- (3) He is maligned as “unimpressive” in personal appearance, while his speech is declared to be “contemptible” (II Cor. 10:10).
- (4) He is railed against for opposing circumcision, for antinomianism in excluding the works of the Law and promoting salvation through faith alone (Rom. 3:8; 6:1; Gal. 2:16).

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<sup>1</sup> John Gresham Machen, “Jesus and Paul,” *Biblical and Theological Studies*, Princeton Seminary Faculty, p. 547.

- b. He is still opposed in doctrine and authority for a variety of reasons.
- (1) “Let us disassociate Jesus from Paul,” so that His simple ethics will not be confused with the apostle’s complicated doctrine that has rabbinic and Pharisaic roots.
  - (2) “Let us pick and choose in Paul’s doctrine; let us distinguish between his culturally conditioned opinions and the truth,” even though other human authors of Scripture are not similarly treated.
  - (3) “Let us subtract from Paul’s writings his Jewish stress on sacrifice and atonement that has distracted us from the pure, living example of Jesus and His parallel Sermon on the Mount.”
  - (4) Nevertheless, Paul’s response to all of this is the same sober reply, “the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man. For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but I received it by revelation of Jesus Christ” (1:11-12).
- c. He now strenuously refutes all of this antagonism, as the summary and then detailed argument of 1:11-2:21 indicates.

We will yet see a greater attack on Paul by Satan so as to weaken his gospel doctrine. Judaism has a particular dislike for Saul who became Paul because he was such a high level traitor to the Old Covenant! Beware of those who introduce a dichotomy between Jesus and Paul. So the apostle writes: “If anyone thinks he is a prophet or spiritual, let him recognize that the things which I write to you are the Lord’s [Jesus Christ’s] commandment (I Cor. 14:37).

## B. PAUL’S GOSPEL IS DIRECT FROM CHRIST, 1:11-24.

### 1. The origin of Paul's gospel in brief, vs. 11-12.

The only true Christian gospel is wholly of divine origination, quite apart from any human initiative, literary composition or input. It was designed in the courts of eternity past according to the good pleasure and kindness of God (Eph. 1:4-5; 2:10; II Thess. 2:13). Then, the triune God decreed the saving of certain sinners, according to economic function; that is, the Father contrived the plan decretively, the Son agreed to execute the plan redemptively, while the Holy Spirit agreed to uphold the Son’s execution of the plan dynamically and thus make application of this redemption to the sinners appointed to Him (John 6:37; 17:2, 9, 12, 24). In all of this, Paul’s individual incorporation into such a divine blueprint was strictly according to the particular, sovereign grace of God, which he joyously acknowledged (Acts 9:15-16; I Cor. 15:10). But further, His subsequent reception of this blueprint, for appointed distribution to the Gentiles, was strictly by means of direct, divine impartation, sans any human mediation, or even human expression of interest, vs. 11-16.

The practical result for today ought to be that the preaching of this same gospel should have the savor of its divine origin. Unlike the crassly earthly proclamation of the gospel

that is presently common in man-centered, utilitarian terms, the herald of this good news should convey the idea of a rich deposit bestowed from heaven (II Tim. 1:14). So Paul writes that, “we have this [gospel] treasure in earthen vessels, so that the surpassing greatness of the power will be of God and not from ourselves” (II Cor. 4:7).

a. It was not *devised* by man, v. 11.

“For I certify/declare/make known [γνωρίζω, gnōrizō v pais] to you, brethren, that the gospel which was evangelized/gospelized/preached [εὐαγγελίζω, euangelizō par apasn] by me is not according to/sourced in man.” It is not inherently within the nature of sinful man to conceive of such a message, any more than a man, with an illness diagnosed as mortal, could conceive of healing himself.

Man, so prone to boasting in meritorious works, and thus being alien to the thought of grace, could not devise a gospel of grace that excluded boasting and meritorious works. As David appears to have appreciated, God’s covenant grace is not after “the manner of man” (II Sam. 7:18-19 NKJV). Hence this gospel being “not according to man” means that it is, humanly speaking, inconceivable, that is not according to the natural course of human thinking, any more than a reprobate could think virtuously.

In other words, man, being so self-opinionated about himself, especially in terms of self-righteousness, could not conceive of a gospel that is founded upon the truth that, in reality, he is thoroughly depraved, and thus an enemy of God (Eph. 2:1-2; Col. 1:21). It is for this reason that revelation from heaven is absolutely essential in terms of God’s assessment of the problem and His determination of a satisfactory, effectual remedy. Hence the gospel, of necessity, must be wholly of God apart from human participation.

b. It was not *received* from man, v. 12.

“For I neither received [παραλαμβάνω, paralambanō v aais] it from man, nor was I taught it, but I [received/was taught] it through a revelation/unveiling [ἀποκάλυψις, apokalupsis n gsf] of Jesus Christ.”

(1) It was not *channeled* through man, v. 12a.

It was not mediated through man in general to Paul, that is by means of accumulated tradition, notable philosophers, learned fraternities, the ruling classes, legislative bodies, the United Nations!

(2) It was not *taught* by man, v. 12b.

It was not communicated through human contrivance and faculty, the University of Tarsus, Rabbinical instruction, or even a revered apostle from the mother church at Jerusalem.

## (3) It was revealed by Jesus Christ, v. 12c.

Here Paul is not concerned with Christ himself being the objective revelation, but rather the Revelator who subjectively deposited the definitive gospel message with Paul.<sup>2</sup> Hence the gospel which Paul preached and wrote about came by direct, unmediated, unsullied revelation. Indeed the inference is strong here that Paul, in not being taught by man, was in fact “taught” by means of this divine gospel communiqué, even from the very lips of Christ. With this purpose in mind, it is possible, though by no means certain, that, distinct from Christ’s appearance on the road to Damascus, He later manifested Himself to Paul in a remote region of Arabia (1:17).

Thus, as Ananias was told in a vision by Christ at Damascus, Paul is a “chosen vessel of Mine, to bear My name before the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel; for I will show [ὑποδείξω, hupodeixō] him how he must suffer for My name’s sake” (Acts 9:3-5, 15-16). Furthermore, Paul has “received of the Lord” specific instruction that surely is embodied in his epistles (I Cor. 7:10-12, 25; 11:23; 14:37; 15:3; II Cor. 11:17; Eph. 3:3). There may also be connection here with the fact that Paul has, through “visions and revelations of the Lord,” also been “caught up into Paradise and heard inexpressible words, which a man is not permitted to speak” (II Cor. 12:1-6).

## 2. The origin of Paul’s gospel in detail, vs. 13-24.

By way of introduction, Paul’s testimony of his conversion through sovereign revelation is a fine model for any Christian who testifies before men of God’s work of saving grace in their lives. It also emphasizes that in his becoming a Christian through this sovereign invasion of his rebellious soul, so the gospel he believed came to him by means of that same sovereign initiative. In this regard, we will also consider Paul’s other conversion accounts (Acts 9:1-19; 22:3-16; 26:9-18; I Tim. 1:12-17).

## a. A testimony of Paul’s zealous, religious self-righteousness, vs. 13-14.

Obsessive fervor is often demonstrated by not only clinging sectarian devotees but also rabid ideologues, yet in itself there is nothing wrong with such intense devotion. The Son of God evidenced holy zeal, ζῆλος, zēlos, for His “Father’s house” (John 2:14-17). So the church in Laodoea was called upon by Christ to “be zealous and repent” (Rev. 3:19). Nevertheless the Jews had “a zeal for God, but not in accordance with accurate/perceptive knowledge [ἐπίγνωσις, epignōsis]” (Rom. 10:2).

## (1) His ministry of persecution, v. 13.

“For you heard [ἀκούω, akouō v aaip] of my [former] manner of life [ἀναστροφή, anastrophē n asf] when in Judaism, that beyond measure/in the extreme [ὑπερβολή, huperbolē n asf], I was persecuting [διώκω, diōkō v iais]

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<sup>2</sup> J. Gresham Machen, *Notes on Galatians*, pp. 58-59.

the church and was ravaging/destroying [πορθέω, portheō v iais] it.” As a Pharisaic zealot (Phil. 3:6), Saul had few equals. He was officially commissioned by the high priest in Jerusalem for the purpose of opposing the Christian infiltration of Jewish synagogues (Acts 9:1-2). However his zeal in this sphere turned out to be directed toward a worthless cause, even “rubbish/dung,” σκύβαλον, skubalon. Yet such an estimate resulted from a contrasting “view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord” (Phil. 3:7-8). One of the marks of true conversion is that painful reflection upon a squandered, misguided past, such as the prodigal son surely experienced, in contrast with blessed residency in his Father’s house.

(2) His ministry of self-advancement, v. 14.

“And I was advancing [προκόπτω, prokoptō v iais] in Judaism beyond many of my own age/contemporaries [συνηλικιώτης, sunelikiōtes n apm] among my race [γένος, genos n dsn], abounding in zeal [ζηλωτής zēlōtēs n nsm] for the traditions [παράδοσις, paradosis n gpf] of my ancestors/fathers [πατρικός, patrikos adj gpm].” Young Saul was a great apologist for Judaism, probably having already debated with many Christians. Here his zeal was cloaked in the status of high Jewish culture, especially a great rabbinic education, having been “educated under Gamaliel,” (Acts 22:3), whose tolerant, judicious spirit (Act 5:33-40), notwithstanding being a Pharisee, does not appear to have been passed on to this particular student.

Paul further describes this prelude in his conversion, that is his transition from self-righteousness to the primary movement of Christ’s free righteousness, as follows: “Circumcised the eighth day, of the nation of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the Law, a Pharisee; as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to the righteousness which is in the Law, found blameless” (Phil. 3:4-6). The same intense commitment to Roman Catholicism was exhibited by Martin Luther as a devout Augustinian monk, that is until he found the gates of paradise opened to him through the knowledge of the gospel of God’s free grace embraced through faith alone.<sup>3</sup> So Paul now leads us through those same gates in vs. 15-17. Jonah likewise passed through those gates when, from a deep watery grave, he cried out, “Salvation is from the Lord” (Jonah 2:9).

b. A testimony of God’s sovereign grace, vs. 15-17.

What a profound contrast is introduced here between Saul’s carnal energy, that animation expended in vain religion, and God’s saving work, the sheer wonder of its contrasting freeness revealed by means of the pen of Paul! “But when God,” contrasts the vainly attempted discovery of religion by man with the revelation of the effectual saving power of God. Paul loves to refer to this radical distinction (Rom. 3:19-26; 5:7-8; I Cor. 1:26-27; 15:56-57; Eph. 2:1-5; Phil. 3:4-9; Col. 1:21-22). A similar contrast is made between the universal darkness of the human

<sup>3</sup> Roland H. Bainton, *Here I Stand*, pp. 49-50.

soul and “the One who has shone in our hearts to give the Light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ” (II Cor. 4:6).

Furthermore, the process of conversion here takes us back to the conception of Paul in the mind of God, and consequently conception in his mother’s womb, certainly at a time when the apostle was unable to make any conscious response (cf. Rom. 9:10-13, re Jacob and Esau). Then, subsequent to birth, there is God’s oversight through an earthly legal wilderness in the midst of which particular grace invades, probes, arrests, and takes possession for the purpose of active ministry, for which Paul was predestined, vs. 15-17.

(1) Sanctification from his mother’s womb (pre-conversion), v. 15a.

“But when He [God], who had set me apart [ἁφορίζω, aphorizō par aansm] from/out of my mother’s womb.” This was divine consecration or baby dedication at the point of birth, akin to that of Jeremiah (Jer. 1:5) who was similarly “foreknown/called,” v. 5a, and then “consecrated before birth,” v. 5b. This was not salvation or conversion, any more than was the case with John the Baptist in his mother’s womb (Luke 1:15, 41).<sup>4</sup> Yet it was God’s sovereign claim being made upon Saul, followed by call and conversion, that did not make allowance for his choice or cooperation. It meant that all that subsequently followed from his life, particularly the gospel he proclaimed and his epistles, would have the same divine origin.

(2) Calling through grace (pre-conversion), v. 15b.

“And called [καλέω, kaleō par aansm] me through His grace [χάρις charis n gsf].” Here the aorist of kaleō refers to God’s particular, effectual call based upon his electing decree (Rom. 1:6-7; 8:28, 30; 9:24; 11:29; I Cor. 1:2, 9, 24, 26; Gal. 1:6; Eph. 4:4; II Thess. 2:14). It encompasses that period from his birth onward to his conversion and appointment by God as an apostle to the Gentiles. Thus, from his birth onward, indeed even from conception, the Spirit of God guided him and called him with a particular call that was present at the stoning of Stephen (Acts 7:58; cf. 26:14), but became effectual on the road to Damascus. However, in biblical terms, justification by faith, by the very nature of the term, concerning Jeremiah, John the Baptist and Paul, only became effective when they first, savingly, consciously believed. For Paul that occasion occurred immediately after the Lord Jesus appeared to him and he enquired “Who are you, Lord?” It was then that, as Paul testifies, God the Father “revealed His Son in me” (Gal. 1:16).

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<sup>4</sup> The problem here with attributing conversion to John the Baptist in his mothers womb is generated by a too simplistic importation of meaning from passages like Romans 8:14; Titus 3:5-6, where the definite article clearly identifies the third person of the Trinity, whereas here in Luke 1:15, 41, also v. 67, the definite article is not used. In this regard, refer to Nigel Turner, *Grammatical Insights Into The New Testament*, pp. 17-22. Further, the expression “filled with the Holy Spirit” has a varied idiomatic use in the New Testament so that Peter, having been “filled with the Spirit” at Pentecost (Acts 2:4), is subsequently “filled with the Spirit” (Acts 4:8). Moreover, in Ephesians 5:18-19, being “filled with the Spirit” involves, not a passive reception, but active use of means of grace, that is “psalms and hymns and spiritual songs.” Most likely John the Baptist was under the influence and shepherding of the Holy Spirit at that time, as were his mother and Father.

