

Epistle to the Galatians

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(1983 Study)

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1. Each paragraph preceded by “**Comment**” or “**Q**” (an abbreviation for “**Question**”) was introduced by someone other than Bro. Frank.
2. The original study did not follow a prepared text but was extemporaneous in nature.
3. Although the transcriber tried to faithfully, with the Lord’s help, set forth the thoughts that were presented in the study, the notes are not a verbatim rendering and, therefore, should be considered in that context.
4. Finally, Bro. Frank did not review the notes for possible errors that may have inadvertently entered the text.

With this disclaimer in mind, may the notes be a blessing as a useful study guide.

EPISTLE TO THE GALATIANS

(Study led by Bro. Frank Shallieu in 1983)

Gal. 1:1 Paul, an apostle, (not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised him from the dead;)

The parenthetical words help to clarify the context. Why did Paul say that he was not an apostle of men or by man but by Jesus and God? Paul wanted to show that he was the *authentic replacement* for the vacancy that occurred when Judas Iscariot was removed from his apostleship.

“God the Father ... raised him [Jesus] from the dead.” Subject matter later on in this epistle will reveal why Paul mentioned Jesus’ resurrection in this first verse. However, one reason is that he was chosen as an apostle *after* Jesus was resurrected, whereas the other apostles were chosen earlier, during Jesus’ earthly ministry. The *risen* Jesus appeared to Paul on the road to Damascus.

Gal. 1:2 And all the brethren which are with me, unto the churches of Galatia:

Who were “the brethren” with Paul, and in what sense were they with him? Either (1) they were with him when he wrote this epistle, or (2) they were his traveling companions, for several brethren accompanied him on each missionary tour. For example, Luke followed Paul to almost every place, and Timothy accompanied him to many places until he was left behind at Ephesus. Probably Paul was saying the “brethren” were with him in this second sense.

Many Bibles state at the end of Galatians that this epistle was written from Rome, but we believe that conclusion is incorrect. Many different thoughts were brought up in this epistle that will help us to place more accurately Paul’s location at the time of the writing, so we will postpone the discussion at this time.

Notice that this epistle was addressed unto the churches (*plural*) of Galatia. Usually an epistle was written to one particular ecclesia, to the Christians in *one* city—for example, Corinth, Ephesus, and Rome. However, Galatia was a territory, not a city, so Paul was addressing several ecclesias in that territory in Asia Minor. Revelation 1:4 is a similar form of address: “John to the seven churches [or ecclesias] which are in Asia [Minor].” Galatia embraced the towns of Iconium, Derbe, and Lystra, among others. Bible maps indicating “Galatia” are not necessarily accurate with regard to the time Paul wrote this epistle, which was around AD 55. The Book of Acts tells of Paul’s visits to these towns, and now, years later, he was writing to the classes he had started there.

Gal. 1:3 Grace be to you and peace from God the Father, and from our Lord Jesus Christ,

Paul used his characteristic manner of address. We, too, develop customary opening and closing lines for our letters, such as “Greetings in Jesus’ dear name,” “Your brother in Christ,” and “By His grace.”

Gal. 1:4 Who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father:

Jesus “gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and [even—Greek *kai*] our Father.” How would Paul’s salutation,

his reference to the resurrected Christ, and his saying that Jesus died for our sins to deliver us fit in with what he said later, such as in Galatians 3:1, “O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth”? One problem with regard to the “bewitching” was that the Galatians were troubled by Judaizing Christians, that is, by Jews who had accepted Christ but felt that Christians had to obey the Law too in order to attain salvation. This mixture and confusion of Christianity and the Law caused much difficulty in the early Church. For one thing, Christians who were honest with themselves knew that they could not obey the Law perfectly. In talking about the Law in his Epistle to the Romans, Paul said, “Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?” (Rom. 7:24). He was looking for life, but he found he could not render perfect obedience. Thus the Law was a bondage of corruption and death, whereas Christ is the way of deliverance from that bondage.

Paul even used the word “deliver” in verse 4: “that he [Jesus] might *deliver* us from this present evil world.” Deliverance was impossible under the Law, for the Law condemned. A Christian who felt he was under the Law would be fighting for the rest of his life with a pessimistic outlook because justification comes by faith and grace, not by the works of the Law. Judaizing Christians laid snares for and illegitimate burdens on other Christians through their wrong teachings.

Paul rebuked Peter for dissembling when Jews walked in while he was eating with Gentiles (Gal. 2:11,12). He asked, “Are you trying to yoke again those who are free in Christ?” Peter’s dissimulation was like putting the additional yoke of the Law on Christians. In humility, Peter accepted the correction and never forgot the lesson.

In summary then, Paul was giving the Galatians a hope of deliverance through Jesus, who had given himself as a ransom.

Gal. 1:5 To whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

To God “be glory for ever and ever. Amen.”

Gal. 1:6 I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel:

Gal. 1:7 Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ.

What is the “other gospel” the Galatians were “so soon removed” to? It was the *Law*, that is, the *supposed* deliverance that the Law offered. (The rest of the epistle will verify this statement.) *Only Jesus* can accomplish the hope of life that the Law held out. This “other gospel” was that in order to get eternal life, one also had to obey the Law. Unfortunately, some teach this erroneous doctrine today—Armstrong and the Adventists, for example.

“I marvel that ye are so soon removed from ... Christ unto another gospel: Which is *not* another [gospel].” Paul was saying, “This teaching regarding the Law purports to be a way of life, but in reality it is not.”

“But there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ.” Certain individuals were sponsoring or fostering this false doctrine. A proof that their false teaching was largely successful is Paul’s statement “I marvel that ye are so soon removed.”

The words “so soon” are a time clue as to when Paul wrote this epistle, but we still need more information for a definitive answer. Paul went through the territory of Galatia three times. Was

this letter written after the first, the second, or the third trip?

Gal. 1:8 But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed.

Several points in verse 8 are of vital concern and interest to us, as follows:

1. The verse warns against blindly accepting teachings from an elder just because that individual has been consecrated and in the way for a long time, for any one of us could stumble or stray. Therefore, we should constantly be on guard, trying the spirits and testing doctrines against the Word of God (1 John 4:1). Imagine, Paul was an *apostle*, yet he made this statement! The warning is not to blindly receive a doctrine just because of the *office* of the one who promulgates it. We know that of the apostles, only Judas fell, but nevertheless, Paul issued this caution regarding even the apostles. (Remember how he commended the Bereans for *daily* searching the Word—Acts 17:11.) Therefore, one should not be too sensitive if he is questioned about his ideas or statements. The flesh may resent certain questions, but it is proper to resent them *if* the motivation of the questioner is wrong. For example, some deliberately try to find fault, and the Bible shows that such individuals do not have to be answered. The general rule is that it is healthy for “him that *is taught* in the word [to] *communicate* unto [with] him that *teacheth* in all good things” (Gal. 6:6).

2. Paul even brought in the possibility that a *supernatural* being could come—“an angel from heaven”—and preach a different gospel. Verse 8 providentially leaves the door open for very dramatic lying signs and wonders along this line to occur at the end of the age. We speak about the *invisible* presence so much that some brethren who are not sound in the truth think there is no possibility of a visible supernatural manifestation as a lying wonder. If such a thing does occur, these brethren will be caught off guard. We need to be *forewarned* of the *possibility*. We must NOT be swayed by the eloquence or appearance of a supernatural being (a fallen angel). Everything we see or hear must be squared with the Word of God in order to be believed.

3. “Let him be accursed.” If we say that we cannot judge anybody else, we will not be able to obey this Scripture, for the Bible teaches that *we are to judge doctrine and conduct*. Isn’t verse 8 informing us that if someone comes with a different gospel (teaching) that is a serious error, he is to be accursed? (To insist that the Christian has to obey the Law is serious, for it teaches justification by works, and thus makes the grace of God null and void.) Paul was addressing the *ecclesias*, not just elders. Hence every one of us has a responsibility to *analyze* a teaching and to take a stand if a teaching is contrary to the doctrine that we have received. “Mark them which cause divisions and offences *contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them*” (Rom. 16:17). The Bible also says that divisions must occur, so the thought is not that divisions should not take place under any circumstance. In other words, *sometimes* divisions are necessary. The Bible encourages us to be *unified if possible*; that is, we should try to do things in unity of fellowship and spirit but not when something of this nature intrudes.

Q: What is the thought of “let him be accursed”?

A: “Mark them,” “let him be accursed,” etc., means to *avoid* the individual(s). If such a person is speaking or teaching, we are to cut him off. We could say, “I am not interested. We have nothing to talk about.” This would apply to a *serious* doctrinal error such as universal salvation. We should not recognize as a brother one who teaches universal salvation, nor should we vote for him as a speaker, for this is a dangerous and pernicious doctrine. Such a one believes that even Satan will be saved eventually and that all will be saved. This sounds great—it sounds better than the truth—but it is contrary to the Bible.

“Let him be accursed” means that we should *completely* sever our relationship with the individual and no longer recognize him in fellowship. We are not to parley, converse, or reason with advocates of such erroneous doctrine. We must take a *strong* stand against *teachers* of serious doctrinal error. However, one who is new in the truth may not yet be learned enough to make a distinction between true and false doctrines along certain lines. Such a one is *not advocating* the error but is *being indoctrinated*; therefore, we should try to help him. We should avoid an elder or one who is *confirmed* in a serious wrong teaching. Of these, Paul said, “There be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ” (verse 7). They intrude their thinking and advocate it—whether they are on the platform or in the congregation—and thus should be cut off. Incidentally, a person does not have to be an elder in order to “teach.”

Gal. 1:9 As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed.

Verse 9 is a repeat of verse 8. Hence Paul was speaking in *strong* terms to emphasize and impress the lesson. In person, he would have spoken *with force*; in writing, he used repetition.

Q: Is this “accursing” in the same vein as Paul’s statement in 1 Corinthians 16:22, “If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maranatha”?

A: Yes, the principle is the same.

In the New Testament, there are *eight* very marked instances that require disfellowshipping. However, three or four of those instances are based on *character*, not doctrine. Many brethren will take a stand on doctrine but not on character or principles. Other brethren do the reverse. Depending on the situation, we should recognize that disfellowshipping can be done for *either* doctrine or principles of right and wrong, including character. Both are equally important. Here in the letter to the Galatians, we are getting an example of *doctrinal* disfellowshipping. Paul was saying, “If I should preach another gospel, do not follow me, but cut me off; disfellowship me.” Many of the epistles carry this theme, yet it is rarely discussed today. Instead we hear love, love, love.

Comment: In verse 8, Paul used two extreme examples that would probably be most persuasive with the brethren—the apostles and a fallen angel from heaven. But just in case the Galatians still did not get the point, he now added, “If any man [*anyone*] preach any *other* gospel unto you ... let him be accursed.”

Reply: The duplication served the purpose of both emphasis and clarification.

And there is another point. In addition to being an apostle, Paul was the one who introduced the truth to the Galatians. The Bible tells us that we are to remember and highly regard the one who brings us the truth but not to the extent that if he goes astray, we would go astray too. Therefore, we should always have *reserve*—we are not to be suspicious or have a faultfinding disposition, but we are to have common sense. Our commitment is to *Christ*, and not to any other individual in the final analysis. Jesus is our Master and Lord.

Comment: If serious doctrinal and character errors crept into the early Church, how much more we can expect them now, at the end of the age! We should not think it strange that there will be times when someone must be disfellowshipped.

Reply: If we read this epistle dispassionately and analyze it, we will realize and consider that this was the first phase of the Church. The Church in the beginning of its way was relatively pure, being pictured as a “white horse” and as a “woman clothed with the sun[light]” (Rev. 6:2;

12:1). Moreover, the apostles were on hand to expose error, and many of the brethren had known Christ and actually seen him and heard him preach the gospel, yet even in this *ideal* situation, there were causes for disfellowshipping. Today no apostles are on the scene to point out false teachers and wrongdoers, so we must be sure to analyze situations and know Scripture. If Paul were on the scene, we can be sure he would give tongue-lashings and find a lot that needs remedial action.

Gal. 1:10 For do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ.

Comment: We seek to please *God*, not men. Paul spoke similarly to the Thessalonians. “But as we were allowed of God to be put in trust with the gospel, even so we speak; not as pleasing men, but God, which trieth our hearts. For neither at any time used we flattering words, as ye know, nor a cloak of covetousness; God is witness” (1 Thess. 2:4,5). We need to speak according to God’s Word and to avoid the temptation to say things that will make us popular.

Gal. 1:11 But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man.

Gal. 1:12 For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ.

The gospel Paul preached did not come from man. Not only did he speak forcefully to the Galatians, but initially, he received the gospel through a revelation from *Jesus Christ*.

Gal. 1:13 For ye have heard of my conversation in time past in the Jews’ religion, how that beyond measure I persecuted the church of God, and wasted it:

Paul’s reputation for having persecuted the early Church spread outside of Judea, even up into Galatia. Now this former persecutor was a converted Jew. By calling attention to the fact that he was once an enemy but was now a Christian, Paul was trying to impress upon the Galatians how much the truth meant to him. His eyes having been opened, he was more than an ordinary speaker. His life had changed *radically*, and he was *enthusiastic and positive* in his ministry. If he spoke with *power*, it was because he was formerly so *blinded* with prejudice.

In other words, Paul was explaining why he was using tough language such as “let him be accursed” and “so say I now again.” The reason for his strong words was that he wanted to help others. He had been a Jew to the extreme, a Pharisee of the Pharisees, so if he now spoke to a mixed audience of Jews and Gentiles against the Judaizing Christians, the latter could not boast that they knew the Law better than he (Acts 23:6).