“Grace” here must be distinguished within the love of God. The love of God is that active expression of His goodness, which is the admirable quality of His holy Person. However this active love of God may be distinguished first, according to His *benevolence* or love as welfare, second His *longsuffering* or patience of love, third, His *mercy* or relieving love, and forth His *grace* or love toward man as a great sinner (I Tim. 1:13-16), even from a mother’s womb (Ps. 51:5; Rom. 5:12, 19).<sup>5</sup>

(3) Revelation of Jesus Christ (conversion/commissioning), vs. 15c-16a.

“[God] was pleased [εὐδοκέω, eudokeō v aais] to reveal [ἀποκαλύπτω, apokaluptō inf aa] His Son in me in order that I might preach/gospelize Him among the Gentiles.” Here is where “the pleasure of God,” or “the kind intention of His will” (Eph. 1:5-9) focuses, that is the revelation of Christ to, but especially “in” Paul (4:19; Rom. 8:9; Eph. 4:11-13; Col. 1:27). Surely God delights in fashioning something beautiful in holiness, after His own character, from something ugly in unholiness. So Paul, along the Damascus road and under the ministry of Ananias at Damascus, was found by Christ, and thus saved, justified, and regenerated. He became *right* with God through Christ’s atoning sacrifice and *alive* unto God through the enlivening Holy Spirit (3:3); this is what constitutes a biblical Christian, and thus qualified Paul to “preach [εὐαγγελίζω, euangelizō] Him among the Gentiles.” He does not appear to have had any post-conversion “baptism in/by the Holy Spirit.” A true gospel minister proclaims that concerning which he knows in his own life. Further, it may be a worn cliché, yet the expression concerning a believer being “saved to serve” is very much to the point here. Being “called through grace” involves the responsible vocation of being a “herald/proclaimer/gospelizer” of that same grace. So Paul was predestined to be a preacher to a specific mission field, the Gentiles, just as the Lord Jesus appointed him (Acts 9:15-16), yet not to the exclusion of the Jews. Whatever distinctive spiritual gifts we are given, surely we are commissioned to use them for the glory of He who saved us and sends us, cf. v. 24. Yet all of this is ultimately according to divine “revelation,” even as Peter was instructed by Christ (Matt. 16:16-17), and not self-discovery or the pursuit of man-based religion.<sup>6</sup>

(4) Sanctification to Arabia and Damascus (post-conversion), vs. 16b-17.

“I did not immediately consult/gain information [προσανατίθεμαι, prosanatithemai v amis] with flesh and blood, nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles [ἀπόστολος, apostolos n apm] before/preceding me, but I went away to Arabia and again returned [ὑποστρέφω, hypostrephō

<sup>5</sup> When John Bunyan writes of “The Jerusalem Sinner Saved, or Good News for the Vilest of Men,” based upon Luke 24:47, he intends that his writing be a help for despairing souls, showing that Jesus Christ would have mercy in the first place offered to the biggest sinners, as especially found in Jerusalem. *Works*, I, pp. 67-103.

<sup>6</sup> In *The Pilgrim’s Progress* John Bunyan distinguishes between Christ being sovereignly revealed in true conversion, as is the case in Hopeful’s testimony, and the absence of such a revelation in the false, scoffing testimony of Ignorance. *Works*, III, pp. 155-56, 58-59.

v aais] to Damascus.” Subsequent to his Damascus road experience, Paul was under no compulsion to seek earthly advice, to compare notes with esteemed Christian leaders, for one was his Lord to whom he yielded allegiance (Eph. 4:5; I Cor. 8:6), and by whom he was set apart, sanctified.

(a) *Sanctified calling*, v. 16b.

Paul “did not immediately consult with flesh and blood,” the inference being that he did meet with the glorified Lord Jesus. Like Moses, Elijah, and John the Baptist, he learned of God while being alone with God. He was ordained of God, not men, not even the twelve apostles. The further inference is that not only Paul’s conversion, but also the resultant message he proclaimed, was wholly of revelation from Christ who came from heaven. Therefore, whatever subsequent consultation he participated in after his conversion, with regard to reception of gospel truth, was solely with this exalted heavenly Christ.

(b) *Sanctified training*, v. 17a.

While the natural suggestion from associates at Damascus might have been to “report” to Jerusalem, Paul’s retirement to Arabia may indicate seclusion on account of divine command, then more public exposure and pastoral nurture. Though there is no indication of the specific time spent in Arabia and then Damascus. “Arabia” in Hebrew originally meant desert. Perhaps for a year the apostle-in-training, the one to be divinely “sent,” first learned from his “Sender,” even within the environs of Mt. Sinai as the supplanter of Moses. Here, possibly, he met with Christ and received detailed revelation, that is “Emmaus road” type instruction along with a resultant “warmed heart” (Luke 24:26-27, 31-32).<sup>7</sup>

(c) *Sanctified fellowship*, v. 17b.

From the Lord’s desert seminary classroom Paul moves back to internship in Damascus, for perhaps two years. Here he was further shepherded by Ananias, who tradition reveals to be one of the Savior’s seventy disciples, a bishop/elder of the Damascus church, and ultimately a martyr. Here, for “many days,” Paul cut his teeth as a Christian preacher with great effect, declaring that Jesus is “the Son of God” (Acts 9:19-21). So he “kept increasing in strength and confounding the Jews who lived in Damascus by proving that this Jesus is the Christ.” As a result, “the Jews plotted together to do away with him” (Acts 9:22-23), so that with this prompting he came to Jerusalem.

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<sup>77</sup> See J. B. Lightfoot’s article, “St. Paul’s sojourn in Arabia,” *Commentary on Galatians*, pp. 87-90.

c. A testimony of many witnesses, vs. 18-23.

It is a common misunderstanding that Paul commenced his main missionary journeys soon after his conversion. Not so, for his initial period of obscurity and training involved not only three years in Arabia and Damascus, but also several years in the regions of Syria and Cilicia, including beloved Damascus. The fact that Paul delayed in going to visit the apostles and leaders in Jerusalem is strong evidence that he felt no dependence on them or necessity for submission. Yet they did testify to his authority.

(1) The testimony of Peter, v. 18.

“Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to make acquaintance [ἱστορέω, *istoreō* inf aa] with Peter, and remained [ἐπιμένω, *epimenō* v aais] with him fifteen days.” Escaping in the night from death threats in Damascus, Paul stays with the head of the twelve for fifteen days in Jerusalem. It seems that to begin with, even the twelve would not meet him since, probably suspecting a subtle plot, “they were all afraid of him, not believing that he was a [genuine] disciple” (Acts 9:26). However Barnabas intervened and convinced Peter that Paul’s conversion was genuine. Then followed his meeting with Peter, this being an association of equals (cf. 2:11). Thus the new apostle freely and passionately testified in the city of David (Acts 9:27-29), that is until he had again to flee to Caesarea and Tarsus from death threats on the part of “Hellenistic Jews,” who probably had instigated the death of Stephen (Acts 6:9-12). For Christ’s sake, his past friends had become his enemies!

(2) The testimony of James, v. 19.

“But of the other apostles, I did not see [any of them] except James, the brother of the Lord.” Thus Paul also met with “James, the Lord’s brother” (Mark 6:3), the eventual leader or president of the Jerusalem church (Acts 15:13; 21:18), not being one of the twelve. But as with Peter, there appears to have been no conflict in discussion, only delightful fellowship, and probably exchanged testimonies concerning the radical change that had come to their lives. Even then there was probably discussion concerning Paul’s distinctive calling to evangelize the Gentiles. However there is no attempt on the part of Peter or James to pull rank, so to speak, and call upon Paul to submit to their authority.

(3) The testimony of Paul, v. 20.

“(Now what I am writing to you, behold/I make bold before God that I am not lying [ψεύδομαι, *pseudomai* v pmis].)” This testimony, an extreme step, is in the form of a solemn oath made in the presence of the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, since the Jewish legalists have maligned Paul’s authority. So he affirms, as a sober pledge, his acceptance as an apostle amongst the Christian leaders of Jerusalem. It may also be implied that the readers are invited to make enquiry with the church at Jerusalem for verification.

- (3) The testimony of the churches of Syria and Cilicia, vs. 21.

“Then/afterward I went into the regions [κλίμα, klima n apn] of Syria and Cilicia.” So rancorous was the hatred of Paul by the Jews at Jerusalem that the church leaders whisked him away to Caesarea, where he sailed for Tarsus, the capital of Cilicia, his home town. Here Paul spent eight years in relative obscurity, according to Sir William Ramsay’s chronology, yet doubtless in Christian fellowship, while witnessing to the Gentiles and Jews. Again, there was no need for him to report back to Jerusalem or the apostles. Then, sought out by Barnabas, Paul is brought to Syrian Antioch, probably on account of vibrant ministry to Gentiles being conducted there, where he spends a fruitful year prior to his first missionary journey (Acts 11:19-26).

- (4) The testimony of rumors throughout Judea, vs. 22-23.

But for all of the personal obscurity concerning Paul throughout the broad environs of Jerusalem, one prevalent rumor spread, namely that “the faith” which he once attempted to destroy is now “the faith” that he has embraced. The issue here is the radical change in his life, not a discrepancy in his new message. His gospel is that commonly acknowledged by the apostles; they will continue to confirm his gospel (2:7-9).

- (a) The lack of recognition of Paul in Judea, v. 22.

“I was [continuing] unknown [ἄγνοέω, agnoeō par ppnsm] in person to the churches/messianic fellowships in Judea which are in Christ.” In other words, Paul did not fall under the authoritative umbrella of oversight conducted by the mother church in Jerusalem. There had been no formal instruction from the apostles and elders at the Jerusalem church concerning Paul being officially recognized there, and thus being under their authority. Rather, for “the churches in Judea,” the ministry of Paul was one of obscurity, rumor, not accredited recognition.

- (b) The reputed conversion of Paul in Judea, v. 23.

“But only they were hearing [ἀκούω, akouō par panpm] that, ‘He who was persecuting [διώκω, diōkō par pansm] us is now preaching/gospelizing the faith [πίστις, pistis] which he once tried to destroy [πορθέω, portheō v iais].’” Amongst those messianic fellowships that had previously feared the persecution of Saul, now they had simply learned, by way of heresay, of his radical conversion in the north and his enthusiastic evangelistic ministry. Other than that, there had been no understanding of Paul being in submission to the Christian leaders in Jerusalem.

- d. A testimony to God’s glorification through Paul, v. 24.

“And they were glorifying [δοξάζω, doxazō v iaip] God in/because of me.” To sum up, Paul declares that his conversion has resulted in God being glorified in

Judea, which happy result is in itself authenticating. There has been a new chorus of praise offered to God on account of such a remarkable turn of events. They, the Judeans, have rejoiced at the power of this one gospel, for if such an enemy of Christ as Paul can be saved, then who could possibly be excluded? Hence Paul is declaring that the non-gospel which the Galatians have been listening to is not the gospel pervading Judea, but another gospel, a "little [corrupting] leaven," 5:9, introduced by trouble-makers, 1:7; 5:12, flesh mutilators, 6:12. In other words, Paul is saying: "Listen to the praise of God's grace down south; check it out! These false-gospellers in the north have no such fruit, except division, carnality, the collection of foreskins, the advocacy of Moses along with Christ.

### 3. Application.

The main point here is that the fruit of the effectual preaching of the true gospel is the praise and glorification of God, not the evangelist. Note in 6:12 how the false gospellers "desire to make a good showing in the flesh." Their ministry focuses on themselves; true evangelistic ministry focuses on the glory of God in His saving of sinners.

- a. What then does Paul's gospel mean to you, not as a man to be followed, but rather as the personification, the embodiment of the power of the gospel of the grace of God? Do his epistles and experience represent, as Luther describes it, "the opening of the very door of heaven" for you? In his spiritual testimony, *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners*, John Bunyan relates how, in first studying the Bible he could only digest historical sections and not Paul's epistles. Unconverted, although more sensitive in his soul, he later testified that, "the epistles of Paul were especially sweet and pleasant to me."<sup>8</sup>
- b. Do you, as a result of embracing this same gospel, have Paul's identical jealous regard for this gospel's purity and proclamation? Do you understand the distinction here between the true gospel and non-gospels as a major issue, not a mere matter of perspective or necessary adjustment or semantics?
- c. Have you stopped seeking the contribution of self-righteousness, legal conformity, trusting in your religious performance? If you pursue these matters you will not be bringing glory to God. People will attempt to glorify you. But to embrace the only true gospel results in God being glorified. Then we sing with Horatius Bonar:

Thy works, not mine, O Christ,  
 Speak gladness to this heart;  
 They tell me all is done,  
 They bid my fear depart.  
 To whom, save Thee, who canst alone  
 For sin atone, Lord, shall I flee?

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<sup>8</sup> Bunyan, *Works*, I, §§ 29, 46, pp. 9, 11.

Thy wounds, not mine, O Christ,  
 Can heal my bruised soul,  
 Thy stripes, not mine, contain  
 The balm that makes me whole.  
 To whom, save Thee, who canst alone  
 For sin atone, Lord, shall I flee?  
 Thy cross, not mine, O Christ,  
 Has borne the awful load  
 Of sins that none could bear  
 But the incarnate God.  
 To whom, save Thee, who canst alone  
 For sin atone, Lord, shall I flee?  
 Thy death, not mine, O Christ,  
 Has paid the ransom due;  
 Ten thousand deaths like mine  
 Would have been all too few.  
 To whom, save Thee, who canst alone  
 For sin atone, Lord, shall I flee?  
 Thy righteousness, O Christ,  
 Alone can cover me;  
 No righteousness avails  
 Save that which is of Thee.  
 To whom, save Thee, who canst alone  
 For sin atone, Lord, shall I flee?