After Paul’s conversion, he went apart into seclusion for a long time to reread what he had previously known but with the new perspective that Jesus was the Messiah. Similarly, Jesus went into the wilderness for 40 days after his baptism. He was perfect, but even he had to evaluate the new light he had gotten at Jordan.

“Beyond measure I persecuted the church of God, and wasted it.” Paul not only held the garments of those who stoned Stephen but also became a ringleader in doing the actual persecution (Acts 7:58). In fact, he had been a real holy(?) inquisitor, ferreting out disciples of Christ and going from house to house in an attempt to destroy this new “heretical” religion.

This Epistle to the Galatians is enlightening with regard to Paul’s development. His zeal was *always* for the Lord, even though it was misguided until his conversion to Christ.

Gal. 1:14 And profited in the Jews' religion above many my equals in mine own nation, being more exceedingly zealous of the traditions of my fathers.

Paul was more religious than other Jews of his own age. Because of his zeal and enthusiasm, he was above them in legalism, traditions, and ceremonialism. In short, he was ahead of his peers in his Jewish training.

Gal. 1:15 But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace,

God called Paul by grace from his “mother’s womb” to reveal Jesus to him. Both God and Jesus were involved in Paul’s calling (see verse 1) but in what sense? God does the calling through the Son; therefore, both know of the calling before the individual does.

Thus there was a “separation” or dedication of Paul in the very beginning of his existence. Providentially, he was called *from birth*, although for a while, he seemed to be going on the wrong path with the persecution of the saints through his misguided zeal. Providential training and care were over his life from the beginning, but even though God had called Paul and had him in mind, He did not reveal His Son until the trip to Damascus.

Comment: Verse 15 supports the thought that some of the consecrated can look back on their life prior to consecration and see certain turning points where God intervened, for He knew in advance that someday they would consecrate.

Reply: Yes, some of the brethren had this experience prior to consecration—but to a lesser degree than Paul.

Comment: Jeremiah used similar words: “Then the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations” (Jer. 1:4,5).

Gal. 1:16 To reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen; immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood:

Gal. 1:17 Neither went I up to Jerusalem to them which were apostles before me; but I went into Arabia, and returned again unto Damascus.

Paul went to Arabia to sort out his thinking. We surmise that possibly he went even to Mount Sinai during this period of time. After his sojourn in Arabia, he returned to Damascus. In the interim of time between Paul’s getting the vision and his return to Damascus, he did not see anyone; that is, he did not confer with the disciples or go to Jerusalem but went into the wilderness, for he needed to readjust himself with the Scriptures he already had. Upon his return to Damascus, he conferred with the disciples there and preached vigorously.

Luke recorded the Book of Acts, and certainly he knew about Paul’s ministry, for they traveled together. While the Book of Acts starts with information about Peter, the greater part of the book pertains to the activities of Paul.

We will stop here and insert a discourse to harmonize, in chronological sequence, the events of Galatians 1 and 2 with those in the Book of Acts. While the writings of others on the subject of Paul’s conversion and subsequent actions explain verses in Galatians or pertinent verses in Acts, they do not harmonize both accounts. As a result, there seems to be a very apparent

contradiction. Therefore, we need to take a little time to harmonize Acts and Galatians.

Chronological Harmony of Paul's Activities in Galatians 1 and 2 with Acts

The sequential order of Paul's activities in Galatians is fine as far as that epistle is concerned, but as other epistles are read and *especially* the Book of Acts, certain questions arise as to how to properly integrate all of the events. At first, there seem to be some discrepancies, which we will try to harmonize. To our knowledge, this subject, which is rather involved, has never been treated by any writer because of certain difficulties. However, we believe the difficulties can be ironed out.

Acts 9:1-18 tells of Paul's conversion.

“And Saul [Paul], yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, went unto the high priest,

“And desired of him letters to Damascus to the synagogues, that if he found any of this way, whether they were men or women, he might bring them bound unto Jerusalem.

“And as he journeyed, he came near Damascus: and suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven:

“And he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?

“And he said, Who art thou, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest: it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks.

“And he trembling and astonished said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do.

“And the men which journeyed with him stood speechless, hearing a voice, but seeing no man.

“And Saul arose from the earth; and when his eyes were opened, he saw no man: but they led him by the hand, and brought him into Damascus.

“And he was three days without sight, and neither did eat nor drink.

“And there was a certain disciple at Damascus, named Ananias; and to him said the Lord in a vision, Ananias. And he said, Behold, I am here, Lord.

“And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the street which is called Straight, and inquire in the house of Judas for one called Saul, of Tarsus: for, behold, he prayeth,

“And hath seen in a vision a man named Ananias coming in, and putting his hand on him, that he might receive his sight.

“Then Ananias answered, Lord, I have heard by many of this man, how much evil he hath done to thy saints at Jerusalem:

“And here he hath authority from the chief priests to bind all that call on thy name.

“But the Lord said unto him, Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel:

“For I will show him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake.

“And Ananias went his way, and entered into the house; and putting his hands on him said, Brother Saul, the Lord, even Jesus, that appeared unto thee in the way as thou camest, hath sent me, that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost.

“And immediately there fell from his eyes as it had been scales: and he received sight forthwith, and arose, and was baptized.”

Then Acts 9:19 reads, “And when he had received meat, he was strengthened. Then was Saul certain days with the disciples which were at Damascus.” The first part of the verse, “And when he had received meat, he was strengthened,” has to do with the Apostle Paul’s conversion. After he was struck blind by a light from heaven and converted, the Lord appointed Ananias to partially restore Paul’s sight and to anoint and instruct him on certain matters. As Ananias put his hands on Paul, “immediately there fell from his eyes ... scales: and he received sight forthwith, and arose, and was baptized.” Then follow the first nine words of verse 19: “And when he had received meat, he was strengthened.” We suggest that verse 19 should *end* after the word “strengthened.” In other words, the rest of the verse happened *later*: “Then was Saul certain days with the disciples which were at Damascus.” The translators incorrectly incorporated this second sentence into verse 19.

Now we will consider Acts 22:12-16, where Paul, at a much later date, recalled and reviewed the circumstance we just read about with Ananias. “And one Ananias, a devout man according to the law, having a good report of all the Jews which dwelt there, Came unto me, and stood, and said unto me, Brother Saul, receive thy sight. And the same hour I looked up upon him” (verses 12 and 13). Incidentally, the wording suggests that Paul was on his knees at the time, for “the same hour” he was able to look “*up* upon him [Ananias].”

Paul continued to review what Ananias had said, “The God of our fathers hath chosen thee, that thou shouldest know his will, and see that Just One, and shouldest hear the voice of his mouth” (verse 14). (Just previously Saul had *seen* the risen Lord and *heard* his voice: “Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?”) Notice that it was *God* who had appointed Paul, not Jesus.

Ananias spoke further: “For thou shalt be his witness unto all men of what thou hast seen and heard. And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord” (verses 15 and 16). Here we see that Paul, an *apostle*, was baptized with *Jesus’* baptism to have his sins washed away. This recounting by Paul of the mission of Ananias in connection with his own baptism and the receiving of his sight ties in with Acts 9:17-19a.

Next we will turn to Galatians 1:15,16, where Paul said, “It pleased God, who separated me from my mother’s womb, and called me by his grace, To reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen.” Again we are told that *God* appointed Paul. The last part of verse 16 brings in the chronology aspect: “Immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood.” Thus, *as soon as Paul was baptized*, he was driven of the spirit into a condition of separation (similar to Jesus at his baptism) and went into the wilderness in Arabia. He did not consult, parley, fellowship, or visit with the brethren. “Neither went I up to Jerusalem to them which were apostles before me; but I went into Arabia [which took time], and returned again [later] unto Damascus” (Gal 1:17). The sequence thus far is that Paul’s sight was partially restored in Damascus, he was baptized, he did not communicate with others or go to Jerusalem on the way but went directly into the wilderness in Arabia (a condition of separation), and eventually he returned to Damascus. Here the account does not state how long Paul was in Arabia, but he did return to Damascus after that experience.

Now we will go to the last half of Acts 9:19, “Then was Saul certain days with the disciples which were at Damascus.” Paul could not have gone to the disciples right after his baptism, for he said in very positive words that he did not confer with flesh and blood but went to Arabia

and then returned to Damascus later. Therefore, it was *after returning from Arabia* that Paul first “conferred with flesh and blood” at Damascus. “And straightway he preached Christ in the synagogues [at Damascus], that he [Jesus] is the Son of God” (Acts 9:20).

The account in Acts 9 continues, “But all that heard him were amazed, and said; Is not this he that destroyed them which called on this name in Jerusalem, and [then] came hither for that intent, that he might bring them bound unto the chief priests? But Saul increased the more in strength, and confounded the Jews which dwelt at Damascus, proving that this is very Christ” (Acts 9:21,22). Hence we see that Paul began his public ministry upon his return to Damascus from Arabia—and the more he was opposed and rejected, the stronger he got and the more zealous he became.

As we continue, we will find that the accounts in Galatians and Acts do harmonize and are in sequence. Returning to Galatians 1:18,19, we read, “Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter, and abode with him fifteen days. But other of the apostles saw I none, save James the Lord’s brother.” We know that when Paul went to Jerusalem to see Peter and James, he went there from Damascus, but the question is, When did he leave Damascus for this visit? We feel that this visit occurred before Paul’s ministry in Damascus was completely stopped because of persecution. In other words, *during* his ministry in Damascus, Paul went to Jerusalem for one of the feasts, and while there, he visited only Peter (for 15 days) and the Apostle James, the Lord’s brother. Thus he took time out for a *brief* visit and subsequently returned to Damascus, where he continued his public ministry until he was stopped and the disciples let him down in a basket.

Next, notice Galatians 1:20, “Now the things which I write unto you, behold, before God, *I lie not.*” This verse has rather puzzled us because of the *strength* with which Paul affirmed that he *was telling the truth* with regard to this experience in his life. For the time being, we will leave in abeyance the reason for his speaking, as it were, with God’s oath. The answer will become apparent as we proceed. In other words, Galatians 1:18-20 was the next sequence after Paul preached in the synagogues of Damascus. He took time to slip away to visit Jerusalem with the purpose or intent of seeing Peter and James. Probably the primary motivation for this brief visit was to get more details about the life of Christ. Who could inform Paul better than Peter, who was so close to the Master, and James, the natural “brother” of Jesus, who could supply details prior to when Peter knew him?

Acts 9:23-25 reads as follows: “And after that many days were fulfilled, the [Damascus] Jews took counsel to kill him. But their laying await was known of Saul. And they watched the gates day and night to kill him. Then the disciples took him by night, and let him down by the wall in a basket.” Paul, having returned to his Damascus preaching, was in time sought by the Jews there, who wanted to kill him. However, the brethren helped Paul to escape, letting him down over the wall in a basket at night.

Acts 9:26,27 tells of Paul’s next experience. “And when Saul was come to Jerusalem, he assayed to join himself to the disciples: but they were all afraid of him, and believed not that he was a disciple. But Barnabas took him, and brought him to the apostles, and declared unto them how he had seen the Lord in the way, and that he had spoken to him, and how he had preached boldly at Damascus in the name of Jesus.” On this second visit to Jerusalem, after having been let down in a basket over the wall at Damascus, Paul found that the disciples were afraid of him. Therefore, Barnabas took him in hand to reassure the apostles that Paul’s conversion was bona fide and sincere. In other words, Barnabas vouched for Paul, saying that he was not a spy trying to get into the machinery of the Church to better destroy them. We see, then, that Barnabas had left the isle of Cyprus and was now with the disciples in the Jerusalem area. Also, Peter had left the Galilee area, so both he and Barnabas were now resident in Jerusalem.

Next we will tie in where the Apostle Paul, much later in life, recalled this incident when he was talking to King Agrippa. Acts 26:19,20 reads, “Whereupon, O king Agrippa, I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision: But showed first unto them of Damascus, and at Jerusalem, and throughout all the coasts of Judaea, and then to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance.” Paul was saying that when he was converted, the first place he preached publicly was Damascus. (When he returned from Arabia, he went back to Damascus and there preached boldly in the synagogues about Christ.) The next area of concentration in his public ministry was Jerusalem, that is, *after* Barnabas had introduced him to the brethren and the disciples realized his conversion was genuine.

Acts 22:17-21 is also a later reference to this same stay in Jerusalem when Barnabas helped Paul. “And it came to pass, that, when I was come again to Jerusalem, even while I prayed in the temple, I was in a trance.” (In between verses 16 and 17, Paul went to visit Peter and James in Jerusalem. Now he had returned to Jerusalem the second time. Not only was Paul introduced to the brethren, but also he had an unusual experience in which the Lord began to give him visions. Paul was in the Temple at the time and sort of in a trance. “And [I, Paul] saw him [the Lord] saying unto me, Make haste, and get thee quickly out of Jerusalem: for they will not receive thy testimony concerning me. And I said, Lord, they know that I imprisoned and beat in every synagogue them that believed on thee: And when the blood of thy martyr Stephen was shed, I also was standing by, and consenting unto his death, and kept the raiment of them that slew him. And he said unto me, Depart: for I will send thee far hence unto the Gentiles” (verses 18-21). Paul was told to leave Jerusalem quickly; he was being sent “far hence unto the Gentiles.”

Acts 9:28,29 fills in more information about Paul’s activities in Jerusalem and the development that led to his being told in vision to leave and go unto the Gentiles. “And he was with them [the disciples] coming in and going out at Jerusalem” (verse 28). In other words, Paul was *active* in Jerusalem for a period of time. “And he spake boldly in the name of the Lord Jesus, and disputed against the Grecians: but they went about to slay him” (verse 29). In other words, Paul was preaching boldly about Jesus and disputing against the Greeks. Then God gave him the vision in the Temple, informing him that the Greeks were not receptive to his message and were planning to slay him. The vision further instructed Paul that he was to leave Jerusalem, for God had other plans for him. First, however, Paul tried to reason with the Lord that those in Jerusalem should know his words were true because they knew he had formerly persecuted Christians (see Acts 22:19,20). Apparently, then, if the Lord had not given Paul the vision, he was willing to die. He was not afraid and would have remained in Jerusalem. Now, however, Paul was willing to leave.

Acts 9:30,31 continues the account: “Which when the brethren knew, they brought him down to Caesarea, and sent him forth to Tarsus. Then had the churches rest throughout all Judaea and Galilee and Samaria, and were edified; and walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, were multiplied.” When the brethren learned that God had told Paul in vision to leave and go far hence unto the Gentiles, they took him to Caesarea. From there, he journeyed up to Tarsus and eventually had a ministry to the Gentiles.

Galatians 1:21-24 reads, “Afterwards I [Paul] came into the regions of Syria, and Cilicia; And was unknown by face unto the churches of Judaea which were in Christ: But they had heard only, That he which persecuted us in times past now preacheth the faith which once he destroyed. And they glorified God in me.” After the brethren expedited Paul’s trip from Caesarea, he went up to Tarsus, which bordered on Syria and was the capital of Cilicia. These regions were Paul’s home area, but the brethren there did not know him by face. They had heard about him but had not met him and, therefore, did not recognize him.

Acts chapter 10 belongs here chronologically, but it will be discussed at the end.

Acts 11:25-30 states, “Then departed Barnabas to Tarsus, for to seek Saul: And when he had found him, he brought him unto Antioch. And it came to pass, that a whole year they assembled themselves with the church, and taught much people. And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch. And in these days came prophets from Jerusalem unto Antioch. And there stood up one of them named Agabus, and signified by the Spirit that there should be great dearth throughout all the world: which came to pass in the days of Claudius Caesar. Then the disciples, every man according to his ability, determined to send relief unto the brethren which dwelt in Judaea: Which also they did, and sent it to the elders by the hands of Barnabas and Saul.” Barnabas left Antioch and went to Tarsus to find Paul, who was in the region of Cilicia and Syria. Barnabas brought Paul back to Antioch, and they remained there for a while and taught many. When Agabus prophesied of a coming famine in Jerusalem, the disciples in Antioch contributed to a relief fund, which was subsequently committed to the responsibility of Barnabas and Paul to take to the brethren in Judaea.

Acts 12:1,2 picks up the narrative, saying, “Now about that time Herod the king stretched forth his hands to vex certain of the church. And he killed James [Zebedee] the brother of John with the sword.”

The next significant point is stated in Acts 12:25, “And Barnabas and Saul returned from Jerusalem, when they had fulfilled their ministry [of delivering relief money to the brethren], and took with them John, whose surname was Mark.” Notice that when Barnabas and Paul returned to Antioch, they brought John Mark with them (see Acts 13:1). Hence we know that John Mark accompanied them on the first missionary journey later on. Not only was he probably a resident of Jerusalem, but we believe he was the one who had a linen cloth around his body at the time of Jesus’ apprehension. In that incident, someone was awakened out of sleep and came out in a sheet and was stripped naked by Jesus’ apprehenders (Mark 14:51,52).

In the next chapter, Acts 13:2 tells that Barnabas and Paul were about to be sent on their first missionary tour. “As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them.” John Mark went with them on that first journey, which was not that long. They went to the isle of Cyprus, and from there, they sailed to towns on the mainland or underbelly of Asia Minor (Derbe, Lystra, Iconium, etc.). In the meantime, in transit from Cyprus to the mainland, John Mark deserted them, and Barnabas and Paul continued on alone. After visiting the towns, they returned to Antioch and stayed there for quite a while. Thus ended the first missionary journey.

Acts 14:26 tells about the return of Barnabas and Paul to Antioch. “And thence sailed [from Asia Minor] to Antioch, from whence they had been recommended to the grace of God for the work which they fulfilled.” Just as Barnabas and Paul had faithfully fulfilled their ministry with regard to the relief money, so they now fulfilled their responsibility of the first missionary tour. Acts 14:27,28 reads, “And when they were come, and had gathered the church together, they rehearsed all that God had done with them, and how he had opened the door of faith unto the Gentiles. And there they abode long time with the disciples.” In other words, on their return after the rather short expedition, Paul and Barnabas stayed in Antioch for some time.

Acts 15:1,2,4 reads, “And certain men which came down from Judaea taught the brethren, and said, Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved. When therefore Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and disputation with them, they determined that Paul and Barnabas, and certain other of them, should go up to Jerusalem unto the apostles and elders about this question.... And when they were come to Jerusalem, they were received of

the church, and of the apostles and elders, and they declared all things that God had done with them.” While Paul and Barnabas were at Antioch, the Jewish question came up that the Christian needed to be circumcised in order to be saved. As a result, the brethren were greatly troubled, so they felt it advisable to send Paul and Barnabas to Jerusalem, along with “certain other of them,” to confer with the other apostles and get the matter resolved.

Now, after much intervening activity, we will read Galatians 2:1, “Then fourteen years after I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, and took Titus with me also.” While Paul and Barnabas were appointed to go to Jerusalem from Antioch about the Jewish circumcision question, we see that Titus, a convert of the first missionary tour, accompanied them. In other words, Titus first accompanied Paul and Barnabas back to Antioch, and now he also went with them to Jerusalem. The time setting was “fourteen years after,” but the question is, After what? The answer will be discussed later. First, we want to read about what happened in connection with the circumcision issue.

Galatians 2:2-5 reads, “And I went up by revelation, and communicated unto them that gospel which I preach among the Gentiles, but privately to them which were of reputation, lest by any means I should run, or had run, in vain. But neither Titus, who was with me, being a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised: And that because of false brethren unawares brought in, who came in privily to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage: To whom we gave place by subjection, no, not for an hour; that the truth of the gospel might continue with you.” Paul went to Jerusalem to discuss circumcision with the apostles, but before doing so *publicly* with the convened elders and others, he went to the chief ones to communicate *privately* with them first. Paul followed this procedure so as not to unduly embarrass the chief ones, but to give them advance notice and time for preparation. (In other epistles, Paul’s advice is that *wherever possible* in dealing with others, we should try to be gentle and use decorum and tact. However, sometimes circumstances *force* us to behave in a manner that may *appear* unseemly.) While Paul was discussing the matter privately, false brethren came in as spies and wanted to force Titus, a Greek, to be circumcised. Hence this problem about circumcision and trying to force Christians to obey the Law for salvation was rife in Jerusalem as well as in Antioch. However, Paul would not yield to this pressure—“no, not [even] for an hour”! As a result, Titus was not circumcised.

Elsewhere we are told how *strongly* Paul objected, for he was more interested in obeying *God* than in pleasing man. Paul had gone privately and discreetly to the apostles, but he had to *strongly withstand* the false element when the council was convened *before all*.

Galatians 2:6-10 continues, “But of these [highly respected ones in the Church, some of whom were false brethren] who seemed to be somewhat, (whatsoever they were, it maketh no matter to me: God accepteth no man’s person:) for they who seemed to be somewhat in conference added nothing to me: But contrariwise, when they saw that the gospel of the uncircumcision was committed unto me, as the gospel of the circumcision was unto Peter; (For he that wrought effectually in Peter to the apostleship of the circumcision, the same was mighty in me toward the Gentiles:) And when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given unto me, they gave to me and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship; that we should go unto the heathen, and they unto the circumcision. Only they would that we should remember the poor; the same which I also was forward to do.” The council, or conference, was convened with the apostles, elders, and false brethren all being present. Except for the false brethren, the others were more amenable to Paul’s reasoning. When they listened to the facts and the logic, they realized that God had committed the gospel of the uncircumcision to Paul, and they expressed their approval, with James of Alphaeus, Peter, and John giving him the right hand of fellowship.

Acts 15:5-21 is an account of the *same* council in Jerusalem.

“But there rose up certain of the sect of the Pharisees which believed, saying, That it was needful to circumcise them, and to command them to keep the law of Moses.

“And the apostles and elders came together for to consider of this matter.

“And when there had been much disputing, Peter rose up, and said unto them, Men and brethren, ye know how that a good while ago God made choice among us, that the Gentiles by my mouth should hear the word of the gospel, and believe.

“And God, which knoweth the hearts, bare them witness, giving them the Holy Ghost, even as he did unto us;

“And put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith.

“Now therefore why tempt ye God, to put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples, which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear?

“But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved, even as they.

“Then all the multitude kept silence, and gave audience to Barnabas and Paul, declaring [that is, who declared] what miracles and wonders God had wrought among the Gentiles by them.

“And after they had held their peace, James answered, saying, Men and brethren, hearken unto me:

“Simeon hath declared how God at the first did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name.

“And to this agree the words of the prophets; as it is written,

“After this I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up:

“That the residue of men might seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles, upon whom my name is called, saith the Lord, who doeth all these things.

“Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world.

“Wherefore my sentence is, that we trouble not them, which from among the Gentiles are turned to God:

“But that we write unto them, that they abstain from pollutions of idols, and from fornication, and from things strangled, and from blood.

“For Moses of old time hath in every city them that preach him, being read in the synagogues every sabbath day.”

This account gives the nature of the “much disputing” at the conference between the false and the true brethren. Paul and Barnabas were given opportunity to state their case. James then talked about what Peter said and summed up by showing that the argument was really in favor of Paul and Barnabas. The recommendation was that the Gentiles should abstain from pollutions of idols, fornication, things strangled, and blood—and Galatians 2:10 added that they were to “remember the poor.” But the Gentiles were NOT under the Law.

Acts 15:22-35 continues.

“Then pleased it the apostles and elders, with the whole church, to send chosen men of their own company to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas; namely, Judas surnamed Barsabas, and Silas, chief men among the brethren:

“And they wrote letters by them after this manner; The apostles and elders and brethren send greeting unto the brethren which are of the Gentiles in Antioch and Syria and Cilicia:

“Forasmuch as we have heard, that certain which went out from us have troubled you with words, subverting your souls, saying, Ye must be circumcised, and keep the law: to whom we gave no such commandment:

“It seemed good unto us, being assembled with one accord, to send chosen men unto you with our beloved Barnabas and Paul,

“Men that have hazarded their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

“We have sent therefore Judas and Silas, who shall also tell you the same things by mouth.

“For it seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things;

“That ye abstain from meats offered to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled, and from fornication: from which if ye keep yourselves, ye shall do well. Fare ye well.

“So when they were dismissed [in Jerusalem], they came to Antioch: and when they had gathered the multitude together, they delivered the epistle:

“Which when they had read, they rejoiced for the consolation.

“And Judas and Silas, being prophets also themselves, exhorted the brethren with many words, and confirmed them.

“And after they had tarried there a space, they were let go in peace from the brethren unto the apostles.

“Notwithstanding it pleased Silas to abide there still.

“Paul also and Barnabas continued in Antioch, teaching and preaching the word of the Lord, with many others also.”

The apostles and elders and all the church in Jerusalem chose to send some of the Jerusalem brethren (Judas Barsabas and Silas) back to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas to set the matter straight on the circumcision issue. Moreover, the apostles and elders gave them a letter to take along to explain the issue. The Antioch brethren rejoiced when they read it. (Incidentally, the reason for sending Judas and Silas was to provide two witnesses who could affirm the genuineness of the letter.) Paul and Barnabas stayed in Antioch for a while, and Silas chose to remain there also, while Judas went back to Jerusalem.

Now we go back to Galatians 2:11-21.

“But when Peter was come to Antioch, I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed.

“For before that certain came from James, he did eat with the Gentiles: but when they were come, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing them which were of the circumcision.

“And the other Jews dissembled likewise with him; insomuch that Barnabas also was carried away with their dissimulation.

“But when I saw that they walked not uprightly according to the truth of the gospel, I said unto Peter before them all, If thou, being a Jew, livest after the manner of Gentiles, and not as do the Jews, why compellest thou the Gentiles to live as do the Jews?

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

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

“But if, while we seek to be justified by Christ, we ourselves also are found sinners, is therefore Christ the minister of sin? God forbid.

“For if I build again the things which I destroyed, I make myself a transgressor.

“For I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God.

“I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.

“I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain.”

Some time *after* the delegation of Paul, Barnabas, Silas, and Judas Barsabas had returned to Antioch with the results of the conference and the letter, Peter arrived in Antioch also. While Peter was there, Paul had to withstand him to his face for being hypocritical with the Gentiles. (He would not eat with the Gentiles when Jews arrived because he feared those of the circumcision.) Other Christian Jews, and even Barnabas, followed Peter’s lead and dissimulated too. This time Paul did the rebuking *in front of all*, for the circumstances made this necessary. The issue of the Christian’s not being in bondage under the Law and being justified by faith, not by the works of the Law, had been clarified in the Jerusalem council, but here it cropped up again along another line. Paul’s rebuke was strong, and he even used *Peter’s own reasoning* from the conference. *With great humility*, Peter rightly received this hard lesson. And later on, Peter said that Paul was more learned than he on these matters. Lesson: The yoke of the Law should NOT be put on Christians.