### C. PAUL'S APOSTLESHIP IS AUTHENTIC, 2:1-21.

It is interesting to surmise as to the argumentation that the Judaizers from Jerusalem used when they attempted to persuade the Christians of Galatia that their legalistic gospel was to be heeded. Most likely they deceitfully claimed authority through association with the apostles and leaders of the mother church. Probably their spiel was as follows: "We come from the mother church in Jerusalem, with authority vested in us by the original twelve apostles. Don't listen to that Paul any more; he is an antinomian who depreciates the Law of Moses; he is a libertarian who was too eager in Antioch to make concessions with the Gentiles; he is not a true apostle; why he has hardly been in Jerusalem, and, when he has come, trouble seems to follow his every step (Acts 9:26-30)."

1. As an apostle, Paul is received by the apostles, vs. 1-10.

Hence Paul must respond with more genuine, authentic credentials, and his proof is his high rank at the significant first Jerusalem Council (Acts 15:1-11) where his gospel, indeed the apostolic gospel, triumphed over the "false brethren," v. 4.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> The period of fourteen years here is either from Paul's conversion to his "famine visit" to Jerusalem (Acts 11:30; 12:25), or from his fifteen day visit, 1:18, to the Jerusalem council of Acts 15. We follow the latter view here, it being more commonly believed, as by Hendriksen, Lightfoot, Machen, contra Alford, namely that Paul now recounts more details of his visit to the Jerusalem council.

- a. His gospel is verified as Jerusalem authenticated, vs. 1-2.

Even this later return of Paul to Jerusalem was not according to a request or apostolic directive; Peter and James had no such authority over him; rather Paul was directed solely according to “revelation,” v. 2.

- (1) He works and moves independently as an apostle, v. 1.

“Then, after a period of fourteen years, again I went up to Jerusalem with Barnabas, also having taken along [συμπαλαμβάνω, sumparalambanō par aansm, as a companion] Titus.” Note the force of the “fourteen year” hiatus between Paul’s visits to Jerusalem. He was saved, then spent the next three years in Arabia and Damascus, after which he saw Peter and James during a brief stay of fifteen days in Jerusalem. Since that occasion he has not seen another apostle for fourteen years. Then Paul did visit Jerusalem with Barnabas, who was saved six years before his conversion on the Damascus road, over whom, according to Luke (Acts 15:2), he now has precedence. He also brought Titus with him, an uncircumcised Greek.

- (2) He works and moves dependent on “revelation,” not the directives of the apostles, v. 2a.

“I went up according to/because of [a] revelation/unveiled truth [ἀποκάλυψις, apokalupsis n asf].” Exactly what this “revelation” was we simply do not know, except that it seems implicit that the Lord Jesus gave this specific direction to Paul. There is divine concern that the Jerusalem church needs protection from Judaizers (Acts 15:1); the gospel is in danger of pollution in Antioch as well. So who is better prepared to be of assistance than Paul? At Antioch he and Barnabas have witnessed great blessing amongst the Gentiles (11:19-26). We might conclude that integral to Paul’s “success” as a missionary was his submission to the revealed will of God (Acts 13:1-4; 16:6-10; 18:8-11; 23:10-11). And so it is the case with every Christian, who subordinates circumstances and advice (Acts 21:8-14) to the known purpose of God.

- (3) He submits his gospel to the scrutiny of the chief apostles to have it verified, v. 2b

“And I submitted to them the gospel which I proclaim/herald among the Gentiles, yet according to privacy/oneself [κατά, kata pre ἴδιος, idios adj asf] to those who were notable/esteemed/of reputation [δοκέω, dokeō par padpm], lest in vain [κενός, kenos adj asn] I might run [τρέχω, trechō v pass], or I had run [v aais].” From v. 9 we learn that “James and Cephas [Peter] and John were reputed to be “pillars/steadfast leaders” in the church at Jerusalem. Hence to these in particular Paul privately submitted, for scrutiny, the gospel which he preached. By this means, a resultant, united front would better deal with the legalists. Most likely Paul spoke with great, uncompromising specificity so as to distinguish the false from the true; he surely testified of his conversion at Damascus, his distinctive calling to the

Gentiles, and the “revelation” he had received, while Peter added his support by recounting his Joppa and Caesarea experience Acts 11:1-18).

Paul was not in doubt as to the truth of his message, but it was to his advantage, especially in Antioch, to have his gospel vindicated as apostolic. However, knowing the legal friction generated by “the false brethren,” it was also imperative that he consult with the leaders for the sake of united ministry between Jerusalem and Antioch. This was astute conflict resolution! As Bruce explains,

His [Paul’s] commission was not derived from Jerusalem, but it could not be executed effectively except in fellowship with Jerusalem. A cleavage between his Gentile mission and the mother-church would be disastrous; Christ would be divided, and all the energy which Paul had devoted, and hoped to devote, to the evangelizing of the Gentile world would be frustrated.<sup>10</sup>

The result was that James, Peter and John “recognized the grace that had been given to Paul,” and as a consequence extended “the right hand of fellowship,” vs. 9. Now the stage was set for a council of agreement at which Peter would declare, “But we [Jews] believe that we are saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, in the same way as they [Gentiles] also are” (Acts 15:11). With the authority of Scripture being assumed here, the true gospel becomes the ground of true fellowship.

- b. His mission to the Gentiles is verified as apostolic, vs. 3-10.

Assuming that Acts 15:1-29 records details of Paul’s visit to Jerusalem as here described, first let us now consider Luke’s record of events that precipitated this Jerusalem Council. To begin with, the church at Antioch is troubled, vs. 1-2a. Legalists from Judea (Jerusalem) claim that faith in Christ plus circumcision are needed to be saved. No doubt they claimed authority, having come from the mother church, and at the same time rejected Paul’s apostleship. Paul and Barnabas, while uncompromisingly defending the gospel of pure grace, are sent to Jerusalem to obtain a ruling from the apostles and elders. Possibly some of the legalists returned with them, vs. 2b-3. It is likewise found that the church at Jerusalem is also troubled with legalism. Paul and Barnabas relate the blessings at Antioch, especially amongst the Gentiles. However, the legalists attack again, probably being confident of their support in supposedly home territory. Note that now it is plainly stated that the issue is not simply circumcision, but the Law of Moses being adhered to as a whole, vs. 4-5 (Acts 15:5). So the council deliberates, vs. 6-29.

By way of application, consider what the spirit of today might be with regard to resolving such a divisive issue. Consider the pressure that Paul encounters, especially from those who for the sake of “peace” desire some “give and take” on both sides. Today we frequently hear of “negotiation”, “appeasement,” “conciliation,” “arbitration,” “compromise,” and “détente [easing of strained relations].” It is often suggested that the best course is the middle of the road, neither to the left or right. Give way for the sake of peace and harmony! However

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<sup>10</sup> F. F. Bruce, *Galatians*, p. 111.

Paul dealt with such a crisis, as described in Galatians 2:3-5, in a most uncompromising manner.

(1) Paul's decisive response against the legalists, vs. 3-5.

It ought to be acknowledged that there is a place for conciliation amongst the people of God under certain circumstances, as with Abraham and Lot (Gen. 13:7-12); Jacob and Laban (Gen. 31:43-55); Paul and Mark (Acts 15:36-41; II Tim. 4:11). On the other hand, there cannot be any compromise where foundational truth is concerned (Ps. 11:3).

(a) He seeks to make practical confirmation of the gospel, v. 3.

“But not even Titus, who was with me, being a Greek, was compelled [ἀναγκάζω, *anankazō* v *apis*] to be circumcised [περιτέμνω, *peritemnō* inf *ap*].” Paul's pastoral heart also desired the clearest evidence of the truth of his gospel for the flock at Antioch. Hence Titus, having already proved the validity of his witness in Antioch, is ideal for giving testimony in Jerusalem and then returning as living defense of the gospel.

1) The witness of not being circumcised.

Titus, Paul's “partner and fellow-helper” (II Cor. 8:23), was a trusted worker and intimate friend; he carried Paul's letters and appears to have personally sorted out the immorality problem at Corinth (II Cor. 7:13, 15; 12:18). As a Greek, on this occasion he becomes the perfect embodiment, by his life and ministry, of “the righteousness of God apart from the Law . . . being witnessed by the Law and the prophets; even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe” (Rom. 3:21-22). Note that it is imperative for Paul that he not only be uncircumcised, but also outwardly manifest in his life this righteousness of Christ, otherwise his testimony is in vain. In the same way it is imperative that those who claim to have liberty in Christ today should also manifest this same righteousness of God (Rom. 2:26).

Was the essence of the problem the fact that these legalists would have “compelled” Titus to be “circumcised”? No, since in Acts 16:3 Paul has Timothy circumcised at Lystra. But why? So that Timothy might testify to Jews that while he was now a Christian, he had himself previously been a Jew through his mother, though his father was a Greek. For Paul, in this situation, circumcision was in no sense considered to be a necessity for salvation or sanctification. It was a practical necessity for witnessing. However in the *Epistle to Titus*, there is no indication by Paul that Moses

must be engaged for the purpose of spiritual growth.<sup>11</sup> The real question that arose at Jerusalem was: “Is obedience to the Law of Moses necessary to justification and sanctification or not?” In particular, does the requirement of an external observance contribute toward our justification and sanctification with God? This becomes a timeless question that transcends the particular ritual demands of Judaism.

- 2) By way of illustration, are people similarly insistent today about the saving effect of a particular ritual? Not concerning circumcision, but consider the following:

. . . .the custom of blessing the [baptismal] water is of very great antiquity, and soon became universal in the Church. And very naturally so, because the water which is used in baptism is raised by the work of the Holy Spirit to the dignity of an instrumental cause of our regeneration. . . . Moreover, it must be clearly understood that the child dying without baptism is definitely lost.<sup>12</sup>

Baptismal regeneration, such as here by Roman Catholicism, is the insistence that water baptism, *ex opere operato*, contributes toward salvation; it is legalism that is equivalent to that threatening Galatia.

Likewise consider the supposed words of Jesus Christ as he speaks to the Mormon founder, Joseph Smith: “Verily, verily, I say unto you, they who believe not on your words, and are not baptized in water in my name, for the remission of sins, that they may receive the Holy Ghost, shall be damned.”<sup>13</sup> However, Paul would never allow the gospel to be compromised concerning faith and the necessity of water baptism any more than he would compromise on the necessity of faith and circumcision.

But further consider *additional* demands for secured salvation and sanctification that are also said to be necessary, whether by direct statement or strong inference, such as tithing, dietary regulations, Sabbath keeping, meeting attendance, dress codes, worship forms, etc. Some of these matters may be of practical importance and involve personal preference. But they are not mandatory, saving, or inherently sanctifying.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Hendriksen declares the principal purpose of this epistle to be, “the promotion of the spirit of *sanctification* in congregational, individual, family, and social relationships.” *Commentary on I & II Timothy and Titus*, p. 42. However it is to be noticed that law is absent, by either quotation or intimation, as a means toward this end, cf. 1:14; 3:9.

<sup>12</sup> George D. Smith, ed., *The Teaching Of The Catholic Church*, II, p. 770; I, p. 385.

<sup>13</sup> Joseph Smith, *Doctrine And Covenants*, 84:74.

<sup>14</sup> With regard to tithing, some maintain that a Christian should minimally give a tenth of his income to his local church. Concerning food, *Seventh Day Adventists* promote kosher diets, others vegetarianism. Concerning Sabbath keeping, consider a recent book by Joseph Pipa, *The Lord’s Day*, pp. 63-64, 79-81. “This episode [of the man stoned to death for gathering wood, Num. 15] does not teach, as some suggest, that we may not cook on the Lord’s day or use electricity, although the application of the principle involved

- (b) He seeks personal confrontation for the cause of the truth of the gospel, vs. 4-5.

So Paul is directed by “a revelation” to confront the root cause of the problem of leavening legalism, and reaching Jerusalem he is not disappointed in terms of anticipated opposition.

- 1) Paul's personal confrontation, v. 4.

“But [it was] on account of false brethren [ψευδάδελφος, pseudadelphos n apm] brought in alongside/privately/secretly [παρείσακτος, pareisaktos adj apm], who had come in alongside/entered/slipped in [παρεισέρχομαι, paraiserchomai v aaip] to spy out/secretly examine [κατασκοπέω, kataskopeō inf aa] our freedom/liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, in order to enslave us/make us captive [καταδουλώω, katadouloō v faip, to the Law of Moses].” The legalists subtly entered the Jerusalem church without being noticed, in a manner Jude similarly describes concerning apostates who “crept in unawares,” meaning “to slip in through a side door” (Jude 4a), v. 4a. They attempted to destroy our liberty in Christ, 5:1, 4, by means of stifling, legalistic demands that call for endless qualification, usually by “experts,” who hypocritically do not uphold what they demand (Matt. 23:1-4), v. 4b. They snare believers and lead them into bondage and frustration and paralysis and fear. Why? Because, as Paul later writes, “I testify again to every man who receives circumcision, that he is under obligation to keep the whole Law [totally, perfectly, eternally],” 5:3; cf. Acts 15:5.

- 2) Paul's steadfast cause, the truth of the gospel, v. 5.