Acts 15:36-41 reads, “And some days after Paul said unto Barnabas, Let us go again and visit our brethren in every city where we have preached the word of the Lord, and see how they do. And Barnabas determined to take with them John, whose surname was Mark. But Paul thought not good to take him with them, who departed from them from Pamphylia, and went not with them to the work. And the contention was so sharp between them, that they departed asunder one from the other: and so Barnabas took Mark, and sailed unto Cyprus; And Paul chose Silas, and departed, being recommended by the brethren unto the grace of God. And he went through Syria and Cilicia, confirming the churches.” When the second missionary journey was being contemplated, a dispute arose between Paul and Barnabas. Barnabas wanted to take John Mark along, but Paul said no because John Mark had deserted on the first missionary journey. The contention was so sharp that Paul took Silas with him, while Barnabas and John Mark went to Cyprus.

We harmonized the foregoing Scriptures in Acts and Galatians by integrating them in sequential order. However, we purposely left a gap at Acts chapter 10 for discussion at this

time; that is, we skipped from Acts 9:30,31 and Galatians 1:21-24 over to Acts 11:25. Paul had been put in a trance and told to leave Jerusalem, and the brethren subsequently sent him to Caesarea, from where he went way up to Tarsus. All of these things happened before Barnabas sought Paul out. In that period of time, after Paul's departure to Tarsus, the conversion of Cornelius took place, as set forth in Acts chapter 10. In other words, (1) everything prior to Acts 10 happened *prior to* Cornelius's conversion, and everything that took place in Acts 10 happened *after* Galatians 1:24.

There is another point. Not only did the conversion of Cornelius take place after Paul went to Tarsus, but also we have to place chronologically the stoning death of Stephen, to which Paul had consented. Acts 7 and 8 tell of Stephen's martyrdom; Acts 10 recounts Cornelius' conversion. In between, Acts 9 (plus some events not listed there) took place—but what happened in between is the question. Now we will see why Paul spoke so strongly in Galatians 1:20, "Now the things which I write unto you, behold, before God, *I lie not.*" He was trying to say that he was consecrated, and in the truth, the very year Jesus died or very, very shortly thereafter. It is this fact that the brethren were not aware of, for the first time he went to Jerusalem, he saw only Peter and James, the Lord's brother. On a later trip to Jerusalem, Paul had to be introduced to the brethren by Barnabas. Paul also had been in Arabia and had preached in Damascus. All of these events occurred in between Stephen's martyrdom and Cornelius' conversion, which took place in AD 36, or 3 1/2 years after Jesus' crucifixion. The next question is, When was Stephen martyred? He was martyred not too long after Pentecost. We feel that he had to have around three years to be developed, and those years were during our Lord's earthly ministry. In addition, he had to live past Pentecost in order to be officially identified as a member of the body of Christ. Before that, however, he was a disciple, and he was chosen because he was very noble and active and would do deacon work on behalf of the apostles to give them more freedom to minister and to study the truth.

Now we come to the three years. Remember that when Ananias came to Paul after the latter's conversion, he instructed, "Arise and be baptized." In recounting his experiences, Paul said in effect, "After the scales fell off my eyes and I was baptized, the first thing I did was not to consult with anybody but to go down to Arabia. After being there a while, I returned to Damascus." The point is that *Paul was a consecrated brother* when he was anointed by Ananias and baptized and also when he went to Arabia. Then he returned to Damascus, where he was active. All of these activities took place in a very early period of the Church. Subsequently—that is, *after three years*—he went to Jerusalem. The three years included his visit to Arabia and his preaching in Damascus. How do we know this? If the time period were any longer, Paul would have been consecrated *before* Jesus died on the Cross, which is an *impossibility*. We believe that Paul consecrated in the *same Roman year* in which Jesus died. Jesus died in the spring, on April 3, AD 33, and Pentecost came 50 days later. Shortly after, Paul consented to Stephen's martyrdom. Then Paul was converted and went to Arabia and returned to Damascus to preach. In other words, *his three years of consecration* included his visit to Arabia and his work of preaching in Damascus. If the three years referred to only his preaching in Damascus, his consecration would have occurred before Christ's death—and that could not be. Therefore, Paul was saying, "After the three years of my consecration, I went up to Jerusalem and saw Peter and James." All of these events took place *prior to* the conversion of Cornelius in AD 36. If we subtract 3 from 36, we get AD 33, and a lot happened in the year AD 33—Pentecost, Stephen's martyrdom, Paul's conversion, and his going to Arabia. That is why he said with an oath, "I am telling you the truth."

To confirm his apostleship, Paul needed to see Jesus. Although he did not know him personally—he did not see him face to face or speak with him during his earthly ministry—he had the extraordinary experience on the road to Damascus, whereby he, like the other apostles, could say, "I have *seen and heard* the Lord!" Paul was probably even in Jerusalem

during Jesus' earthly ministry, for he was a Pharisee being taught at the feet of Gamaliel. Surely he heard about Jesus, but that does not mean he personally went out to see and hear him. Certainly Paul would have been aware of Jesus, but for other reasons, unexplained to us, he did not see him at that time. This explanation shows that the persecution of the disciples took place almost immediately after Jesus' death and that Paul was one of the ringleaders in trying to exterminate Christianity.

Thus Paul could say that he was a long time in the truth, and he could speak about Jesus and the events of those days with quite a bit of authority, *even though he did not know Jesus personally*. And he could go to Peter and James to get filled in with details of Jesus' previous life—his youth, his manhood, his consecration, his ministry in Galilee, etc.

This harmonization and integration of pertinent Scriptures in the Book of Acts and Galatians gives us a perspective of what happened. When Paul was sent by revelation to Tarsus, a far place, and was escorted by brethren, the brethren in Jerusalem had peace after his departure and prospered for a time before the next wave of persecution came and financial problems happened at the time of the famine.

Now we will return to the verse-by-verse commentary, starting with Galatians 1:18.

Gal. 1:18 Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter, and abode with him fifteen days.

Gal. 1:19 But other of the apostles saw I none, save James the Lord's brother.

At Jerusalem, Paul saw Peter and James of Alphaeus, "the Lord's brother." Jesus had instructed the apostles to preach the gospel among all nations but to *begin* at Jerusalem (Luke 24:46,47). The gospel was to go first to Jews, next to the Samaritans ("half-breeds"), and then to Gentiles (Acts 8:25). The point of starting in Jerusalem was to reach all the Jews who came three times a year to Jerusalem for the feast days.

Paul had close fellowship with Peter for 15 days and then met with James. No doubt Paul was trying to find out all he could about Jesus.

Gal. 1:20 Now the things which I write unto you, behold, before God, I lie not.

Paul was telling the *truth!* There was a misconception about him, so he wanted it on record that he did not speak to the others at that time. He was trying to straighten out an involved matter that was confused.

Gal. 1:21 Afterwards I came into the regions of Syria, and Cilicia;

Gal. 1:22 And was unknown by face unto the churches of Judaea which were in Christ:

Gal. 1:23 But they had heard only, That he which persecuted us in times past now preacheth the faith which once he destroyed.

Gal. 1:24 And they glorified God in me.

Gal. 2:1 Then fourteen years after I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, and took Titus with me also.

Q: In the statement "then fourteen years after," what was Paul referring to?

A: Paul mentioned three years in Galatians 1:18. Therefore, we should add 14 years to the three years because Paul was speaking in sequence. In other words, “After a total of 17 years from my consecration, I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, and took Titus with me also.” This explanation slides the chronological sequence of the scale of Paul’s consecration so that it is three to five years earlier than is generally considered.

The three years covered from the time of Paul’s consecration through his going to Arabia, his return to Damascus to preach, and then his visit to Jerusalem to see Peter. In other words, Paul’s visit to Peter and James took place three years after his consecration. From that three-year period, there was an additional 14-year period for a total of 17 years from Paul’s consecration when he “went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, and took Titus” with him. Paul was building from a starting point of three years, and now, 14 years after the three years, he was referring to 17 years later.

Q: Did Paul go back and forth between Damascus and Jerusalem on two different occasions in this early period of his life?

A: Yes. In other words, when Paul went from Arabia to Damascus, he started to preach boldly. Then he traveled to Jerusalem to see Peter and James. After that, Paul returned to Damascus and continued to preach for “many days.” When, because of persecution, he was let down over the Damascus wall in a basket, he went to Jerusalem again and found that the brethren were afraid of him. However, Barnabas introduced Paul to the apostles, certifying the genuineness of his consecration. Now Galatians 2:1 picks up the narrative at a much later period of time, when Barnabas and Titus were with him after the first missionary tour.

Comment: It was not long, then, after the death of Judas that the Lord selected Paul as the replacement.

Reply: That is correct. Paul was building a strong case for his apostleship. It is important to realize that shortly after the death of Judas, God filled the vacancy so that there would again be 12 apostles. Also, the Lord did not long permit the apostles’ choice of Matthias as the twelfth apostle to seem legitimate. Later Paul had another problem when brethren laid their hands on him, for he had to show that the *Lord’s* hands being laid on him were what really certified his apostleship. From another standpoint, the fact that Paul’s conversion occurred *so early* is a good reason why he was the messenger to Ephesus, the first period of the Church.

We do not know how long there was a gap of inactivity in Paul’s ministry while he was in Arabia. He could have been there for three months, four months, a year, or even a year and a half. However, the point is that the three years had to include his preaching in Damascus, among other things.

Gal. 2:2 And I went up by revelation, and communicated unto them that gospel which I preach among the Gentiles, but privately to them which were of reputation, lest by any means I should run, or had run, in vain.

Paul went to Jerusalem “by [special] revelation,” not just on a whim.

Q: Why did Paul say, “I preach[ed] among the Gentiles, but privately to them which were of reputation, lest by any means I should run, or had run, in vain”? With regard to “running,” was Paul referring to his own effort and labor?

A: Yes. As an apostle and an ambassador of the Lord, he had a special revelation and special

duties to perform. It is one thing to obey God in our own personal life, but as an apostle, he had another obligation, which was to use the greatest amount of wisdom possible to make converts to Christ. Making converts had to be done the *Lord's* way, not his own way. He was fearful that in trying to be faithful to his calling, he might overlook the Lord's method, and lest he unnecessarily stumble some, he went "privately to them which were of reputation." In other words, why raise up unnecessary anger or strife if his communicating could be accepted in this private fashion? In one of his epistles, he said that we have to be careful lest we destroy brethren with our knowledge. Instead we should consider that they are thoroughly dedicated and consecrated to the Lord and not harp on an issue and bear down hard every time we see them. Through tact, we should try to eliminate unnecessary friction yet not compromise on principle.

By not only running in the present life as an apostle, the office for which he had been appointed, but also being faithful in that office, Paul did not want to run in vain by doing things in his own way. Therefore, he went privately to the elders and other apostles lest their pride would be a barrier to accepting his strong message. Thus where he could, he went privately, but on other occasions, he went publicly. For instance, when Peter dissembled at the table, Paul rebuked him *publicly* because it was necessary for all who were present to see the impropriety of Peter's hypocrisy. Had Paul not rebuked Peter openly before all, he would have lost the opportunity to resolve the matter with those who were observing. Those individuals would have returned to their several locations with the wrong thought on the Law versus Christ. Had Paul remained silent, he would have been compromising principle for the sake of peace.

In talking privately with elders and other apostles, who were teachers themselves, Paul might even have reasoned with them on Scripture. However, had he done so in the presence of others as an audience, it would have looked like he was trying to demean the elders and the apostles.

Gal. 2:3 But neither Titus, who was with me, being a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised:

Other brethren had insisted on circumcision for Titus, but Paul did not permit him to be circumcised because he was a Greek. Paul was refuting those Jewish Christians who said that the Christian had to obey the Law and Christ. Judaizing Christians were troublemakers throughout Paul's ministry. (Originally, the other apostles were also confused on this matter, but they were won over to Paul's thinking.)

Gal. 2:4 And that because of false brethren unawares brought in, who came in privily to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage:

Judaizing Christians "came in privily to spy out our liberty." These false Christians had never really grasped the fundamental truth of the grace that is in Christ Jesus. Although they were respected individuals who were called "brethren" and were eloquent in speech, financially prosperous, or outstanding in some other superficial way, they were false brethren. Here they came with a wrong motive, for they were purposely trying to cause trouble and find fault. Considering Paul to be too liberal in regard to Gentiles, they wanted to make Titus, a *Gentile*, the center of the issue and force him to be circumcised. In other words, these false brethren came with the motive not to try to understand and reason on the matter but to stipulate that all—Jews and Gentiles—had to obey the Law in order to be a Christian. They wanted to stop the gospel from going to the Gentiles, unless they first became proselytes to the Jewish faith and then accepted Christ. In short, the Judaizing element wanted to bring the Christian "into [the] bondage" of the Law. As here, *both principle and doctrine* are important in keeping the Church pure.

Gal. 2:5 To whom we gave place by subjection, no, not for an hour; that the truth of the gospel might continue with you.

Verse 5 suggests that those who “came in privily” did not remain quiet; they came in stealthily but created an issue. However, Paul stood his ground and did not in any way compromise or give in to the false brethren on the issue of Titus’s circumcision. The statement in verse 3 that Titus “was compelled to be circumcised” shows pressure on the part of the Judaizing element. If they could not compel Paul, they would put pressure on Titus himself; that is, they would try to separate or wean him from Paul’s influence. However, Paul would not allow the separation to take place.

Notice that Paul used the plural pronoun “us” in verse 4; namely, the false brethren wanted to “bring us into bondage.” If Titus had ignored Paul and agreed to circumcision, he would have been in bondage under the Law, and if Paul had agreed to circumcision, he would have been in bondage, for henceforth he would have preached to new converts that before they could experience the grace of Jesus, they first had to come under the yoke of the Law. One cannot obey two masters!

Gal. 2:6 But of these who seemed to be somewhat, (whatsoever they were, it maketh no matter to me: God accepteth no man’s person:) for they who seemed to be somewhat in conference added nothing to me:

Gal. 2:7 But contrariwise, when they saw that the gospel of the uncircumcision was committed unto me, as the gospel of the circumcision was unto Peter;

Paul did not trouble himself to expose the false brethren at this time, for to have done so would have distracted from the very important principle of circumcision, the issue immediately at hand. These false ones were of reputation, but they were *wrong*. Paul’s mind was set, and these false brethren did not sway him regardless of reputation.

Paul came off victorious, not only personally but also in winning the battle with the brethren. Although he did not convince the false ones, he persuaded the others who were assembled there. By Paul’s presence and firm action, they began to see the light; they recognized that he had been called to preach to the Gentiles and that his thinking was correct. Had Paul been wobbly, he would have lost the debate, and the truth would have suffered.

Gal. 2:8 (For he that wrought effectually in Peter to the apostleship of the circumcision, the same was mighty in me toward the Gentiles:)

Gal. 2:9 And when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given unto me, they gave to me and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship; that we should go unto the heathen, and they unto the circumcision.

Even James, Peter, and John were not too clear on the issue of circumcision until Paul reasoned with them. Now they gave Paul and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship and encouraged them in their ministry to the Gentiles. Meanwhile, they would continue in their ministry to the Jews. Incidentally, Paul was sustained in his Christian walk by multiple visions, which raised him out of low points.

Gal. 2:10 Only they would that we should remember the poor; the same which I also was forward to do.

Gal. 2:11 But when Peter was come to Antioch, I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed.

Gal. 2:12 For before that certain came from James, he did eat with the Gentiles: but when they were come, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing them which were of the circumcision.

Gal. 2:13 And the other Jews dissembled likewise with him; insomuch that Barnabas also was carried away with their dissimulation.

Gal. 2:14 But when I saw that they walked not uprightly according to the truth of the gospel, I said unto Peter before them all, If thou, being a Jew, livest after the manner of Gentiles, and not as do the Jews, why compellest thou the Gentiles to live as do the Jews?

Gal. 2:15 We who are Jews by nature, and not sinners of the Gentiles,

Gal. 2:16 Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.

Gal. 2:17 But if, while we seek to be justified by Christ, we ourselves also are found sinners, is therefore Christ the minister of sin? God forbid.

Gal. 2:18 For if I build again the things which I destroyed, I make myself a transgressor.

Q: What “things” did Paul destroy? Was he referring to the Law? Was he saying, “If I brought in the Law again and forced the Christian to obey it, I would be building again the things which I destroyed”?

A: Paul had already “destroyed” justification by the works of the Law by showing that the Christian is justified by faith in the blood of Jesus Christ, so if he now gave in to the Judaizing element, he would be undoing what he had properly done and would make himself a “transgressor.” Incidentally, this verse shows that disobedience incurs more responsibility after one has light than before he is enlightened. This is true both doctrinally and morally. For example, we should think much more kindly and sympathetically of those who cannot see the doctrine of Jesus’ invisible presence than of those who, having seen the light, utterly reject the doctrine and go into darkness. Of course, the presence is only one facet of development. Some acquire knowledge and development along a certain line at a different time period in their Christian walk but are far more developed along other lines. What matters most is the finished picture, where a person needs both grace and truth to have a rounded-out Christian character.

Gal. 2:19 For I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God.

Gal. 2:20 I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.

Gal. 2:21 I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain.

Comment: Paul said, “I am [present tense] crucified with Christ” because he considered his crucifixion of the flesh to be ongoing until death. The Pastor brought in the thought of the new

creature versus the old creature, the flesh.

Reply: Paul treated the subject from two different perspectives, which have to be kept separate. (1) He said, “We walk in newness of life as though we had been dead and are now alive.” (2) He also said, “I am being baptized in death.” From the first perspective, Christians walk as children of the day, and from the second perspective, they are being planted in death. Paul also taught that the Christian is an embryo in a womb, awaiting birth. In another picture, he taught that the Christian is a little child needing the milk of development in order to grow to maturity in Christ. If pictures are not mixed, there is no confusion.

Gal. 3:1 O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you?

The words “that ye should not obey the truth” are spurious.

“O foolish Galatians.” Bro. Magnuson used to illustrate a principle by reading a letter from a son at college who wrote to his dad for money. He read the *same* letter with two different intonations. First, the son appeared to be ungrateful and selfish, and then he appeared to be the opposite—timid and having problems but embarrassed to ask his father for money. Similarly, “O foolish Galatians” can be read with different intonations. We believe that Paul said this in a *fatherly and patronizing* way, not in a reprimanding manner. Since Paul and Barnabas had established this church on their first missionary journey, the brethren there knew Paul’s manner of speaking. Also, in the past, both writing and speaking were done more spontaneously, whereas today we sometimes speak one way and write another because we are conscious of grammar, diction, etc. Sometimes people speak poorly but write well, for example. However, many individuals write as they speak, so when we read a letter from such a person, we can see his personality in the letter. The point is that we think Paul spoke in a fatherly way here, and not with sternness.

Paul was asking a question: “O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you?” Why did Paul mention the “eyes”? On his first missionary tour, he went to Cyprus and then to different towns on the mainland of Asia Minor. Galatia was a territory (or a province) in which Paul had established several ecclesias. Therefore, in writing to the Galatians, he was addressing all of these locales, such as Derbe, Lystra, and Perga.

To repeat the question: Why did Paul mention “eyes”? We would understand that when Paul expounded the gospel to the brethren in Galatia, Barnabas and others were with him. In telling about the life and death of Jesus, they all gave living *eyewitness* testimony, for they had actually seen him firsthand. Since Jesus was crucified at Passover, a high holy season, Jews were gathered in Jerusalem from all over, and a great many of them witnessed his crucifixion, or at least the aftermath. Thus their testimony was more than just talk—in fact, it was *so vivid and forceful* that it was almost as if the hearers were witnessing the event themselves.

Gal. 3:2 This only would I learn of you, Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?

Paul was very direct: “This only would I learn of you—did you receive the Spirit by the works of the Law, or by believing what was preached to you?” Earlier the Galatians had heard Paul’s preaching and were persuaded it was the truth. Then they consecrated and were begotten by the Holy Spirit, but they also got a mechanical gift when Paul laid his hands on them. Thus Paul was referring to the gift of the Holy Spirit, as well as the new understanding and knowledge, and could say to them, “Received ye the Spirit...?” The gift was a token, or a concrete evidence,

that something new had actually entered their life. And how had they received the Holy Spirit? It was through their hearing and accepting the *teaching about Jesus* (and not a teaching about the Law). Salvation comes *by faith*, not by the works of the Law. Paul cut through all the debris of understanding to say, “This one thing I would like to know about the gift of the Spirit that you received. When it came into your life, did it come as a result of your knowledge of and obedience to the Law?” No, it came in connection with hearing Paul’s preaching.

Paul used many lines of reasoning to bolster the thought that the gospel is one of justification by *faith*, rather than by works. Many of these Christians were devout Jews who had conscientiously tried to obey the Law all their life with nothing spectacular happening. Then along came a man, with associates, who preached the most fabulous message they had ever heard, and it opened up new vistas to them. They believed the message, consecrated, and received a gift. Did the gift come by the works of the Law or by the hearing of faith (by hearing a message and complying)? Paul got right to the heart of the matter.

Gal. 3:3 Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?

The Revised Standard has, “Are you so foolish? Having begun with the Spirit, are you now ending with the flesh?” Christians should pray, “Lord, *increase our faith*.” Increased faith will produce works, and not vice versa; that is, one does not perform works to produce faith. Of course a lot of prayer is involved in the exercise of faith—it is a *heart* attitude and desire to please the Lord.

Since this radical new beginning was based on *grace and faith*, did the Galatians now think they could justify themselves by the works of the flesh? When they had tried that previously, they were miserable failures. After beginning this new experience, would they return to the Law? If they sat back and reflected on what was happening, they would realize they were getting into a trap, for they were reverting to their previous frame of mind before the message of grace was preached to them.

Gal. 3:4 Have ye suffered so many things in vain? if it be yet in vain.

Gal. 3:5 He therefore that ministereth to you the Spirit, and worketh miracles among you, doeth he it by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?

In other words, “Did the Lord, who ministered the Spirit to the Galatians through Paul’s ministry and worked miracles among them, do it by the works of the Law, or by the hearing of faith?” Obviously, it was by the latter. Again the “miracles” were the gift(s) that they had received at consecration when Paul laid his hands on them. Thus Christians who received the bona fide gifts in the apostles’ day knew in their heart that theirs was a reformed life of walking in newness and of full devotion to God.

Of course Paul was speaking of *true* miracles and gifts, but here we get some idea of how hard the test will be at the end of the age when *all manner of lying signs and wonders* (concrete evidences) are seen and heard. *Lying miracles*—very strong deceptions—will make it hard for one to stand up for the truth.

Gal. 3:6 Even as Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.

First, Paul used a practical method of approach. Now he introduced another evidence, namely, that the Scriptures teach *justification by faith* in the life of Abraham. Paul was quoting from Genesis 15:6, “And he [Abraham] believed in the LORD; and he [God] counted it to him for righteousness.” On that occasion, God reaffirmed the covenant with Abraham, saying, “Look

now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them: ... So shall thy seed be.”

Gal. 3:7 Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham.

Those who are of faith—that is, consecrated Christians, both Jew and Gentile—are the “children of Abraham.” Christians are children by and of *faith*.

Gal. 3:8 And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed.

This is an important verse. Abraham was told, “*In thee* shall all nations be blessed.” As repeated to Jacob, the promise was, “*In thee and in thy seed* shall all the families of the earth be blessed” (Gen. 28:14). But notice the thrust here, which is quite different from the “restitution” emphasis that is usually given. It is true that the promise made to Abraham will extend to all mankind, but Paul was emphasizing *justification by faith* as the *primary* lesson. Restitution is the *secondary* lesson.

In the Kingdom Age, when all the families of the earth will be blessed, they will be blessed *by works*, not by faith. Paul was talking about *faith now*, in the Gospel Age. Jesus said, “It is more blessed to give than to receive” (Acts 20:35). Interpreted another way, Jesus was saying that it is more blessed to be the *blessor* than to be those who *are blessed* in the next age. To repeat: To be privileged to be of the divine family, who will *dispense* the blessings in the next age, is more blessed than to be the *recipients* of the blessings. The chief blessing will be to dispense blessings to others.

Paul’s application was that in the Gospel Age, God is calling a peculiar people to be kings and priests—to be of that *blessor* seed through which the blessings will come. God justifies the heathen in the *present* age for that very purpose. Those who now, *by faith*, accept Jesus as their Savior, confess their sins, and consecrate, are justified and given the opportunity to become part of that *blessor* seed, the *channel* of blessing, rather than the recipients at the end of that channel.

Incidentally, the Lord’s goat, the goat of the people, represents a *class chosen out of the people* to be sacrificed for sin. Christians are *of all nations* but do not include all people. The people will be blessed in the next age *after* the bullock and the Lord’s goat of this age have been sacrificed and atonement has been made. It is more blessed to be of that goat class than to be of the people who will be blessed by that offering for sin.

And that is what Paul was saying: “The gospel is the gospel of the *heavenly Kingdom* class—of those who become followers of Jesus.” That is the *primary* application, whereas restitution is the *secondary* application. The chief promise is to become kings and priests of the next age; the gospel is the *heavenly* hope of becoming part of The Christ.

Gal. 3:9 So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham.

Paul continued to emphasize the *channel* of blessing, not the recipients. Those who are “*of faith* are blessed with faithful Abraham.”

Gal. 3:10 For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.

Gal. 3:11 But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident: for, The just shall live by faith.

Gal. 3:12 And the law is not of faith: but, The man that doeth them shall live in them.

In verses 10-12, Paul was definitely talking about a doctrine of *faith and grace*, not of the Law and works. Here he quoted two more Scriptures from the Old Testament. Verse 10 quotes Deuteronomy 27:26, “Cursed be he that confirmeth not all the words of this law to do them.” Verse 11 quotes Habakkuk 2:4, “The just shall *live* by his faith.”

The Habakkuk text would have been puzzling until the Gospel Age dawned and the teachings of Christ became available. Back there the Jews were conversant with the letter of the Law, which included the prophets, but they needed further understanding. Notice what Paul said: “But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is *evident*: for, The just shall live by faith.” Paul used the word “evident” because he was talking about a Scripture that was *known*. Paul was saying, “You are all familiar with this Scripture that the just shall live by faith, but the *reason* for this statement is the new message about Jesus—the message of *grace* in Christ.”

Q: Were the churches of Galatia a mixed situation with Jews and Gentiles meeting together?

A: Yes.

Q: Was part of the problem that the Jewish Christians were pushing the Law?

A: Yes. That emphasis was very natural for the Jews. The early Church was a difficult time from that standpoint because the gospel was a sudden and radical change. Paul had to speak distinctly in order to show the importance of justification by faith and to reinforce those who started to waver on this issue. A *full assurance of faith* was needed for proper development in Christian growth. Galatia was in Asia Minor, where the gospel was now opening up to Gentiles as well as Jews.