“But to them, not for an hour/a brief moment did we yield [εἴκω, eikō v aaip] in submission [ὑποταγή, hupotagē n dsf] in order that

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would preclude going out to buy groceries on Sunday, even if we had run out of food. Of course, the death penalty for Sabbath-breaking was a special part of the Mosaic economy which does not apply to us. [?] . . . [S]ome say that The [Westminster] Shorter Catechism forbids physical rest when it requires ‘the spending the whole time in the publick and private exercises of God’s worship.’ Does this mean it is wrong to take a nap on a Sunday afternoon? To answer the question you must determine the purpose of the nap. Is it to refresh you so that you can pursue with renewed vigor the purposes of the day, or is it a choice of idleness because you do not want to do anything else? . . . This principle of necessity also helps us answer the question about the use of electricity. . . . [O]ur use of electricity is not forbidden by the prohibition to Israel about kindling a fire. A number of things necessary for a proper keeping of the Lord’s day are provided by electricity. We need electricity to heat and cool our houses and church buildings and to provide light. Thus, it is not contrary to the principle of the Sabbath to turn on a light switch or a heater on a Sunday.” Concerning eating when traveling we read: “Some prefer to purchase sandwich material to keep in their [motel] room and others to spend the day in fasting. In my opinion, hotel/motel restaurants, like hospital or university cafeterias, are necessities in our society, but fast food establishments and restaurants not connected to a hotel/motel ought to be closed,” pp. 63-64, 79-81. Concerning church gatherings, some fellowships mandate attendance at every meeting. Concerning dress codes, some churches smile on certain western traditions, and frown on nonconformity. Concerning worship forms, the traditional is almost regarded as apostolic.

the truth of the gospel would permanently remain [διαμένω, diamenō v aass] with you.” He does not compromise, or steer a middle course for the sake of a peace and unity that would in fact turn out to be false. “Not for an hour” means “not in any degree/in the slightest” did Paul and Barnabas give way. Foundational truth cannot be compromised else it ceases to be foundational truth with the result that the whole doctrinal edifice collapses, v. 5a. Their cause is “the truth of the gospel,” that is bottom line truth which is “not negotiable,” v. 5b.

The prevailing notion today concerning truth is that it can be regulated by subjective reasoning, what I opine about and feel, what the evolving times and culture call for; e.g. “this means to me,” or “this is true for me;” thus truth is flexible, relative, situational. And the liberal approaches Scripture with the same frame of mind.

Nationally, moral truth is increasingly being determined by consensus, not external, divine revelation. But Paul is captive to the fixed “truth of the gospel,” revealed truth, truth outside of Paul or any human group, objective truth, the truth of God by concrete revelation. For Paul to give in on this point in any respect is to see Christianity become assimilated into Judaism; to stand fast is to guard the future of the gospel. Listen to Paul, in vs. 15-16, declare this gospel truth with exactness, negatively and positively, in all of its works-rejecting, self-denying, grace exalting purity: “We are Jews by nature and not sinners from among the Gentiles; nevertheless knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the Law but through faith in Christ Jesus, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, so that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the Law; since by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified.”

(2) The apostles’ decided approval of Paul’s Gentile mission, vs. 6-10.

Probably the clearest proof that Paul’s “submission of the gospel he preached,” v. 2, to the leaders of the Jerusalem church was not personal subservience or enforced capitulation is found in the verses that follow. He was cooperative, but never submissive.

(a) Paul learns nothing new from the apostles, v. 6.

“But from those seeming to be something [of importance], (what kind they were makes no difference [διαφέρω, diapherō v pais] to me); God does not receive [is not swayed by the] face/appearance of man). For those seeming [to be something] add nothing [προσανατίθεμαι, prosanatithemai v amip] to me.” Note the NIV translation here: “As for those who seemed to be important – whatever they were makes no difference to me; God does not judge by external appearance – those men added nothing to my message.” Paul is not intending to tear down

apostolic authority or demean his brothers in Christ. Rather he is concerned about answering those who opposed his authority by maintaining that, “James, Peter, and John had a more intimate acquaintance with Jesus than Paul ever did, and thus are more reliable and authoritative in matters of gospel doctrine.” In saying, “those who were of reputation contributed nothing to me,” was to use strong language, but it was for the cause of Christ’s revelation to him of “the truth of the gospel,” not self-aggrandizement.

- (b) Paul’s gospel is recognized to be identical with that of Peter, vs. 7-9.

Clearly James, Peter, and John were recognized as “pillars/steadfast leaders” of the Jerusalem church, yet Paul was not intimidated by them on account of the revelation he received directly from Christ, especially his distinctive commission to the Gentiles. Quite likely Christ, in ministering to Paul, also mentioned Peter’s distinctive commission to the Jews.

- 1) Paul and Peter received the same gospel for different fields, v. 7.

“But on the contrary [τοῦναντίον, *tounantion pro asn*], seeing that I had been entrusted [πιστεύω, *pisteuō v ppis*] with the gospel to the uncircumcised [ἀκροβυστία, *akrobustia n gsf*], just as Peter [had been entrusted] to the circumcised [περιτομή, *peritomē n gsf*].” Neither had authority over the other, though both had distinctive authority in their spheres of calling. Both had “been entrusted” by Christ with separate callings concerning the one gospel, though not with rigidity, for Peter also preached to Gentiles in Israel (Acts 10:24-48) even as Paul did to Jews in Gentile lands (Acts 9:15). Consider the gospel that Paul preached at Pisidian Antioch (Acts 13:37-39; Rom. 3:24), which is identical to the gospel that Peter preached at Jerusalem (Acts 15:11; I Peter 3:18). It is good for the church of Christ when Christian workers can accept different spheres of calling in others while giving primary attention to their own missionary endeavors. Authoritarianism is then kept in check. Peter and Paul were complementary in ministry, not in conflict as one old German school of theology taught, under F. C. Baur. During the Reformation this principle was evident with regard to the distinctive ministries of Luther, Calvin, Knox, Zwingli, and in the eighteenth century concerning the Wesleys, Whitefield, Newton, Simeon, even as our Savior taught (Luke 9:49-50).

- 2) Paul and Peter were equally effective with this same gospel, v. 8.

“(For He who has worked [ἐνεργέω, *energeō par aansm*] through Peter in apostleship to the circumcised has also worked through me [in apostleship] to the Gentiles [ἔθνος, *ethnos n apn*]).” There was divine authentication of each ministry since both Peter and Paul were directed by God’s effectual “working.” Peter was

effective amongst the Jews (Acts 2:41; 3:11-4:4). Paul was effective amongst the Gentiles (Acts 11:25-26; 19:9-10; 22:17-21; 28:1-10). In a similar way God was pleased to bless George Whitefield as well as John and Charles Wesley with much fruit, doctrinal differences notwithstanding. Peter needed some correction and humbly received it from Paul (2:11-14). Unfortunately John Wesley needed some correction, though he would not receive it from George Whitefield! However both ministries had divine validation. After all, what is the use of any ministry except the blessing of God rest upon it in an identifiable, that is fruitful manner.

3) Paul was acknowledged by James, Peter, and John, v. 9.

“And knowing/acknowledging the grace that was given to me, James and Cephas [Peter] and John, those seeming/appearing [δοκέω, dokeō par panpm] to be pillars/steadfast leaders [στῦλος, stulos n npm], they gave to me, also Barnabas, the right hand of fellowship, in order that we [might go] to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised.” Along with Barnabas, the acknowledgment that Paul had sought for is received, that is the right hand of fellowship from James, Peter, and John. Here the gospel of free grace receives mutual endorsement; the gospel of the Judaizers is repudiated; the fellowship between Jerusalem and Antioch is cemented. James, the Lord’s brother and probable the author of the Epistle of James, endorses Paul’s gospel and mission. Peter, author of two Epistles, the probable source of the Gospel of Mark, endorses Paul’s gospel and mission. John, the beloved, author of the Gospel of John, three Epistles, and Revelation, endorses Paul’s gospel and mission. So Paul and Barnabas triumphantly, joyously return to Antioch (Acts 15:22-35), along with “chosen men” (Acts 15:25) who bring with them an official apostolic letter. And what are the results?

- a) Confession, and condemnation of the Judaizers, v. 24.
- b) Vindication of the only true gospel of free grace, vs. 25-26.
- c) Clarification of practical necessities, vs. 28-29.
- d) Rejoicing, unity, and peace amongst the brethren, vs. 31-33.

(c) Paul is exhorted to remember the poor, v. 10.

“Only concerning the poor [πτωχός, ptōchos adj gpm, they asked that] we might remember [them], which very same thing also I was diligent/eager [σπουδάζω, spoudazō v aais] to do.” The only apostolic request from Jerusalem is the exhortation “to be remembering [present tense] the poor,” that is the Judean church. But Paul does not now assert his apostolic independence; rather he gladly agrees to help, and in

this way gives practical demonstration of his gospel of free mercy. Consequently he did not neglect to follow through on his promise of assistance (Rom. 15:26; I Cor. 16:1-4).

2. As an apostle, Paul rebukes an apostle, vs. 11-14.

a. Introduction.

(1) The recurrence of legalism following genuine conversion.

For the Christian, one of the most delusive problems with legalism is the assumption that we are now beyond regressing into such a former state of bondage. After all, we have now come to appreciate the glorious liberty of the children of God (Rom. 8:21), liberty through grace that brings us under the royal administration of Jesus Christ. Formerly we were subject to bondage as slaves in the legal administration of Moses. But now that is past and beyond us. However, nothing could be further from the truth. If such backsliding was able to reclaim and enslave Peter, as well as Barnabas, as is now all too evident, then it could happen to any authentic child of God!

One of the significant problems that arises here is that truth professed is at the same time truth that is not consistently expressed in daily life. Clearly Peter had already received much instruction concerning the universal ramifications of the gospel that, in including the Gentiles, therefore excluded the necessity of conformity to the Mosaic administration. At the house of Simon the tanner in Joppa, the house of Cornelius in Caesarea, and in deep discussion with Paul and the other leaders at the Council of Jerusalem, Peter had substantial, graphic instruction, both divine and human (Acts 15:11). Yet, the question remains as to how effecting that vital truth was in his life.

So at this stage we need to ponder, not merely the *fact* of this reversionism, but also the reasons *why* such relapses occur. Therefore we have to ask ourselves not only *what* Peter did, but *why* he acted so inconsistently. Or in plain and simple terms, how is it possible for genuine Christians, having become oriented toward the free grace of God, nevertheless to act so legalistically and thus hypocritically?

(2) The recollection of events following the Council of Jerusalem.

The original mission from Antioch to Jerusalem appears to have been wonderfully successful. The true gospel has been upheld while church unity is maintained as a consequence. So Paul, Barnabas, Titus, and representatives from Jerusalem, bringing with them a letter signed by James, Peter, and John, have returned northward so that Acts 15:30-35 declares the happy results at Antioch. There is joy at the encouraging message of the Gentiles' freedom in the gospel, vs. 30-31. Paul and Barnabas return to their ministry of solid teaching and preaching of the Word of God, v. 35. So from Galatians 2:11 it appears that Peter soon after visited the church at Antioch, not only to encourage the Gentiles out of fatherly interest, but also witness at first hand the remarkable awakening that had taken place as well as the Jewish/Gentile harmony, which in fact he fractures! It is interesting that solid church

tradition, such as from Eusebius and Chrysostom, indicates that Peter was in fact the founder of the congregation at Antioch.

It is a reasonable supposition then that Paul may have been away from Galatia for a time since otherwise the problem would not have advanced to such a divisive and influential stage. For this reason, when Paul reappears, he must act decisively, boldly, and publicly, with all of the force of his apostolic authority, and that before the very presence of another esteemed apostle.<sup>15</sup>

b. Peter's activity denounced by Paul, v. 11.

“But when Cephas [Peter] came to Antioch, I opposed [ἀνίστημι, anistēmi v aais] him to his face because he was to have been condemned [καταγινώσκω, kataginō skō par ppnsm].” Paul makes it plain, again for the sake of the cause of the gospel, that he is equal in rank as an apostle, though here he shows superiority with regard to character and courage; he fears no church dignitary or man. In the military, you are only able to rebuke those who are of lesser or equal rank. Thus here fallible Peter is hardly a “Pope,” yet necessarily is to be condemned, not so much by Paul and his bystanders as by the obviously hypocritical actions themselves, as the perfect passive of kataginōskō, suggests.<sup>16</sup> So a face-to-face encounter was required, indeed in this case a *public* rebuke was necessary, v. 14, particularly because the whole assembly at Antioch had become involved.

c. Peter's activity declared by Paul, v. 12.

“For before certain men came from James, he [Peter] was eating together with the Gentiles; but when they came, he was withdrawing [ὑποστέλλω, hupostellō v iais] and separating [ἀφορίζω, aphorizō v iais] himself, fearing those from the circumcision [party/persuasion].” On his own, Peter seems to have assimilated well with the Gentile Christians in Antioch by eating with them and acknowledging that they were equally citizens of the household of God. He probably testified of his humbling, soul-enlightening Joppa/Caesarea experience. However, from association with James in Jerusalem comes a delegation of professing Jewish Christians, perhaps in need of observing in Antioch the Gentile liberty they had found so hard to accept. Furthermore, these visitors were so intimidating with their legalism, as is often the case, that even Peter cowered before their authoritarian condemnation. Now he sat at a strictly Jewish table and only ordered from the kosher menu! So the visitors felt satisfied with their legal imposition and conquest. As a result, compensation for Peter's humiliation was the assurance that his Jerusalem reputation would remain intact. Surely that was what mattered most to him, not the required courage to withstand those who would destroy the gospel!

Peter's problem here was not in the realm of his gospel principles; they had become established (Acts 10:1-48), confessed (Acts 15:11) and acknowledged (Gal. 2:7-9). What really troubled him was the lack of application and activation of those principles. His precepts had been formulated, but not the consistency of

<sup>15</sup> E. D. Burton, *Galatians*, p. 101.

<sup>16</sup> J. B. Lightfoot, *Galatians*, p. 111.

his practice. Even before the Jerusalem Council Peter had been well taught by divine intervention at Joppa/Caesarea that it was acceptable before God for a Jew to eat with Gentiles (Acts 11:1-18). Hence what exactly was it that influenced Peter's actions in a manner contrary to that which he knew to be right?