Gal. 3:13 Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree:

Verse 13 ties in with verse 1, for it explains the reason for the Crucifixion. The curse on the whole human race through Adam, and doubly on the Jews through their inability to keep the Law, fell upon Jesus as the Sin-bearer. He took it upon himself to be the Redeemer, the one who bears the curse. Paul was tying together a lot of points. The Jews were familiar with the letter of the Law, but he was providing the reasoning to give them a frame of reference they could understand.

Jesus was made a curse in order that the blessing of Abraham might be available. In other words, the blessing through Abraham would not be possible unless Jesus bore the curse. Because Jesus did this, it was now possible for the Jew to get out from under the Law.

Gal. 3:14 That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.

There is an interesting point about human nature. Suppose that we were Jews who had accepted the gospel of Christ. We would know that we had been trying all of our life to obey the Law. Therefore, we might feel that as Jews, we not only had to accept Jesus but also still had to keep the Law. Then, if that were the case, we would be disturbed by the Gentiles in our midst who did not have the background of the Law but, because they believed in Jesus, got all

the benefits of grace. As a result, we would become insistent that the Gentiles be circumcised, observe the holy days, etc. The problem was that because the Jews were confused in their own thinking, they were putting a yoke on the Gentiles. Instead they should have realized that when they accepted Christ, they were released from the Law. If they had understood this matter correctly, they would not have wanted to put that burden on the Gentiles. They did not wholly see the distinction of their being completely transferred out of the Law into Christ as a new and living way. This confusion created real problems in the early Church. The “blessing of Abraham” would not have been possible if Jesus had not borne the curse.

In verse 14, Paul was again emphasizing the *channel* of blessing—to be the blesser seed. In the Book of Genesis, both thoughts are stressed: being of the seed as the channel of blessing and becoming of that seed at a later time through restitution. The literal Hebrew says that in becoming of that seed shall all the families of the earth bless themselves. Thus in the next age, the obedient of mankind will also become part of Abraham’s seed but on a different basis; that is, Gentiles will have to become Israelite proselytes under the New Covenant in order to receive restitution blessings. The New Covenant will require *works of obedience* and compliance with instructions from Jerusalem. Heeding these requirements will make them part of Abraham’s seed, and they will bless themselves not with faith but with *works, or deeds*, of the New Covenant. In this age, we become of Abraham’s seed by faith. In the next age, the world will become of Abraham’s seed by works and by obeying specific ordinances. The world’s justification will be based on works.

Gal. 3:15 Brethren, I speak after the manner of men; Though it be but a man’s covenant, yet if it be confirmed, no man disannulleth, or addeth thereto.

A contract is complete when it is signed. It cannot be changed or amended after it has been signed and sealed with an oath. Paul was implying that the Law was an amendment that did not change or vitiate the Abrahamic Covenant. The Law was added because of transgression (verse 19), but it did not disannul or change the original promise to Abraham. In other words, the Law was added for another purpose, but it was separate and thus did not disannul the first.

Q: What does the term “a man’s covenant” signify?

A: Paul was saying that in everyday life, when a man makes a covenant or a contract, it is binding when signed; it cannot be changed.

The Abrahamic Covenant is now unconditional, but originally it was conditional upon Abraham’s obedience in leaving his homeland and going where God led him. However, once he complied, the covenant became unconditional. Therefore, those who are considered of the seed of Abraham *have to be blessed*.

Paul used the illustration that if an everyday covenant between men is binding when notarized and signed, then *how much more binding and unchangeable* is the Abrahamic promise, which God not only made but also confirmed with His oath. Even in *worldly* life (“I speak after the manner of men”), we can see the common-sense argument of Paul.

Gal. 3:16 Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ.

Verse 16 is puzzling unless we understand the gist of Paul’s reasoning. In our early years of consecration, we wrestled with this Scripture because we could not get an answer, even after reading all of the *Reprint* articles and asking others. The question is, How can Abraham’s seed be *one* seed, not many seeds, when *many* members are in the body of Christ? These thoughts

need to be harmonized. Because there is a multiplicity of numbers in the body, Paul's argument does not seem to be logical. However, the body of Christ is one, and yet many, depending on how it is viewed.

If we were farmers, it would be easier to grasp Paul's thought. Evidently, those to whom he was writing understood what he was saying. One point to keep in mind is that there are different *kinds* of seed: wheat, barley, rye, rice, etc. Paul wrote, "He saith not, And to [a variety of] seeds, as of many; but as of one [kind of seed]"; that is, God was speaking not of a *variety* of seeds but of *one kind* of seed. Like the word "sheep," the word "seed" can be either singular or plural. Thus the "one seed" is plural. Stated another way, there are *many* of that *one kind* of seed in the body of Christ.

The one kind (or variety) of seed was centered through the promise God made to Abraham—not to Confucius or to other religions or salvations or even to the Law itself. Abraham's seed is *multitudinous*, but it is *one kind* of multitudinous seed, not several kinds of multitudinous seed.

Gal. 3:17 **And this I say, that the covenant, that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect.**

"The law ... was four hundred and thirty years after." Verse 17 is erroneously translated in almost all Bibles. For one thing, the punctuation is misplaced. What is the point of confusion? The Law was given 430 years "after"—but 430 years after what?

The Law was given 430 years after God made the *original* covenant with Abraham (not 430 years after the covenant was confirmed). Because of the confusion, many differ with the chronology as presented by the Pastor, but the chronology he used is correct.

To put the matter another way, the 430 years ended at the Exodus. "And it came to pass at the end of the four hundred and thirty years, even the *selfsame day* ... that all the hosts of the LORD went out from the land of Egypt" (Exod. 12:41). But even this verse is mistranslated. Although the sojourning of the children of Israel ended after a period of 430 years—on the *selfsame day*—they were not in Egypt for 430 years. Rather, the 430 years of sojourning extended from the time the original promise was made to Abraham until the day the Israelites left Egypt. Only 215 of those 430 years—half of the time—were spent in Egypt, yet almost all translations state that the Israelites were in Egypt for the entire time.

The 430 years, which constitute the sojourning, date from the time Abraham entered the land and God said to him, "Unto thy seed will I give this land" (Gen. 12:7). However, although Abraham entered the land, he never really inherited it, or got so much as a foot of it, even though his body was taken to Hebron and buried in the purchased cave of Machpelah (Gen. 25:8,9; Acts 7:5). In other words, Abraham died without receiving the promise of the land.

The sojourning continued until the Exodus, the "selfsame day" of the expiration of the 430 years. The terminology shows that the 430 years, mentioned in both the Old and the New Testaments, were an *exact* period of time.

Once Abraham obeyed, God was required to fulfill the promise, but he did not receive it in the present life. Like a pilgrim, Abraham wandered in the land with his sheep but did not inherit it.

In Genesis 15:8, Abraham said, "Lord GOD, whereby shall I know that I shall inherit it [the land]?" Abraham had entered the land of Canaan and been there for a while, and now he wanted an assurance that he would inherit it. God replied by telling him, "Take ... an heifer of

three years old, and a she goat of three years old, and a ram of three years old, and a turtledove, and a young pigeon.... Know of a surety that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs” (Gen. 15:9,13). Abraham was a stranger in that land, even though he had fulfilled his part of the promise. God continued to speak, “Thy seed ... shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years.” Since Abraham had already been in the land for a while, the time period was stated as 400 years, not 430; that is, the time period was now 400 years because God was merely *confirming* the covenant. (Thirty years earlier Abraham had entered the land, and God had *made* the covenant with him.) Thus it was 430 years from the original making of the covenant with Abraham to the Exodus. In Genesis 15:16, mention of the “fourth generation” confirms the 400 years.

After their father Terah died in Haran, Abraham and Lot entered Canaan, and God made the covenant (Gen. 11:32–12:7). Subsequently, there were multiple confirmations of the Abrahamic Covenant—not only with Abraham himself but also with Isaac and Jacob—but those confirmations are not to be confused with the original act (Gen. 12:7).

When the 430 years ended and the Israelites left Egypt, they were to go to the Promised Land and enter right in. But what happened? Because the Israelites disobeyed, their entrance was delayed for another 38 years while they wandered in the wilderness. (Approximately two years had already expired when ten of the spies brought back a discouraging report.) Incidentally, not only were the 430 years *exact* to the day, but that is also true of the 40 years in the wilderness. The correct understanding of chronology is important, for otherwise, the study of prophecy is out of alignment.

Notice that the Law, which was added 430 years after the covenant was made with Abraham, “cannot disannul” the promise; it cannot “make the promise of none effect.” The Abrahamic Covenant is *unconditional*.

Gal. 3:18 For if the inheritance be of the law, it is no more of promise: but God gave it to Abraham by promise.

The inheritance promised in the Abrahamic Covenant is not of the Law, for it is *unconditional* and of *God’s grace*. But to be members of the *blessed channel* comes through faith in Christ. The world of mankind, the obedient families of the earth, will not enter into their inheritance until the end of the next age. The purpose of the judgments of the Kingdom Age is to prove who is worthy to enter the age beyond the Millennium and thus not die anymore but to be like the angels (Luke 20:35,36). They must first pass the tests, including the test of the Little Season, in order to get life, their inheritance.

Gal. 3:19 Wherefore then serveth the law? It was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made; and it was ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator.

“Wherefore then serveth the law?” Instead of asking, “Are there any questions?” Paul often used the technique of anticipating a question and then answering it. For example, he used that technique in his Epistle to the Romans, and that was his method here as well. In other words, he anticipated some asking him the following question: “If you say that the Law does not profit a Christian in the Gospel Age, and that justification is of faith, not works, then why was the Law given in the first place?”

Paul then went on to explain why the Law was added 430 years after the promise was given to Abraham. He said, “It was added because of transgressions,” but what does that statement mean? The Law was given to point out to man that he is a sinner. By being unable to keep the

Law perfectly, man would realize his own insufficiency and guilt and, therefore, his need for some other type of salvation.

Comment: Elsewhere Paul said, “Where no law is, there is no transgression” (Rom. 4:15).

Reply: Yes, and as verse 24 of this chapter points out, the Law was given as a “schoolmaster,” or tutor, to bring the Jews to Christ. And if we enlarge the subject further, the Law contains prophecy, moral instruction, and ceremonial pictures. Also, the Law was added from the standpoint that it was a curb on the evildoer.

There is still another reason why the Law was added. The reward, or the prize of life, was captured by Jesus through his perfect obedience to the Law. In other words, it was added in order to give life to the one who could obey it. Jesus’ perfect obedience was part of the Ransom; his life rights were made available. Thus there are several reasons for the Law, but Paul just made a brief statement here—that it was “added because of transgressions.”

“Till the seed should come to whom the promise was made.” Paul was emphasizing the spiritual aspect. The Law was added 430 years after the promise was given to Abraham, but he did not inherit or obtain the promise in his lifetime. And now, in Paul’s day, still not much had happened to fulfill the promise except, of course, that Jesus had come and opened up the new hope of the gospel to the believer. Thus Paul continued to talk about the *key aspect* of the Abrahamic promise, namely, that the primary reward is to be the channel of blessing rather than the recipient of the benefaction.

“And it [the Law] was ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator.” Moses was the mediator for the Law Covenant. We will delay an in-depth discussion of this portion of verse 19 until verse 20 is treated.

Gal. 3:20 Now a mediator is not a mediator of one, but God is one.

The Living Bible renders this verse better: “But when God gave his promise to Abraham, he did it by himself alone, without angels or Moses as go-betweens.” Paul was making a comparison between the Abrahamic promise and the Law of Moses. When God made the promise to Abraham, there was no go-between; *He alone* made the promise. *He* told Abraham (through an agency, of course, but that is relatively immaterial), “If you go to a land that I will show you, *I* will do such and such.” Abraham obeyed, so the promise is assured, but the Law was a different situation, for in that case, God talked to Moses, and Moses (the *go-between*) talked to the people.

Because of verse 20, Bro. Russell emphatically showed that Jesus is not the Mediator of the Church but is their *Advocate*, their lawyer, the one who represents them to the Father. Jesus is not a go-between for us, for we pray direct to the *Father*, just using Jesus’ name and merit. However, Jesus will be the Mediator for the world in the next age. From a civil standpoint (like Moses), he will be their instructor, and from a clerical standpoint (like the priesthood), he will be their go-between.

Paul was drawing the lesson that the Abrahamic promise is more important than the Law, for it supersedes the promise of the Law. Under the Law, *only* Jesus got life. Under the Abrahamic promise, *many* will get life.

Now we will return to the last clause of verse 19: “... [the Law] was ordained by *angels* in the hand of a mediator.” How was this done, and who were the “angels”?

For one thing, literal angels had a role in carrying out the astounding miracles in the early days of the Law—for example, the mission of the destroying death angel at the time of the first Passover, the opening of the Red Sea, quails being sent, and water coming out of rock. Such miraculous deeds magnified God’s Law to His people.

The words of Stephen in Acts 7:51-53 are also pertinent: “Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye. Which of the *prophets* have not your fathers persecuted? and they have slain them which showed before of the coming of the Just One; of whom ye have been now the betrayers and murderers: Who have received the law by the disposition of angels, and have not kept it.”

When the Law was given to Moses, a priesthood was instituted—Aaron, his sons, and the Levites—who assisted directly in conjunction with the Law because they read the Law to instruct the people and were involved in certain ceremonies. Thus Moses was one component part of the Law, and the Aaronic priesthood assisted with the Law. The latter were along the same line or principle as the “prophets” but closer to Moses and the origination of the Law. The point is that others besides Moses were associated with the giving of the Law and seeing that it was carried out efficiently in regard to God’s purpose with the nation of Israel.

On the one hand, then, literal angels administered the Law back in the type in conjunction with the mediator, Moses. On the other hand, “angels” in human form were servants: Aaron, the priesthood, the prophets, and the elders. To which of these categories was the Apostle Paul referring in Galatians 3:19? For several reasons, we favor the thought of *literal* angels. First, the angels would be *literal* because of the *sequence* in verse 19—the Law (1) was ordained by angels (2) in the hand of a mediator.

In addition to the role of the literal angels in carrying out miraculous deeds to supplement and magnify the Law, there is another aspect that is more immediate to the giving of the Law. When Moses arrived at Mount Sinai, the first thing he did was to go up into the mount for 40 days to commune with God in connection with being *instructed* about the Law. The account in the Book of Exodus does not mention the role of the angels in providing that instruction to Moses, but a statement in Exodus 25:9,40 is the clue. “According to all that I *show* thee, after the *pattern* of the tabernacle, and the *pattern* of all the instruments thereof, even so shall ye make it.... And look that thou make them after their *pattern*, which was *shown* thee in the mount.” See also the following Scriptures:

“And thou shalt rear up the tabernacle according to the fashion thereof which was *shown* thee in the mount” (Exod. 26:30).

“Hollow with boards shalt thou make it: as it was *shown* thee in the mount, so shall they make it” (Exod. 27:8).

“And this work of the candlestick was of beaten gold, unto the shaft thereof, unto the flowers thereof, was beaten work: according unto the pattern which the LORD had *shown* Moses, so he made the candlestick” (Num. 8:4).

“Our fathers had the tabernacle of witness in the wilderness, as he had appointed, speaking unto Moses, that he should make it according to the fashion that he had *seen*” (Acts 7:44).

“Who serve unto the example and shadow of heavenly things, as Moses was admonished of God when he was about to make the tabernacle: for, See, saith he, that thou make all things according to the pattern *shown* to thee in the mount” (Heb. 8:5).

What was Moses doing during those 40 days he was up in Mount Sinai with God? Did he wait

three days for the Lord to say something and then another five days for another verbal communication, etc.? Was he praying constantly, and if so, what was he praying about? We believe there was *constant communication*. Among other things, he was given *all of the many details* of the ceremonial Law—such as what should be done with the sin offering, the heave offering, and the consecration of the priesthood. In addition, he was *shown* the pattern for the Tabernacle itself. Moses was not just given oral instruction but was given *vivid visual demonstrations* on how to perform the services and construct the Tabernacle; that is, as God explained through *angels*, they simulated the *actual construction of the Tabernacle*. For example, Moses was not simply given oral instructions to make a curtain in ten parts, with five curtains this way and five that way. Rather, the making of the curtains was *demonstrated by angels* so that Moses could see how the curtains were sewn together. In other words, Moses was visually presented with *tremendous and explicit three-dimensional details* of the construction of the Tabernacle—it would have been like watching a hologram. Meanwhile, he was told, with emphasis, to make the Tabernacle *exactly* according to the pattern and its measurements.

Thus 40 days was not an unreasonable amount of time for Moses to be up on Mount Sinai, for it took time to know such things as the number of boards, the number of sockets and how they were cast, and the disposition of both. It also took time to know the different layers of curtains, how they were sewn, and their material composition, and it took time to know the number of taches, where they hooked in, how they were sewn and on what edge of the curtain, and where the rings were attached. It took time to see the jewels being cut and planed for engraving, their size, and how they were placed in their ouches—etc., etc., etc. And so all the construction details were done *visually* in front of Moses in *simulation* by the angels. Moses did not just look at a finished Tabernacle but at a Tabernacle *in process* of being made. He was shown step by step.

Q: Did Moses write down the instructions, or was he able to remember all of these details?

A: The details would have been in his head. God prepared Moses in advance for this experience. Not only was he prepared by birth, upbringing, and education, but also he had a wonderful memory and was assisted by the Holy Spirit. And 40 days were set aside for Moses to absorb the instructions. Moreover, when he went up Mount Sinai the second time for 40 days and 40 nights, he was probably given, in addition to other things, a review to make sure the instructions and details were engraved in his memory.

Thus the Law was ordained by literal angels in a *three-dimensional workshop* up in heaven for Moses to watch. Although the workshop was not literal, it was as good as literal because everything was explained and demonstrated three-dimensionally in the right proportion and actual size and height. Moses needed this instruction to be able to tell Bezaleel and Aholiab how to proceed. He *superintended* the casting of the sockets and the making of the curtains—everything—while others did the work.

Moses got instruction and preparation *before* he came down from the mount and became the mediator of the Law. Now, after being assisted in understanding, he was qualified as an able mediator and administrator between the nation of Israel and God.

Comment: In the antitype, the sequence is the same. Jesus and the Church are prepared *first*; then they will become the Mediator of the New Covenant between the world and God.

While we have explained about the angels who were ordained to assist Moses in the giving of the Law and about his being the mediator back there, the question arises, Why did Paul bring up this subject in writing to the Galatians? He could have omitted the words “and it was ordained by angels” and simply said, “Wherefore then serveth the law? It was added because

of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made ... in the hand of a mediator.” The Pastor used the word “children” in his reasoning to explain this chapter of Galatians. We are like little children being instructed by the Law, which is a schoolmaster, or teacher, to bring us to Christ, who is the fulfillment of the Law. As children, we are being instructed for the *future mediatorial work* of the Kingdom. Stated another way, we are brought to Christ and prepared for the mediatorial work, which is the future work of the Kingdom. However, the Church must be complete before it can be the Mediator; it is still undergoing the process of being made able ministers of the New (or future) Covenant, which God will make with Israel.

Thus Paul was saying that not only was the Law added because of transgressions, but also it was an instructor to bring us to Christ. Now we can see why Paul brought in the angels; namely, he wanted to emphasize that the Gospel Age is an *instructional period* for us *now* as it was for Moses *back there*. When he was in the mount, he pictured The Christ, Head and body. Just as Moses, in that ethereal, ephemeral state of learning and being qualified to be the mediator, was given many, many pantomime lessons of instruction, so we are now being instructed in the antitype.

Gal. 3:21 Is the law then against the promises of God? God forbid: for if there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law.

The Law does not curtail, prohibit, cancel, or disannul the promise God made to Abraham regarding the “seed”; that is, it is not “against the promises of God.” However, the second part of verse 21 might be a problem to some, where it says, “If there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should [then] have been by the law.” In providing or paying the Ransom, Jesus also procured life rights under the Law through his perfect obedience. Was Paul contradicting that thought here? Elsewhere in the New Testament, he took a different tack by implying that Jesus secured the life that the Law promised, so how can the two seemingly contradictory thoughts be harmonized and explained?

Comment: There were two different sides of the issue. On the one side, the Law could give life, but it could only do so for a perfect individual. However, on the other side of the issue, the Law could not give life because the entire human race is fallen and imperfect and, therefore, could not keep the Law perfectly.

Reply: In other words, the Law could not give life to any individual of the human race born of Adam. Incidentally, this shows that the sin is not through Eve but through Adam, the *male* aspect—by one *man’s* sin, death came upon all. But Jesus was not of Adam, not of the seed of man; he was born *of woman* and begotten by the *Heavenly Father*. Because of Adam’s sin, none of the human race descended from him are righteous, Adam being the father of the human race (Rom. 3:10).

Therefore, there is no contradiction. On the one hand, the Law could give life if the individual was perfect and obeyed perfectly. On the other hand, the law really could not give life, for none of the fallen race were perfect.

Gal. 3:22 But the scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe.

Verse 22 more or less says the same thing again. Of Adam, of the Law, everything would be a failure. Some *outside* help, something apart from the circumstance that mankind found itself in, was necessary for salvation. There was no real hope for salvation unless God did something—which He did in the person of Jesus. With the exercise of *faith and belief* in Jesus, one might

obtain the promise. The importance of faith and belief is stated in regard to Abraham, for he “believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness” (Rom. 4:3).

Gal. 3:23 But before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed.

When did faith come? It came with Jesus. Therefore, before the faith of Christ came, the Jewish people “were kept under the law.”

Gal. 3:24 Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith.

Gal. 3:25 But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster.

Gal. 3:26 For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.

Gal. 3:27 For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.

Just as is true in many ecclesias today, there was a mixed element back there with some consecrated and some unconsecrated. Paul was saying, “When I speak about belief *into* Christ, it is not just believing that Jesus is the Savior, but it is taking the step of consecration.” Only the *consecrated* are under grace and thus are the recipients of the promise. Therefore, Paul’s saying, “As many of you as have been baptized into Christ,” suggests that some were not consecrated.

A person can “put on Christ” by taking the step of full consecration. Some have the concept that one can “put on Christ” by practicing his precepts, but we do not concur with the theory of “consecration to righteousness.” In fact, it is a dangerous line of reasoning, although that is not the topic of our study at this time. A person is either consecrated, having put on Christ by taking a definite, concrete step, or he is not. The Bible does speak of other conditions, but here Paul was concentrating his attention on those who had made a full consecration.

Incidentally, verse 27 proves the Jew needed to be (additionally) baptized into Christ. John’s baptism alone was not sufficient.

Gal. 3:28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.

Gal. 3:29 And if ye be Christ’s, then are ye Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.

This verse is a marvelous experience for those who are “one in Christ Jesus.” Suppose a person gets to be old and decrepit, yet younger brethren will go miles out of their way to bring that brother or sister to meetings. Worldly institutions do not give that type of care, and although there are senior-citizen activities, they are fleeting. Old, infirm brethren are thought about and prayed for because *all* of the consecrated are members of *God’s family*. This blessing is one of our great rewards in the *present* life, one of our inheritances on this side of the veil.

There is “neither male nor female.” Of course the New Testament does place limitations on women in certain instances, but they are compensated for in other ways. There are ways in which sisters can be heard powerfully but with proper *discretion*. One does not have to be the speaker in order to get a point across, for other avenues are open. With tact and wisdom, opportunities are afforded where all can participate. “Let him that is taught in the word communicate unto [with] him that teacheth in *all* good things” (Gal. 6:6).

On the other hand, a caution is in order, for many today do not realize that they are being influenced by popular beliefs on women's liberation. That influence can have a damaging effect on sisters by making it more difficult for them to realize their place. However, at the same time, they need to know their liberties. In the ecclesia, women are excluded from being teachers, but outside the class, they can have a teaching role as long as they always keep God's arrangement in mind.

There is "neither bond nor free." If we had been a Christian slave or servant living in Paul's day, verse 28 would have been very encouraging. Although in temporal circumstances, we would have continued to be a servant, not chafing to be loosed, that servitude would not have existed in the ecclesia or Christian arrangement. What a blessing that would have been—to think that in the truth, in this new fellowship and family, the shackles of servitude would be removed!

In olden times, it was more common for women to be covered (except for their eyes) and to be silent and put in the background. Therefore, verse 28 was more meaningful in the days of servants and female oppression. The truth is like a wonderful emancipation, but that freedom is contingent upon being truly the Lord's. Stated another way, those *in Christ* are "Abraham's seed, and heirs [or children] according to the [Abrahamic] promise." For such, there is no distinction between Jew and Greek, bond and free, male and female, etc.

Paul gave a summary statement at this point: "And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's [singular] seed." Paul convincingly showed that there is *one kind* of seed in the body of Christ. However, a question still remains: In what way, is the seed singular? That subject will be treated in the next chapter. Isaac was one individual, but he was a *composite* individual. Jesus is the Head of the Isaac seed, and each Christian is one of the body members. Abraham represents the Heavenly Father, and Isaac, the son, pictures Jesus Christ, the Head of the body members.

Comment: Romans 9:7 reads, "Neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children: but, In Isaac shall thy seed be called."

Reply: Being a natural Jew does not make one an Israelite indeed. The promise is according to the Abrahamic Covenant, not according to the Law. It is very difficult for the Jew to completely extricate himself from his past training and schooling. Thus it is remarkable that Paul could see these subjects so clearly. How Jesus would have loved to explain these deeper truths to his apostles during his earthly ministry! However, such explanations would have been a waste of time because the Holy Spirit had not yet been given.

Gal. 4:1 Now I say, That the heir, as long as he is a child, differeth nothing from a servant, though he be lord of all;

Gal. 4:2 But is under tutors and governors until the time appointed of the father.

Gal. 4:3 Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world:

Gal. 4:4 But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law,

"As long as *he* [the heir] is a child, differeth nothing from a servant, though *he* be lord of all... Even so *we*, when *we* were children, were in bondage." The pronouns "he" and "we" apply to

the Jew(s), who were under the Law arrangement *before* Christ came. Those Jews who followed the Master, believed his teaching, and consecrated ceased to be under the Law and became heirs of the Abrahamic promise. Previously, they were *servants* under the Law; now, having accepted Christ, they were *sons* of God.

“The heir, as long as he is a child, ... is under tutors and governors until the time appointed of the [heavenly] father.” The *Heavenly Father* does the calling. We are called *of God*, and we come to *Christ*, who is “the way, the truth, and the life” (John 14:6). And so Paul said that the Father appointed “the time” for Jesus to come.

Jesus came in “the *fulness* of the time,” which can be thought of as either a process or a period of time, but there was also a *specific* fulfillment in *point* of time; namely, he died on the Cross in the fullness of the moon. Immediately after Jesus’ death, the moon, which pictures the Law Covenant, began to wane, showing that the nation was responsible for his death.

Q: When were the people “in expectation” of Messiah (Luke 3:15)?