- (1) It was pride, the exaltation of self at the expense of the truth of God. What would his reputation be like amongst his Antioch kosher visitors, as well as in Jerusalem? Would that he had rather considered what would be the result of his duplicitous actions amongst the Antioch saints, that is division amongst the brethren by means of kosher and non-kosher tables!
- (2) It was a sudden flush of his former self-righteousness concerning those despicable, unworthy Gentiles. It was a reflection of his former erratic, unstable ways, again reflecting principles without practice.
  - (a) Once Peter was a man courageously walking on the water, then suddenly he faltered in faith and cried out, "Lord, save me" (Matt. 14:28-30).
  - (b) Once Peter was a man privileged to behold Christ transfigured on a high mountain, along with Moses and Elijah. Then, distressed at the departure of these two Old Testament saints, and "not realizing what he was saying," he proposed tents so that they would prolong their stay. But the Father emphatically responded, "This is My Son, My Chosen One; listen to him." Then Moses and Elijah were found to have departed, and Peter kept silent (Luke 9:28-36).
  - (c) Once Peter was a man boldly confessing, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." But almost immediately after this confession had been revealed from heaven, he was rebuked by this same Christ for blatant carnal self-assertiveness, being exposed as speaking under Satanic influence (Matt. 16:16, 21-23).
  - (d) Once Peter was a man boasting that he would lay down his life for Christ. Yet only a few hours later he repeatedly claimed, even with cursing, that he was not His disciple (Mark 14:70-71; John 13:37; 18:17, 25, 27).
- (3) It was the recurrence of former legalism that is still possible while we are in this body of flesh and inhabit this present world; it needs constant gospel exposure and condemnation through local church ministry, as Peter later confessed (I Pet. 4:6; II Pet. 2:17-19).

Perhaps a Christian today believes he is still under the dominion of the Ten Commandments of Moses; then what does he do with Deuteronomy 13:6-11, concerning infringement of the second commandment, cf. 5:8-9? He realizes that he is under a new master who is a far better teacher concerning idolatry (Rev. 21:5-8; 22:15; cf. I Cor. 6:9). It is this Son of God who will judge idolaters at a future day of judgment. The standard has not changed,

but the administration of the righteousness of God has. So we sing as Charles Wesley leads us:

Thou, O Christ, art all I want;  
More than all in Thee I find.

d. Peter's activity defined by Paul, vs. 13-14.

One could easily reconstruct the arguments of the disturbing legalists as follows: "But Peter, having been saved by Christ, you need the Law for guidance in your daily life since even He declared he had not come to destroy the Law (Matt. 5:17), but to fulfill, that is explain its spiritual implications. Even Paul has declared that the Law is holy, righteous and good (Rom. 7:12). Without the restraint of the Law there will be a tendency toward loose living."

(1) It was destructive to the Antioch church, v. 13.

"And the rest of the Jews joined him in hypocrisy [συνυποκρίνομαι, sunupokrinomai v apip], so that even Barnabas was lead away together [συναπάγομαι, sunapagomai v apis] with their hypocrisy." The freedom of many Jewish Christians was turned into bondage again because of Peter's contaminating "hypocrisy," sunupokrinomai, meaning collectively, in hypocritical fellowship, "to answer from under cover of pretense, as an actor using a mask." Even Barnabas backslid, "a good man, and full of the Holy Spirit and of faith" (Acts 11:24), being swept away with a tide of Mosaic sanctions. Legalism is extremely divisive of the Body of Christ, and can even invade leadership. In the current Reconstructionist Movement, being a revival of Galatianism, in which, by way of example, there has been division over whether the death penalty for homosexuality should be stoning or an equivalent method (Lev. 20:13)! The Jews of the church at Antioch, having formerly eaten with the Gentiles, now revert to earlier traditional separatism, and doubtless close critical scrutiny of others who fail to conform. The double standard begins to prevail, for Peter having said one thing, is now doing another. Harsh authoritarianism takes over (5:7, 12) from a humble spiritual walk (5:22-26; 6:12-13). Calm gives way to chaos; peace gives way to partisanship!

(2) It was destructive of the truth of the gospel, v. 14a.

"But when I saw that they were not walking straightforwardly [ὀρθοποδέω, orthopodeō v paip] in the face of [πρός, pros pre] the truth of the gospel." But what was Paul's motivation in the heat of this moment? It was certainly not for the purpose of demolishing Peter's reputation for the sake of his own, as if apostolic rivalry was the issue. He will himself soon make a mistake, it would seem, in his repudiation of John Mark (Acts 15:37-40; II Tim. 4:11). No, as at Jerusalem, Paul's main concern continues to be "the truth of the gospel" (2:5), and especially the evident effect of that saving grace upon the believer's life, being the manifestation of "straight [spiritually healthy/orthopedic] walking." This was not a time for conciliation, but confrontation. Titus was later exhorted to use this approach in certain

situations with those who “contradict, . . . especially those of the circumcision, who must be silenced because they are upsetting whole families” (Tit. 1:9-11).

- (3) It was plainly hypocritical in view of his principles, v. 14b.

“I said to Peter in the presence of them all, ‘If you [as a] Jew, exist [ὑπάρχω, huparchō par pansm, in daily living as a] Gentile, and do not live like a Jew, how is it that you compel [ἀναγκάζω, anankazō v pais] the Gentiles [to live like] Jews?’” Paul’s passion is for believers who are being led to run crookedly, haltingly rather than straight, consistently, and that by a “pillar/steadfast leader” of the church. Therefore, public betrayal must be met with public exposure. Peter here has been claiming liberty for himself in one situation while mandating bondage to Judaism in a different setting. Surely what Paul addressed also did not escape the scrutiny of the Gentiles at Antioch, for having experienced open fellowship with Jews, suddenly they find themselves ostracized! Suddenly the air of grace at Antioch has become polluted with choking hypocrisy born of stifling legalism. The essential features then of this Law-living are:

- a. Concern with the outer rather the inward state, what is outwardly perceived rather than what is inward motivation (5:12; 6:13).
- b. Concern with partisan conformity, “you must do such and such because of others,” rather than on account of commitment to the gospel, come what may.
- c. Lack of concern with conflict between the outer and inward states, which is productive of guilty tension, or worse a hardened conscience; only the outer is important!
- d. A tendency toward dictatorial authoritarianism, especially by a pharisaic, ecclesiastical class of leaders that regulates Christian life rather than the Word concerning the gospel.

So, by way of application, having maintained Lord’s Day liberty in a personal sense, we then direct the lives of others telling them they are prohibited by God from participating in such liberty. While not personally tithing according to liberty, we constrain others that they should tithe. While being exact in making legal demands mandatory for others, we rationalize when these same demands are personally applied. So we give the impression that Christians ought not to visit a convenience store on a Sunday, nevertheless we sneak in to make purchases when nobody is watching! So Paul was well aware of the fact that “those who are circumcised do not even keep the Law themselves,” 6:13. The Lord Jesus was just as critical at this point as Paul ever was. Addressing the Jews in Jerusalem he declared, “Did not Moses give you the Law, and yet none of you carries out the Law?” (John 7:19). The very nature of the perfection that the Law demands but cannot produce, and the imperfect nature of fallen man, provide the essential ingredients and chemistry for hypocrisy. But true gospel doctrine provides an

entirely different *modus operandi* and dynamic, the power of grace through the indwelling Holy Spirit (John 13:34; II Cor. 5:11-15; Gal. 2:20; 6:14; Eph. 4:31-5:2; Heb. 13:9; I Pet. 5:12; I John 2:6-8; 4:19).

By way of a postscript, we happily note that Peter seems to have accepted the rebuke of a fellow apostle, as being deserved, since he does not appear to hold a grievance against Paul. Rather he continues to have high regard for him as a wise and beloved brother, even if his writings sometimes contain “some things hard to understand” (II Pet. 3:15-16).

3. As an apostle, Paul declares the apostolic gospel, vs. 15-21.

Having authoritatively, forcefully made his point concerning Peter’s blatant hypocrisy and capitulation to legalism, Paul now moves to the doctrinal heart of Peter’s problem and that of the church in Galatia, namely the essential “truth of the gospel,” vs. 5, 14. From here in v. 15 to the end of this chapter Paul will deal with various aspects of this gospel according to the terminology of justification by faith alone. Only when we understand man’s tenacity in maintaining justification by means of self-righteousness will we appreciate why Paul has to consider this truth with such emphasis and detail.

a. Introduction

It is a vitally significant, and yet commonly neglected fact, that the term “gospel,” meaning “good news/announcement,” presupposes “bad news.” For a doctor, there must first be diagnosis before there can be prognosis. Certainly this is true for Paul where the gospel of Romans 3:21-26 presupposes the exceedingly bad news of 1:18-3:20. So here Paul assumes this same fundamental truth that must nevertheless be brought to the fore, especially in this humanistic twenty-first century. The gospel truth of justification by faith alone that Paul now proclaims in detail has no meaning unless the hopeless sinful condition of man, and his consequent alienation from God, is first deeply appreciated.

Simply put, there is only one true and living God, perfect in holiness and righteousness, who calls for perfect holiness and righteousness from man, on pain of deserved judgment (Lev. 11:44). This being the case, man is confronted with the gravest of predicaments in his soul, and ought to cry out in agony like Job, “How can a man be in the right before God?” (Job 9:2; cf. 4:17; 15:14-15), especially when he is unclean (Job 14:1-4; 15:14-16; 25:4). Unless an honest, personal understanding of deep-dyed corruption in the soul is understood, along with the fearful prospect of standing guilty before the inescapable judgment of God, the gospel has little real meaning. Remember that Job was a religious man, yet he despaired of trusting merely in his religion, and especially that of his friends! So now Paul especially focuses on the religious sinner, who has an exceedingly delusive false hope, particularly within the environment of Judaism and Christianity. He well recalls the terrible delusion he embraced as a fervent, self-righteous Jewish rabbi.

b. The doctrine of justification by faith defined, vs. 15-16.

Note how Paul now enters into Peter's problem with a gracious, inclusive "we," which is therefore an acknowledgment of his own ongoing Jewishness. Indeed Paul and Peter remain authentic Jews having circumcision of the heart and flesh (Rom. 2:28-29). Yet here Paul is also writing broadly with regard to how the Jews esteemed themselves, in all of their strict religiosity, in comparison with the crude, barbaric Gentiles.

(1) Justification by faith alone includes distinctive sinners, v. 15.

"We [indeed], by nature/birth [φύσις, phusis n dsf], [are] Jews, and not sinners from among the Gentiles." Here Paul admits a distinction between Jewish and Gentile sinners that ultimately is of little consequence. "We are Jews by nature" could probably be expanded to, "We are respectable Jewish sinners by nature [ cf. v. 17], and not outrageous sinners like the Gentiles." By this he means that the Jew was not given over to raw pagan excesses, including idolatry, sexual perversion, infanticide, polytheism, etc. The Law of Moses had kept the lid on certain extremes, nevertheless Israel had cultivated their sinfulness into a religious artform that caused "the name of God to be blasphemed among the Gentiles" (Rom. 2:17-24). As a consequence the ultimate question has arisen: "How does being a sophisticated religious sinner count in the presence of God?" And of course for Paul the answer is that it counts only for judgment, since, "all who have sinned under the Law will be judged by the Law" (Rom. 2:12).

Nevertheless Paul distinguishes the Jew, such as Peter, himself and the Judaizers, as "not being sinners among the Gentiles." For what it is worth, there was a "grossness" in the sinning of the Gentile that was repugnant to the Jewish mind, and thus he was preserved from certain temporal/material problems. The fearful claims of God's holiness reigned him in. The emphasis on cleanliness had inbuilt benefits. Yet in spite of the advantages of being a Jew (Rom. 3:1-2), Paul still "charged that both Jews and Greeks are all under [captive to] sin" (Rom. 3:9).

(a) By way of application, this truth is especially humbling when it is realized that our privileges in life do not make us *lesser* sinners and without need of salvation (Rom. 3:22-23). They simply make us *different* sinners. Likewise even our trials in life do not qualify us for mercy from God (Gal. 3:28). Perhaps you are educated, have a high I.Q., know much about religion and the Bible. Then as an educated sinner you need to be justified before (made right with) God just as much as the uneducated laborer, the derelict tramp. You have status, position, breeding, culture. You need to be justified before (made right with) God just as much as the half-caste, the orphan, the rejects of society. You have lived a respectable life in society; you have been faithful in marriage; you have always gone to church; you have obeyed the law of the land. Nevertheless your focus is on self, not God; you judge by your own standards, not His righteousness. God is a mere utility, a token confession, while in reality you are far from Him. You

need to be justified before (made right with) God just as much as the condemned prisoner, the crude pagan!

- (b) By way of illustration, consider Toplady's hymn:

Not the labors of my hands  
 can fulfil Thy Law's demands:  
 Could my zeal no respite know,  
 could my tears for ever flow.  
 All for sin could not atone;  
 Thou must save, and Thou alone.

Queen Victoria's beloved husband, the Prince Consort, Prince Albert of England, constantly repeated this hymn on his death-bed, stating, "if in this hour I had only my worldly honors and dignities to depend on, I should indeed be poor."

Nothing in my hand I bring;  
 simply to Thy cross I cling;  
 Naked come to Thee for dress;  
 helpless look to Thee for grace;  
 Foul, I to the fountain fly,  
 wash me Savior, or I die.

- (c) By way of application, do you now understand that what is at stake here is God's estimate of man's basic problem, and not that of man's estimate of man. And God's evaluation is really all that counts; but further it is far more devastating and humiliating than man's prejudiced, exculpatory, evasive assessment. Man says we are at times dim in our sight, at times myopic. God says we are thoroughly blind. Man says we have impaired hearing. God says we are stone deaf. Man says we are sick in many respects, yet with the prospect of health with careful nursing. God says we are congenitally, mortally diseased. Man says we are environmentally maladjusted, but not beyond the help of our enlightened age. God says we are all dead in trespasses and sins, in which we walk every day, and so are deserving of His condemnation and wrath. If you see things man's way, you will certainly perish. But if you see things God's way, and fear and tremble, then listen to good news: "For the Son of man has come to seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke 19:10).

When Paul declares that, "We are Jews by nature and not sinners from among the Gentiles," v. 15, he then goes on in v. 16 to further explain that, however, "even we [Jews] have believed in Christ Jesus, so that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the Law; since by the works of the Law no flesh [whether Jewish or Gentile] will be justified." In other words Paul is confessing, yes we zealous, religious Jews are thoroughly guilty in the sight of God; our religion has become a façade for the identical sinful infection that the Gentiles are known to have. Therefore, having the same disease, the religious sinner needs to

put aside his hypocritical charade, confess his equally foul condition, and believe only in the Lord Jesus. So he should cry out:

Foul, I to the fountain fly,  
wash me Savior, or I die.

(2) Justification by faith alone excludes the works of the Law, v. 16.

“Yet having known [οἶδα, oida par panpm] that a man is not justified [δικαιώω, dikaiōō v ppis] by works of the Law but through faith in Jesus Christ, even we [Jews] have believed [πιστεύω, pisteúō, v aaip] in Christ Jesus in order that we may be justified [v apsp] by faith in Christ and not by works of the Law, because by works of the Law no flesh/human being will be justified [v fpis].” The “we” of v. 15 is emphatic in describing Jewish sinners as being distinct from Gentile sinners, cf. v. 17. So here the “we” continues to address the Jew, but in such a way that he must yield to the fact of one gospel by which both Jew and Gentile are saved. There are four main elements in this verse, closely compacted together, each of which is stressed three times, namely “justification,” “works of the Law,” “faith,” and “Christ.” Not surprisingly, Martin Luther devotes over 7,000 words to this verse in his commentary on Galatians.

There is also a vital presupposition here concerning the need of being justified before God, and it is that man stands justly guilty before God. Man’s fundamental problem is moral (Isa. 59:2). The great and primary issue of life is not how I relate to my spouse or children or neighbor, but rather how as a sinner I might acceptably stand before God (Job 9:2; 25:4-6). We conclude with Paul, “that both Jews and Greeks are all under sin [in the sight of God],” because “there is none righteous [in the sight of God], not even one; there is none who understands, there is none who seeks for God” (Rom. 3:9-11).

(a) “Justification by faith,” definitively considered, v. 16a.

- 1) What does the doctrine of Justification by Faith mean to you? Consider: “I received Jesus Christ as my own personal Savior.” “God changed my life through encountering Christ.” “Jesus Christ has come to live in my heart and now He makes me a new person as I walk with Him day by day.” “I have been born again by the Spirit of God.” Though legitimate expressions of Christian experience, none of these explain *justification by faith*, which “is God for Christ’s sake declaring me to be freely, gratuitously pardoned and guiltless, even as Christ, and righteous even as Christ.”
- 2) What then does “justification by faith” exactly mean, not just technically, but for me as a sinner? Martin Luther testifies to his grasping of this truth as follows:

Then I grasped [from the study of Romans] that the justice of God is that righteousness by which through grace and sheer mercy God

justifies us through faith. Thereupon I felt myself to be reborn and to have gone through open doors into paradise.<sup>17</sup>

- a) In the New Testament, “to justify,” δικαιώω, dikaioō, means “to declare, to account, to regard as righteous, to justly affirm,” especially in Paul’s epistles. In Luke 7:28-29, the people “justified God,” that is they declared God to be vindicated through the ministry of John the Baptist. So in Luke 10:25-29, the lawyer “justified himself,” that is attempted to declare himself or appear righteous even though he was not essentially righteous. Again in Luke 16:13b-15 the Pharisees have a self-declared righteousness, but it is quite remote from actual righteousness.
- b) In Galatians, “to justify” occurs eight times, four of which are in 2:16-17. It is a forensic or legal term, objective or declarative in character rather than subjective or internal, just as with a courtroom judge who brings down his gavel and declares, “not guilty!” Justification is what God says about me, not what He does in me. However such a verdict and new legal standing results in a change of relationship. Hence at the same time justification is the righteous ground upon which regeneration through the Holy Spirit is established (John 7:38-39; 16:7).
- c) Justification is not only a declaration that the guilt of sin has been amputated, that is removed by means of satisfactory pardon (Ps. 103:10-14; Rom. 4:7; Col. 2:13-14; 4:7; Philem. 18), but also a declaration that the righteousness of God has been imputed to the believer in Christ (Rom. 4:6; Phil. 3:9; Philem. 17).
- d) By way of illustration, a prodigal learns of his father’s death, which news brings about genuine remorse concerning his waywardness. Having returned home, the repentant son is given the will and last testament to read for himself. He is astonished to learn that not only is he fully pardoned, but also he receives a title and large fortune, solely on the basis of his late father’s declared, will. Any doubts about the reality of this gracious bestowal of new status are assuaged by the fact of the father’s objective, concrete declaration, his justification.
- e) David well understands this gospel truth when in Psalm, 143:1-2 he seeks justification solely on the basis of God’s merciful faithfulness and righteousness, and not his own polluted works. Why does David address God this way? Because he understands that, “in Your sight no man living is

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<sup>17</sup> Roland Bainton, *Here I Stand*, p. 49.

righteous [based upon divine estimation].” So here Paul alludes to this thought when he writes, “by the works of the Law [God’s perfect standard of righteousness, required totally, eternally] no flesh will be justified.”

- f) Isaiah teaches us the same truth that: “As a result of the anguish of His [Christ’s] soul, He [the Father] will see it and be satisfied [with Christ’s sacrificial offering]. By His knowledge the Righteous One, My Servant, will justify the many, as He will bear their iniquities” (Isa. 53:11).
  - g) Jesus Christ also well illustrates this truth in the parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector. When the Pharisee testifies, “God, I thank You that I am not like other people,” he gives token acknowledgment of the grace of God with which he cooperates, but his hope is largely in himself. However the publican’s plea is solely based upon trust in God’s merciful character, and thus he is declared to be pardoned only on the basis of the justification of Christ (Luke 18:9-14).
  - h) In Romans 3:24 (cf. John 15:25; Rom. 4:4-5), Paul plainly teaches that God freely, solely due to His divine goodwill, that gracious disposition and purpose which is in Himself, “justifies [the ungodly] gratuitously.” He does not justify those who present themselves with a measure of righteousness and unrighteousness as the Galatian false gospel maintained, but solely the righteousness of faith in Christ crucified.
- 3) What justification is not.
- a) Justification is not the infusion of grace through the seven sacraments, as taught by the Roman Catholic Church, following regeneration by water baptism.<sup>18</sup> I do not *become* a Christian by inviting Jesus Christ into my heart. Christ dwells in my heart by faith, through the Holy Spirit (Rom. 8:9; I John 3:23-24), *because* of justification. Romans 3:28 states that, “a man is justified by faith [in Christ] apart from the works of the Law.”

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<sup>18</sup> The denial of objective justification by Roman Catholicism is evident in *The Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent*. “If anyone saith that men are justified, either by the sole imputation of the justice of Christ, or by the sole remission of sins, to the exclusion of the grace and *the charity which is poured forth in their hearts by the Holy Ghost*, and is inherent in them; or even that the grace, whereby we are justified, is only the favor of God; let him be anathema. If any one saith, that justifying faith is nothing else but confidence in the divine mercy which remits sins for Christ’s sake; or, that this confidence alone is that whereby we are justified: let him be anathema.” Philip Schaff, *The Creeds of Christendom*, II, pp. 112-113.

- b) Justification is not sanctification,<sup>19</sup> as the following contrasts illustrate.

<i>Justification</i>	<i>Sanctification</i>
1. Instantaneous	Progressive
2. Accounted righteous	Made righteous
3. Righteousness imputed	Righteousness imparted
4. Outside of man	Inside of man
5. Christ for us	Christ in us
6. Ground of sanctification	Result of justification
7. Romans 5:1a	Romans 5:1b-11
8. Galatians 2:16	Galatians 2:20b

- 4) By way of application, why then be so dogmatic, so definitive, so precise in defending the doctrine of justification by faith alone? Because Paul, under inspiration, went to even greater trouble. On this truth hangs the destiny of the souls of men, and perilously so! For on the one hand man is universally convinced that his works, especially his religious performances, will obtain God's acceptance. On the other hand God declares the opposite truth, that man's only hope is His *grace alone* by *Christ alone* through *faith alone*. God will be glorified in His sole saving of sinners, and not boastful, cooperating mankind. "For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast" (Eph. 2:8-9).

But further, God wants us to be *assured* of our right standing with Himself. Human works subtract from this assurance since we are never certain as to our degree of conformity with the unknown required minimum. Trust in your works is a bad investment, a leaky cistern! However Christ's demonstrated, completed, acceptable work is alone the best assurance possible. "For this reason it is by faith, in order that it may be in accordance with grace, so that the promise will be guaranteed to all the descendants" (Rom. 4:16).

What does it mean to be justified by faith alone? It means to cry out like Jonah, when swallowed up by trials, "Salvation is from the LORD" (Jonah 2:9), and find oneself delivered up onto solid dry land. It is to forsake any confidence in self and call out as did Peter when sinking, "Lord, save me" (Matt. 14:30), and experience the assurance of the Savior's sovereign grasp (Matt. 14:31). But this hope, this faith, however feeble, is focused only on Christ; to think of making a personal contribution is absurd

<sup>19</sup> Refer to J. C. Ryle's clear description of the distinction between justification and sanctification in *Holiness*, pp. 29-33, 326-30.

presumption that fails to appreciate our hopeless condition. Rather the justified declare with Charles Wesley:

Accepted in the Well-beloved,  
 And clothed in righteousness divine,  
 I see the bar to heaven removed,  
 And all Thy merits, Lord, are mine.  
 Death, hell, and sin are now subdued;  
 All grace is now to sinners given;  
 And lo, I plead the atoning blood,  
 And in Thy right I claim Thy heaven.

- (b) “Justification by faith,” negatively considered, v. 16b.

“Justification by faith” is the grand, *overriding, encompassing principle*, and it is as if Paul is saying to Peter: “Don’t you remember that only recently we all, unanimously agreed on this at the council of Jerusalem. This is also the *unique, incomparable principle* that sets apart heathen religions and sects from biblical Christianity. They are all aliens to free grace. This is also the *distinguishing, defining principle* whereby nominal Christianity is identified as a counterfeit of biblical Christianity. Roman Catholicism is the great exemplar of this.

- 1) “Works of the Law,” do not justify the sinner to God.

So in spite of Paul’s admittance that Jews as well as Gentiles have distinctive modes of sinning, he now moves to eliminate boasting according to distinctive law codes, whether Jew or Gentile. Here the term “Law,” νόμος, *nomos*, is without the article, also vs. 19, 21, and may have a more inclusive meaning designating a standard or principle rather than an objective code. The fact that Paul makes application of “Law” to “all flesh” at the end of this verse would further support this understanding.

- a) The Mosaic Law given by God to Israel.

This encompassing code includes the *decalogue* or ten commandments, the *civil law* or social requirements, the *ceremonial law* or worship requirements. However Israel miserably failed to appreciate its purpose and obey it. It became, in conjunction with faith in supposed obedience, a way of salvation. It was not understood as a means of exposing sin necessitating the restoration of fellowship through sacrifice offered for a redeemed people. “For not knowing about God’s righteousness [by faith] and seeking to establish their own, they did not subject themselves to the righteousness of God” (Rom. 10:3). Hence they came under the Law’s curse. “Cursed is everyone who does not abide by all things written in the book of the Law, to perform them” (Gal. 3:10).

Do you consider your attempts to keep the Mosaic Law will earn you God's favor, like a back-up insurance policy, even as the Galatian false gospel maintained? If you nominate to abide by this Law, you must keep it all, totally, perfectly, eternally, even if you claim to subtract the ceremonial part fulfilled by Christ, since it is not now applicable to the Christian. However the Jews knew of no such threefold division of the Law as moral, civil, and ceremonial. It was all one holy revelation from God.

b) The law written by God on the human heart.

Paul speaks of the Gentiles, though the Jews must also be included, "who show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness and their thoughts alternately accusing or else defending them" (Rom. 2: 15). There are standards of God's righteousness written on your heart, not with inscripturated precision, yet sufficient to reveal both right and wrong according to God's definition. Do you perfectly keep them, continually? Unless you do, then Paul declares that "all who have sinned without the [Mosaic] Law will also perish without the [Mosaic] Law" (Rom. 2:12). The Gentile, as well as the Jew, has revelation sufficient to make him morally accountable. Thus Paul concludes that "all the world . . . [is] guilty before God" (Rom. 3:19).

c) The law of human endeavor intended to influence God.

Here "law" includes "general moral principle," all of man's behavioral standards, whether inherited or invented or voted upon in a democracy. We include those common, conceited cliches, "I have done my best," which does not even usually impress a police officer; "I have lived a reasonably good life," even though our prisons are full of such claimants; "I have done well enough in this life to my fellow man," even though there is no exact idea just how much is good enough; "I have contributed much to society," as though God should be impressed and grateful; and on and on goes the arrogant boasting that has no thought for what God in all of His holy glory and perfect righteousness says or demands.

2) "We" and the implicit "they" do not justify the sinner to God.

There is also another area here which Paul excludes and it is the distinctions men make, such as between Jew and Gentile. Now God established the distinction here, but man perverted it, and racism is the result, as with anti-Semitism and pro-Semitism. Just as there is a distinction between male and female, which God established, so man perverts it with the result the Jewish male has prayed daily, "I thank God I was not born a woman"! Here Paul

repudiates any saving distinction that man establishes between the favored “we” and the despised “they,” whether by race, color of skin, age, education, wealth, culture, etc.

(c) “Justification by faith,” positively considered.

1) “Faith,” is the linkage that channels justification with God.

Faith, based on a foundation of Bible knowledge, launches out from this base and confidently walks in its light. Faith is not a leap in the dark, but a leap in the light. Faith is not preference for Jesus Christ as an option, but confident response according to knowledge about His person and work. Faith is the will and affections responding to the informed intellect (Rom. 6:17). We agree that the ability to respond is the particular work of the Spirit. However, the “will” obeys the truth received; likewise the “heart” responds with affectionate embrace; and the doctrinal, gospel teaching of Paul lodges in the soul to which the will and affections respond. Thus faith grows through embracing large quantities of the Word of God (Rom. 10:17).

Faith is the link or channel that connects one to the Christ who effects my justification. Faith is not the work of proud, autonomous man contributing his part in God’s plan of salvation. Faith in and of itself does not save since it only attaches me to the Christ who does save. It is futile, even absurd, to put our faith in faith. A heathen idol worshipper may have all faith, yet in no way will any answer come. A believer with weak faith in the living God has infinitely better prospects. Ephesians 2:8 teaches that we are saved, “by grace . . . *through* [διά, dia, taking the genitive] faith [πίστις, pistis n gsf].” Even faith itself, the divine arousal to believe, is a gift, “and that [salvation as a whole including faith, is] not of yourselves, it is the gift of God” (Eph. 2:8-9; cf. II Tim. 2:25).

A poor girl accepts the marriage proposal of a wealthy, titled businessman. However her acceptance does not purchase the money and title she now shares; it is hers only because of who her husband is and what he has done. So we are justified, not on account of but through faith in Jesus Christ who effects our justification.

2) “Jesus Christ” is the just ground of justification with God.

The Lord Jesus is the sole object of faith; He is qualified to save being the Son of God; he is vindicated as the object of faith through resurrection from his atoning death. Faith here is not in a religious rite or emblem or icon; faith is in a qualified saving person, as John the Baptist commended: “Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!” (John 1:29). Faith is to

behold the uplifted, crucified Christ, and through that look alone receive everlasting life (John 3:14-16). So Peter confessed, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have words of eternal life?” (John 6:68). Thus doubting Thomas confessed of Jesus: “You are “my Lord and my God” (John 20:28). In the same vein, God the Father exhorted: “This is My beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to Him!” (Matt. 17:5).

c. The doctrine of justification by faith defended, vs. 17-21.

In the commercial world of marketing, one area of study that receives considerable attention is that of overcoming objections. In particular, when a good product is inexpensive, buyers often hesitate since they believe there is a catch, and feel they should pay more!

Paul frequently faced objections from men who considered that his glorious gospel of free grace conflicted with their gospel of grace plus works; they felt they should do more. They declared that his doctrine “profanes the temple” (Acts 24:5-6), that it encourages people to sin (Rom. 3:8; 6:1, 15), that it nullifies the Law (Rom. 3:31), that it implies that God is unrighteous (Rom. 3:5).

Today the faithful minister of this gospel of free grace will similarly be faced with like objections. For instance, it is claimed that preaching salvation by “faith alone” promotes easy believism, cheap grace, and ignores the necessity of repentance, baptism, etc. Such a gospel encourages people to sin with license, even abandon, since grace is plentiful; it paints too black a picture of man’s problem, his debilitating pollution; he does have a part to play in his salvation!

(1) The main objection, v. 17.

“But if [while] seeking to be justified [δικαιώω, dikaiōō inf ap] in Christ, we ourselves are also found [to be] sinners, is it conceivable that Christ is a minister [δίακονος, diakonos n nsm] of/a participant in sin? May it never be/it is unthinkable!”

Simply put, Paul is charged as follows: “In rejecting the Law you make Christ a participant in sin because He lowers the barrier.” So in response Paul now identifies with Peter who has surely faced criticism from the Jerusalem Judaizers. They charged that if you deny the necessity of the Law along with faith, then you make light of the Law, you minimize its importance, and consequently encourage licentiousness and lawlessness. The result is that believers break the Law in Christ’s name. Hence proclaiming faith alone in Christ has in fact made him to be a “minister/servant/encourager of sin.” Thus the Christian needs the Law, in conjunction with faith, so as to help him maintain an ongoing holy life. Yet Paul fervently responds to this charge of him being antinomian: “Never let it be said; perish the thought!” just as he later replies in Romans 6:15, “What then? Shall we sin because we are not under Law but under grace? May it never be!”

## (2) The main responses, vs. 18-21.

## (a) The principle of the wrong use of the Law, v. 18.

“For if what I tore down [καταλύω, kataluō v aais] I rebuild [οἰκοδομέω, oikodomeō v pais], I prove [συνίστημι, sunistēmi v pais] myself to be a transgressor/boundary breaker [παραβάτης, parabatēs n asm].” By way of expanded translation, Paul writes: “For if, having torn down, that is invalidated these things [the whole Mosaic legal system], I am again building upon them, I prove myself to be a transgressor [of that same Law].” This was Peter’s problem, that of rebuilding what had been demolished. He was intent on raising up the instrument of condemnation for the purpose of it supposedly being employed as an instrument of sanctification. Granted that v. 16 is chiefly dealing with justification, however, the reason for this is its foundational importance for sanctification. The following context, especially 2:19-3:3, deals with the heart of the controversy here, namely that having been saved through faith alone, one does not pick up the Law again that was formerly discarded. Indeed this is Paul’s point here in v. 18.

- 1) How did Paul “destroy” the Law? The word here καταλύω, kataluō, means to annul, abrogate. It means that while maintaining its lawful use, as v. 19 will uphold, yet he died to its justifying and sanctifying use since, “not being myself under the Law, . . . [I am] under the law of Christ” (I Cor, 9:20-21).
- 2) How would Paul sin in reestablishing the Law? Contrary to the legalist’s expectation of sanctification, the Law would arouse and reveal sin without providing any remedy. The Law would simply “demonstrate/ prove myself to be a transgressor.” Thus to build upon the Law would insult the completeness of Christ’s atoning work and in fact destroy its efficacy through faith.
- 3) By way of illustration, as a Christian, there is a particular sin in my life that is troubling me. Hence a close friend suggests that what I need is greater awareness of, sensitivity to, and stimulation by the Law. Now it may at best produce temporary restraint, without the affections being changed at all, while at the same time there will be greater aggravation to the point where I feel like dying; but there will be no heartfelt cure. On the other hand, closer union with the grace of Christ, through the Holy Spirit, will cause the eruption of sin to be conquered through a change of heart and new, holy affections. And this is what Paul will teach in v. 20.

## (b) The principle of the right use of the Law v. 19.

“For I, through [the] Law, died [ἀποθνήσκω, apothnēskō v aais] to [the] Law, in order that I might live [ζῶω, zaō v aais] to God.” While Paul

has been courteously applying Peter's defection from the truth to himself in vs. 18, now he emphatically writes of himself, "I," giving direct testimony concerning his own experience with the Law, and particularly with regard to its right and limited use. In I Timothy 1:9 he declares that the "Law is not made for a righteous person, but for those who are lawless and rebellious, for the ungodly and sinners, for the unholy and profane." Likewise, "through the Law comes the knowledge of sin" (Rom. 3:20). Again, "I would not have come to know sin except through the Law" (Rom. 7:7). Then he explains concerning the time of his conversion, "I was once alive apart from the Law; but when the commandment came, sin became alive and I died; and this commandment, which was to result in life, proved to result in death for me" (Rom. 7:9-10).

However, an additional use of the Law has been suggested by a large segment of Christendom over the centuries. In a more contemporary setting, to quote the *Westminster Confession of Faith*, the Moral Law or Ten Commandments is said to be, for "true believers," that is Christians, for whom it is "a rule of life, informing them of the will of God and their duty, it directs and binds them to walk accordingly. . . . It is likewise of use to the regenerate, to restrain their corruptions, in that it forbids sin."<sup>20</sup> Now in Paul here dealing with the sanctified life of the believer, it may well be asked if he gives the same direction as this Confession, and we must respectfully reply, "No, not in the slightest!" Thus we consider this contentious issue of whether there is a third, sanctifying use of the Ten Commandments, and especially here according to Paul.

Notice here how Paul describes that he "died" [v aais], to the whole Law administration of Moses, through the very instrumentality of that Law, to the end that he might "live" [v aais], through the saving instrumentality of Christ. The Mosaic administration has nothing to do with my sanctification.<sup>21</sup> "But," someone responds, "do I not still need the Law to make me aware of my sin even though I am a Christian?" Yes it can do that, in a comparatively limited way. But are you implying that now, in being under Christ, you are subject to a revelation of *lesser* convicting potency? Are you suggesting that under Christ, sin's unveiling will not come so easily? This is a terrible mistake to make, and an insult to the person of Christ.<sup>22</sup> In a kingdom, who is better

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<sup>20</sup> Philip Schaff, *The Creeds of Christendom*, III, pp. 641-2.

<sup>21</sup> Luther adds: "Therefore the whole law, whether it be ceremonial or moral, to a Christian is utterly abrogate, for he is dead unto it. Not that the law is utterly taken away: nay, it remaineth, liveth, and reigneth still in the wicked. But a godly man is dead unto the law like as he is dead unto sin, the devil, death, and hell: which notwithstanding do still remain, and the world with all the wicked shall still abide in them. Wherefore when the sophister understandeth that the ceremonial law only is abolished, understand thou, that Paul and every Christian is dead to the whole law, and yet the law remaineth still." *Galatians*, p. 159.

<sup>22</sup> This is the serious mistake that Walter Chantry makes in suggesting that we need the simplicity of the Ten Commandments compared with the complexity of the instruction of the Son of God. "In Jesus the Lord is our fullest and most beautiful display of righteousness. At the same time, a study of Jesus' life can be complex. In one chapter we observe him obeying his parents. In another place he compassionately feeds the poor. But

equipped to reflect the king's demands, a servant or a son? (Matt. 17:1-5; John 8:35-36; Heb. 3:1-6; 7:11-22; 8:6-7, 13). When Peter cried out, "Go away from me Lord, for I am a sinful man, O Lord!" (Luke 5:8), he did not need the two tables of stone in his hands to come to this conclusion! There is no revelation of the righteousness of God that compares with the Lord Jesus Christ, even the Law of Moses. Even though Paul confesses to being severely wounded by the Law, it was the presence of Christ on the Damascus road that brought him down to the dust! The terror that Mount Sinai brought forth will always take second place to the "wrath of the Lamb" (Rev. 6:16). To be under the law of Christ is not a soft alternative to Moses; it is to move from a summary of God's righteousness to the full blaze of His holy glory!

But yet again how much greater is Christ than Moses is indicated by the final comment of Paul that, through Christ according to v. 20, "I live to God." In fact not only has Christ all of the righteousness of God to reflect from His essence, and all of the righteousness of God to give, but even more he has all of the life of God to give, of which Moses has not a drop to impart! And this point becomes Paul's vital thrust in vs. 20-21. Luther points out that this is the very opposite of the world's injunction which is that to live unto God you must live unto the Law. However the opposite is true, namely that if you would live unto God, you must die to the Law, and of course works and self, and live through ongoing faith in Christ.<sup>23</sup>

(c) The principle of life through union with Christ, v. 20.

"I have been crucified [συσταυρόομαι, sustauroomai v ppis] with Christ; so I am no longer living, but Christ is living in me; so the [life] I am now [νῦν, nun adv] living [ζῶω, zaō pais] in the flesh, I am living by faith in the Son of God who loved me and delivered [παραδίδομι, paradidōmi par aagsm] himself [up] on my behalf/for [ὑπέρ, huper pre] me." Among other descriptions, the Bible portrays the unbeliever as dead in his soul toward God, and thus lifeless. Ephesians 2:1-3 explains that such lifelessness does not exclude natural or animal or even Satanic life since the person "dead in trespasses and sins" yet "*walks* according to the course of this world, according to the *prince* of the power of the air, of the *spirit* that is now working in the sons of disobedience." However the Christian, upon conversion, receives not only justification or right standing with God, v. 16, but also regeneration or life from God, v. 19. It is this "life" from God described at the end of v. 19 that is now expanded upon in v. 20.

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again, nowhere in the Gospels is all of our Lord's righteousness gathered up into a condensed formula. The Ten Commandments are comprehensive enough to embrace all of his pure works and compact enough to serve as a rule in our finite judgment." Further, Chantry suggests, in spite of Luke 6:5, that the Ten Commandments are needed as a standard to judge the righteousness of the Son of God. *God's Righteous Kingdom*, pp. 82-83.

<sup>23</sup> Luther, *Galatians*, p. 158.

1) Sanctification is *based* upon the believer's justification, v. 20a.

One of the great misunderstandings amongst contemporary Christians is that justification by faith alone is an entrance qualification for eternal life, pardon, adoption, like a doorway. Of course this is partially true, but it neglects the vital truth that justification is a ground of ongoing sanctification. By way of illustration, Israel was to continually remember God's gracious redemption from Egypt, especially by means of the Passover (Deut. 16:1-3), and allow this knowledge to govern its daily walk (Deut. 15:15; 16:3; 24:17-18; Ps. 106:7-13, 21-22; Mic. 6:3-4). By way of illustration, a man is short of breath so that his doctor advises a heart valve operation, after which he has new life. But the ground of this ongoing new life ever remains the initial operation. By way of illustration, The Lord's Supper, as the only repeatable ordinance, is a gospel remembrance feast given for a purpose similar to that of the Passover, namely the remembrance of our justification as a basis for our sanctification.

So Paul explains here, from his own experience, how a believer is enabled presently to live, quite apart from legal stimulation as v. 19 has indicated, based upon our past justification and regeneration. "I have been crucified together with Christ," is more accurate here, since the perfect tense of *συσταυρόω*, *sustaupoō*, is a compound that describes a past action having a present or continuing result; e.g. "It has been written" (Matt. 4:4). It does not mean that I daily crucify myself, as if copying Christ. It does not mean that Christ is daily crucified for me as I meditate on him. It does mean that, through faith alone, I identify myself with Christ's crucifixion that occurred at a point of time over nineteen hundred years ago. Having believed on Christ, I continuously acknowledge him to be my Savior and substitute; I died together with him on that cross; "He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness" (I Pet. 2:24), and this truth remains a present reality and stimulant. Hence I also died to the terrors and reign of the Law and Moses, and became wedded to a new head, Jesus Christ, by which new union my life is fruitful (Rom. 7:1-4; cf. v. 19 here). Thus justification is ever a stimulant for sanctification (John 13:34; Eph. 4:31-5:2; I John 2:7-8; 4:19).

2) Sanctification is *based* upon the indwelling Holy Spirit, v. 20b.

With v. 19 concluding that Paul now "lives to God," the same verb, *ζάω*, *zaō*, occurs four times with the present tense in v. 20. Now this new life is described as being sourced in "Christ [who] lives in me." We must beware here of being overly mystical or neglectful of the manifest life of God that indwells the child of God. Paul is not teaching that he ceases to have a distinctive personality, nor is he encouraging a deceitful passivity, nor does he

legitimize a confession that has no necessary relationship with consistent living.<sup>24</sup> Hence, a true Christian is “alive unto God” (Rom. 6:11).

However, if the person of Christ has ascended to the Father and is seated there (Eph. 1:19-20; I Pet. 3:21-22; Heb. 10:12), how can it be said that He indwells the believer (Rom. 8:10; II Cor. 13:5; Eph. 3:17; Col. 1:27)? Much evangelism has been confusing here in suggesting that, to become a Christian, you should, “invite Jesus Christ into your heart.” But this is not the biblical injunction. Having become a Christian, through faith in Christ crucified (John 3:14-16; Acts 16:31), His indwelling comes as a result of conversion. Jesus Christ promised to send the Comforter to testify of himself, specifically his redemptive glory (John 14:18-20, 26; 15:26; 16:13-14). He had to “go away” to the cross, otherwise the Spirit would not come (John 7:39; 16:7). Hence Christ indwells the believer through the Holy Spirit (Rom. 8:9-11; I John 3:23-24). According to Matthew 28:18-20, both his power and presence are to be directed toward true disciples.

So here in Galatians, having begun with the Spirit, we are to walk by the Spirit, while producing the fruit of the Spirit (3:2-3; 5:16, 18, 22-23, 25), and not by “the flesh,” which is associated with “the works of the Law” (cf. 3:1-3). Especially note in Titus 3:5-7 how justification presupposes regeneration. Here is the unmasking of cool, confessional orthodoxy that knows nothing of Christ in whom, as Peter puts it, “you greatly rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory” (I Pet. 1:8); he further describes how, “His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness,” that we have “become partakers of the divine nature” (II Pet. 1:3-4), through *conversion*. It is for this reason Charles Wesley writes so passionately:

I'll praise my Maker while I've breath;  
And when my voice is lost in death,  
Praise shall employ my nobler powers:  
My days of praise shall ne'er be past,  
While life, and thought, and being last.  
Or immortality endures.

3) Sanctification is *maintained* through faith in Christ, v. 20c.

It is one thing to rejoice in Christ's triumph over death and sin in the past, and my inclusion and justification through that victory. But it is quite another to consider how we shall live as a consequence in the present, in the now time. Paul answers that, “the life which I am *now* living, I am living in the realm of faith that is rooted in the Son of God, that is he who loved me and

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<sup>24</sup> Refer to J. C. Ryle's helpful discussion of this subject in his *Holiness*, pp. xiii-xviii, 15-33.

sacrificially delivered himself up to God for me.” Here is the answer to the very practical question, “How is the righteousness of God, having been obtained judicially, satisfactorily, also practically maintained in this closing, decadent twentieth century?” Again we must be reminded that such an enquiry only has application to those who have been regenerated through the Holy Spirit (3:2-3, 5, 13-14; 4:6, 29; 5:5, 16-17, 22-26; 6:1, 8).

- a) It is progressive faith in this body of flesh.

The use of *vōv*, nun, and the present tense is very much an indication of Paul’s emphasis upon progressive sanctification for the Christian. The Christian life certainly commences with initial saving faith, which then results in the life of faith. For Paul faith is not only believing, but a life principle, an ongoing frame of mind and soul.

Such faith does not result in passivity, but a bold, indefatigable, victorious course of action that this world cannot overcome, involving every exigency of life (Heb. 11:32-38). This also includes those of “little faith” (Matt. 6:30; 8:26; 14:31; 16:8), those who have “faith mingled with unbelief” (Mark 9:24,) and those with “great faith” (Matt. 8:10; 15:28), who all yet persevere in faith.

Such faith, a gift of grace, is yet also subject to weakening (Rom. 14:1) or strengthening (Rom. 14:19; II Thess. 1:3; II Pet. 1:5-8; Jude 20) according to the employment of means of grace, both impersonal and personal.

- b) It is regnant faith over this body of flesh.

So this pilgrimage of faith is yet in the vehicle of “the flesh,” which offers relentless opposition, 5:17; yet such faith rises up in dominance over this condemned, decaying carcass, being “led by the Spirit,” 5:18. Again we remind ourselves that this is “the Spirit of His [God’s] Son,” 4:6. Hence the indwelling, living truth of Christ reigns over the body, like a man who rides in full control of a lusty horse (Rom. 6:11-12). So Luther adds:

For this time of life which I now live, I live indeed in the flesh, but not of the flesh, or according to the flesh, but in faith. . . . [Paul] useth also carnal things, as meat, drink, apparel, and such like, which without doubt is to live in the flesh; but he saith that this is not his life: and although he useth carnal things, yet he liveth not through them, as the world liveth through the flesh and after the flesh: for it neither knoweth nor hopeth for any life besides this.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Luther, *Galatians*, p. 172.

- c) It is active faith in Christ crucified.

True, effectual faith will have its focus upon a distinctive object that can really sanctify and achieve. Here we continually, daily look, not at some new, esoteric, secret, mystical truth, but our foundation, just as a wife, even after years of marriage, frequently ponders and is encouraged by the significance of the rings on her finger. We do not even primarily look by faith to Christ being daily *present* with us, however precious this truth may be; rather we look by faith to Christ's *atoning purpose*, His *consecration* which his Spirit reveals to me. I am continually living "by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave Himself up for me." This ongoing set of the soul is also described by Paul as "this grace in which we have stood and presently stand [perfect tense]" (Rom. 5:2), and by implication, will continue to stand. Again, the Lord's Supper is a continual means to this end.

- d) It is active faith in Christ's particular grace.

But further, this faith that looks in the right direction will also have a particularly narrow focus; it will not simply be faith in Christ who saves sinners, but specifically faith in Christ's distinguishing love for "me," based on elective grace alone. At the heart of human individuality is a craving for discriminating love. So in marriage we declare, "forsaking all others, [I] keep thee only." We are all different and want to be loved for our distinctiveness. But here the distinctiveness is that of my sinful poverty, not personal worthiness. Luther adds: "Christ then in very deed is a lover of those which are in trouble or anguish, in sin and death, and such a lover as gave himself for us: who is also a High Priest, that is to say, a mediator between God and us miserable and wretched sinners."<sup>26</sup> So the Christian sings with wonderment:

And can it be that *I* should gain  
 An interest in the Savior's blood?  
 Died He for *me*, who caused His pain?  
 For *me*, who Him to death pursued?  
 Amazing love! How can it be  
 That Thou, *my* God, shouldst die for *me*!

- (d) The principle of the impotence of the Law, v. 21.

"I do not deny/set aside [ἀθετέω, *atheteō* v *pais*] the grace of God; for if [saving] righteousness [acceptable to God comes] through [the] Law, consequently Christ died unnecessarily [δωρεάν, *dōrean* adv]."

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid., p. 179.

Wherever the gospel is faithfully proclaimed, the nature of God is such that there will be some fruit on account of the seed of truth falling on good (prepared) ground, while the nature of man is such that opposition and objection is inevitable. Having clearly upheld both the gospel and its sanctifying effect, vs. 11-20, Paul fences in the truth by responding to a complaint he frequently encountered, even as it is a common rejoinder today amongst sincere, but uninformed believers. It is protested that to do away with the Law for both justification and sanctification is to loosen the reins of sin that can still erupt in the believer. By inference, the upholding of the Law in the life of the believer not only keeps sin in check but also stimulates righteousness. However the preceding context would suggest that Paul's ongoing passionate concern is "the life which I am now living," v. 20, that is the sanctified life that is rooted in the justified life.

1) The invalidation of the Law does not weaken grace, v. 21a.

We further translate, "I am not disqualifying/cheapening/ slandering the grace of God because the absence of the dynamic of the Law is said to allow the proliferation of sin " (cf. Rom. 6:15). But some were clearly charging Paul with antinomianism, that is a laxity toward the Law that fostered both loose living and belief in the availability of easy grace. Further, they would have been suggesting that the O.T. does address the Christian believer, indeed it expectantly commands him to follow the sanctifying directions of the Law (Ex. 19:5; Lev. 18:4-5). Surely then the Christian needs the law to direct him.

In line with v. 20, this charge here seems to be focusing on the whole matter of life and power and ability and instrumental help with regard to living righteously. In other words, the inference is that without the law the believer is relatively impotent and therefore sure to live licentiously. To begin with there is the assumption that man has an inherent ability to keep the law that Moses prescribed. Furthermore, it is also inferred that there is life and a degree of potency in the law, so that we need it to live holy lives.

a) However there is no potency in man. That is, while having a potency for evil, yet he is impotent with regard to fulfilling the righteousness of God (Rom. 8:3, 7). Then why the commands of Exodus 19:5 and Leviticus 18:4-5? Luther explains:

Moses does not say, 'Thou hast the strength or power to choose,' but 'Choose, keep, do!' He issues commandments about doing, but does not describe man's ability to do. . . . The commandments are not, however, either inappropriate or purposeless, but are given in order that blind, self-confident

man may through them come to know his own diseased state of impotence if he attempts to do what is commanded.<sup>27</sup>

b) Further, there is no potency in the law. While it is a standard of the righteousness of God, yet it cannot impart that righteousness (Acts 13:39; Rom. 7:8, 11, 13; 8:3; Heb. 7:18-19; 10:1-2, 19-22). If the law did indeed have an intrinsic ability to produce a righteousness acceptable to God, then why has it not done so? But more importantly, if the law can save and sanctify in a measure, then does this not demean Christ's ability to save?

2) Righteousness through the law disqualifies Christ, v. 21b.

Therefore, "if [and it is assumed to be true] righteousness comes through [the] law, then Christ died unnecessarily." Here "righteousness" must include justification and sanctification. As Luther declares:

[Paul] intreateth here of the righteousness that availeth before God, whereby we are delivered from the law, sin, death and all evils, and made partakers of grace, righteousness, and life, and finally, are now become lords of heaven and earth and of all other creatures. This righteousness neither man's law, neither the law of God is able to perform.<sup>28</sup>

Hence to attribute saving ability to the law is to dishonor Christ, it is insultingly to draw Moses in as a concubine into the house of Christ so as to invite spiritual bigamy (Rom. 7:4). And again we repeat, as does Luther having already made this point concerning 2:19, that "law" here means the totality of the law of Moses, including the Ten Commandments (Acts 15:5).<sup>29</sup>

3) Conclusion, Christ came because of the law's impotence.

Actually Romans 8:3 gives us more information at this point. Specifically it declares not only the fact of the law's impotence, but also why this is so. The reason is that the "law" was "weak as it was through the flesh." Strictly speaking the law is a neutral entity,

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<sup>27</sup> Martin Luther, "The Bondage Of The Will", in *Luther and Erasmus: Free Will and Salvation*, eds. E. Gordon Rupp and Philip S. Watson, p. 191.

<sup>28</sup> Luther, *Galatians*, p. 184.

<sup>29</sup> "Here again I admonish you, that Paul speaketh not of the ceremonial law only, as the sophisters do continually dream. . . . Therefore he speaketh of the whole law." *Ibid.*, p. 181. Notwithstanding J. Gresham Machen's concern regarding the dangers of antinomianism, his exegetical honesty leads him to write concerning 2:16: "[W]hen Paul speaks of 'the law,' he does not mean merely the ceremonial law, but he means the whole law of God as it is set forth in the Old Testament, including what modern men would call its ethical as distinguished from its ceremonial requirements. When the meaning of the term 'the law' is limited to the ceremonial law, the real point of the Epistle to the Galatians is missed." *Machen's Notes On Galatians*, pp. 156-157.

being “holy and righteous and good.” (Rom. 7:12). The root problem is man’s thoroughly polluted condition. Even so, the law, for all of its representation of the righteousness of God, cannot reproduce itself in the sinners life, any more than your gazing at the painting of a great master will give you the ability to paint in like manner. Looking at the law will not help; in fact it will only frustrate and aggravate and make you miserable. To paint like a master you need the nature of a master. To be righteous before God you need the very nature of God. And that is the very reason that the Son of God has come, that is, as Peter describes, to make sinners “partakers of the divine nature” (II Pet. 1:4). There is only saving and sanctifying potency in Christ as 3:1-5 will reinforce.