A: That was at the time of his birth. Many, including some from other nations, had become familiar with the 70 weeks’ prophecy in the Hebrew Scriptures through Daniel when he was in Babylon (Dan. 9:24-26). Although they could not pinpoint the date, they could certainly approximate it. In other words, they knew that the 70 weeks were symbolic, being 70 weeks of years, but they had a little difficulty in knowing where they were on the stream of time. Others expected Messiah’s coming through Balaam’s prophecy that “a Star” would arise out of Jacob (Num. 24:17). Daniel was the head of the magi; that is, he was put over the college of the magicians in Babylon. Therefore, the three magi, or wise men, who traveled a long distance to see Jesus after his birth had been either directly or indirectly influenced by Daniel. By putting two and two together, they got enough clues and then saw something very unusual in the heavens, so they knew they were in the period prophesied but did not know where to start it.

“God sent forth his Son, made of a *woman*, made under the law.” In other words, Jesus was made *flesh*, he was born of a *woman*, and he was *Jewish*. The reason Paul said that Jesus was “made of a woman” will be seen later in the chapter.

The clause “when the fulness of the time was come” indicates that God conducts His providences according to a schedule or fixed plan. When the time was right according to what He had predestined, Jesus was born of a woman. Thus the “fulness of the time” can also be thought of in connection with Jesus’ birth.

The Jews “were in bondage under the *elements of the world*.” We will discuss this terminology when we consider verses 9 and 10.

Gal. 4:5 To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.

One reason that Jesus was born a Jew under the Law was for the purpose of redeeming not only the world of mankind (the Gentiles) but also the Jews, for the latter were under double bondage. The Jews were (1) under the curse that came on the human family through Adam’s sin and (2) under the curse of the Law. What feature of the Law made it possible for Jesus to redeem the Jews? The Law promised everlasting life to anyone who could keep it perfectly. Through perfect obedience, Jesus gained the prize of everlasting *human* life, which he will pay as a ransom on behalf of humanity to redeem them from the curse. Paul was saying that Jesus was born under the Law to capture the booty, or prize, of that Law, namely, eternal, everlasting human life.

Gal. 4:6 And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father.

The spiritual calling is a heavenly calling to sonship with the Messiah. “Abba,” an endearing and affectionate term such as a child would use, means “Father” in Aramaic. Therefore, those who respond to the gospel in the present age and consecrate are dealt with as sons. The repetition “Abba, Father” shows that they develop an affection for God in due time.

Comment: The Phillips Modern English translation reads, “... God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts to cry ‘Father, dear Father.’”

Comment: Romans 8:15 also uses “Abba, Father”: “For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.” The use of the *double* term—“Abba” is Aramaic and “Father” is Greek—shows that *both* Jews and Gentiles could be adopted as sons.

Reply: “Abba” itself is double: “a” before “b,” and then “b” before “a.” If the vowels are omitted, the term is “bb.” From a negative or blasphemous standpoint, “papa” (the pope), meaning “father of fathers,” is also double.

Gal. 4:7 Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ.

The way Paul addressed the Galatians in verse 7 suggests that the greater percentage were Jewish Christians. The relationship of father and son before the age of responsibility changes when individuals become children of God. They forsake Adam, their former father, and now have God as their Father.

Gal. 4:8 Howbeit then, when ye knew not God, ye did service unto them which by nature are no gods.

Gal. 4:9 But now, after that ye have known God, or rather are known of God, how turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements, whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage?

Gal. 4:10 Ye observe days, and months, and times, and years.

Paul asked, “How turn ye again to the *weak and beggarly elements*, whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage?” In verse 3 of this same chapter, he said, “Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the *elements of the world*.” To what do the terms “weak and beggarly elements” and “elements of the world” refer? The Law is one aspect, but the word “elements” is *plural*.

Paul was asking, “Do you again desire to be in bondage?” Then he mentioned “days, and months, and times, and years.” Of course under the Law, certain days were to be especially honored, and the males were *required* to observe three feasts: Passover, Pentecost, and Tabernacles. Over the years, however, unauthorized days were added—just as in the Catholic and Protestant world special days and observances (such as Lent and days honoring saints) were added. Hence in the Hebrew religious service, many days throughout the year are devoted to observing days not prescribed in the Bible.

Paul was saying, “You observe not only days but also months, times, and years. By *adding* so many special occasions, you rob the three primary feasts of their real value. Because of the

multiplicity of your feasts, you lose sight of the primary importance of what *God* ordained.” Thus Paul was criticizing the *man-made* ordinances in the Talmud. The Jews regarded the Talmud to be of *equal* importance with the Old Testament—and, in fact, some even revered it *more*. The Catholic catechisms are likewise regarded, whereas *nothing* should equal or supersede the Word of God. Other writings are the word of man, and even though these contain good thoughts in many instances, they cannot be equated with the Word of God. There is a vast gulf of difference between the two. And so we find that invention in both the Jewish and the Christian religion causes the majority of adherents to lose sight of true values.

Incidentally, even though the slaying of the Passover lamb was ordained of God and thus was proper for Jews back there, Christians in the Gospel Age observe Christ Jesus, the antitype. Thus it would be improper for Christians to follow the sacrifices prescribed under the Law (Heb. 9:10-14). Christians live in an age of grace and faith—they are justified by faith—and God, in mercy, judges heart intention rather than strict obedience according to the letter of the Law. Otherwise, no one would get life.

Note: Several weeks later the following commentary was added for verses 9 and 10 because a point is sometimes overlooked that can cause problems.

Paul asked the Galatians, “How turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements, whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage?” For example, they observed days, months, times, and years. Under the Law, it was proper to observe mandatory days (the sabbath, new moon, Day of Atonement, Feast of Passover, Feast of Pentecost, etc.), but the Talmudic teachings went *beyond* the Law by inventing new feasts and ordinances. *It is wrong to add traditions, rituals, and ordinances.* Catholic and Episcopalian churches have been especially guilty of filling up the calendar with saints’ days and teachings other than the Memorial. The Christian “law,” as laid down by Jesus, was to remember just the Memorial of his *death*, his commandment being, “This do in remembrance of me” (1 Cor. 11:24,25). The Bible does not tell us to observe Christmas, Easter, Lent, etc.

Some of the early Christians desired to return to bondage—not only to the Law and its *God*-ordained ordinances but also to traditions and ordinances *added* by rabbis, to commandments of *men*. However, the Christian is to be separate from *both* kinds of bondage.

The “weak and beggarly elements” refer to the Law of God and, in addition, based on Paul’s reasoning, the commandments of men. The term “beggarly elements” conveys the wrong thought. In Galatians 4:3, the preferable expression “elements of the world” is used.

“Elements” are rudiments and principles; that is, they are more childlike and elementary, being the first steps. In elementary school, children are taught the *basics* of grammar, reading, writing, and arithmetic, but these will not get one a high school diploma or a college degree. These are merely the basic (or beginning) training that one needs before *progressing* to *higher* things. Therefore, Paul was saying, “You can attain the higher things not by the Law but by *faith in Christ, the new and living way.*”

In what sense is the Law of God “weak”? Romans 8:3 says that the Law “was weak through the flesh” because imperfect man could not keep it; hence the Law could not bring life. The Law was perfect, but it brought death. The word “beggarly” incorrectly implies disapproval—that the Law was wrong and unnecessary. No! The Law was *perfect!* Many Christians think all they need is the New Testament or even just the Gospels; they feel that the Law and the Old Testament are no longer pertinent. But Paul constantly referred to the Law as an *authority*. Galatians 4:21 reads, “Do ye not hear the *law?*” Then Paul discussed the seed of promise and Abraham, Sarah, and Hagar, using the Law as an *authority* to teach the Grace Covenant. He did

not abrogate the Law as being no good—period! But the Law was no good for *justification*, for justification comes only by *faith in Christ*, not by works. In addition, the Law has many valuable lessons for the Christian, and the types that teach about Christ and the various covenants are very important. The Law was “weak” in the sense that it was ineffectual for obtaining life. The Law was actually strong, but it was weak in not producing justification and life. The weakness lies in the *individual’s incapability* to obey rather than in the Law itself.

The word “beggarly,” a poor translation, improperly casts a stigma on *God’s perfect Law*. Paul’s reasoning was as follows. The Law was ineffectual not only because the flesh was weak but also because there was another intent; namely, it was a “schoolmaster” to bring the Jews to Christ (Gal. 3:24). Paul said, “We were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed” (Gal. 3:23). In other words, the Law was designed to be a *temporary expedient* up to a certain point of time—until Christ came.

“As long as the heir is a child, he does not differ from a servant ... but is under tutors and governors [the ordinances of the Law] until the appointed time” (Gal. 4:1,2 paraphrase). The Law, which was like elementary school, had its place, but it was to be abandoned when no longer needed. The “child” was under the Law (tutors and governors) until the appointed time of the Father. The Jews under the Law were like children under a tutor, or *servants*, but once they accepted Christ, they became *heirs*, a different category.

“Beggarly” elements are like *elementary school development only*—nothing higher. The higher and more noble things are attainable *only in Christ*. Therefore, a Christian will not grow and make his calling and election sure unless he leaves the Law behind and goes on to superior training.

The “elements” Paul was referring to were the *poorer* elements, those that were on a *lower* plane or level; they would not enable the Christian to attain that which he is seeking. The Old Testament *alone* is ineffectual in that it cannot bring life. The New Testament is needed. However, the Christian, who is not to go back under the bondage of the Law, needs to search out the *basic principles* of God’s Law and to investigate the prophecies (the types and pictures) from a spiritual standpoint.

Unfortunately, some think the Law has been utterly done away with, but it has been done away with *only to the believing Jew in Christ*. All other Jews are still under the Law. The Law is crucified *only to consecrated believers, Jews or Gentiles*. The Law “decayeth and waxeth old [and] is ready to vanish away,” but it has not vanished yet (Heb. 8:13). The Law is still obligatory upon nonbelieving Jews. Only to Jews who have accepted Christ has the Law been nailed to the Cross.

Galatians 3:11,12 shows that Paul did not regard the Law in a derogatory sense. “That no man is justified by the law in the sight of God ... is evident: for, The just shall live by faith.” In other words, everyone is dying because the Law is not of faith, but “the man that doeth them [the works of the Law] shall live in them.” Paul was saying that the Law will give life to any who can obey it perfectly, but only Jesus could do this. Therefore, the Law was ineffectual as far as producing results, but the problem is with *us, with our humanity*, not with the Law. Therefore, “Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the Law [from death].”

“Weak” means impotent, without strength to bring life. “Poor” is a better thought than “beggarly,” meaning poor as far as obtaining results. If one tries to get justification by the deeds of the Law, he will still be poor and impoverished.

By taking examples of how God dealt with the Israelites—by seeing what He approved and

disapproved—we can get an idea of what He thinks with regard to spiritual Israelites. In other words, the Old Testament principles, which are on a human plane, can be transferred to a spiritual plane for the Christian. Thus by studying the features of the Law, we can extract *principles that apply to us as Christians*. In fact, we *must see* the value of those principles in order to be *balanced and mature* Christians.

Gal. 4:11 I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labour in vain.

Paul was “afraid” that if the Galatians kept up these practices indefinitely, they would be sidetracked from the main issue at hand. Incidentally, Paul suffered tremendous persecution. He founded this little group in Galatia, and they grew and prospered. But now they were getting derailed from the spiritual calling.

Gal. 4:12 Brethren, I beseech you, be as I am; for I am as ye are: ye have not injured me at all.

Comment: Paul was saying, “I was a Jew too, so we should be in agreement on this matter.”

Reply: Yes. The thought is well expressed in the Living Bible: “Dear brothers, please feel as I do about these things, for I am as free from these chains as you used to be. You did not despise me then when I first preached to you.” In other words, “I used to be in bondage to the letter of the Law, but I am now free as you were. However, things have changed, and now you are under bondage again.”

Gal. 4:13 Ye know how through infirmity of the flesh I preached the gospel unto you at the first.

Gal. 4:14 And my temptation which was in my flesh ye despised not, nor rejected; but received me as an angel of God, even as Christ Jesus.

Paul’s “infirmity of the flesh” was impaired vision. At the time of his conversion, he was blinded by the vision he saw on the road to Damascus. That experience left him without sight, until Ananias, a disciple in Damascus, prayed over him and his sight was partially restored. Subsequently Paul prayed three times to have this affliction completely removed from him, but the Lord replied, “My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness” (2 Cor. 12:9). In other words, Paul, having learned at the feet of Gamaliel, was so brilliant that God deemed it best for him to have this impairment to keep him humble.

Many people are impressed with a stately bearing, costly clothes, money, influence, power, etc., and few are impressed with the *message*, with *truth*, which is much more enduring than food, raiment, and position in life. All go into the grave; the rich eventually come down to the *same* level as the humblest peasant, so *no one* should be impressed with his *own* importance. However, those who are interested in *God* and the future life and are doing *His* will become important in *His* sight. As little children, they are willing to be taught of God.

The Galatians were very unusual. Not only had Paul initially come to them with his infirmity, but also he was short of stature and partly bald and had a voice that was weak and much inferior to that of the Greek orators. Thus outwardly, Paul appeared unimportant, yet when this little man spoke, his logic and message were POWERFUL. The Galatians so appreciated his words that they overlooked the exterior. “The LORD seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the *outward* appearance, but the LORD looketh on the *heart* [the inner man]” (1 Sam. 16:7). As the Bible teaches in many places, our inner person is far more important than the exterior, which most people are governed by in the present life.

“Ye ... received me as an angel [messenger] of God, even as Christ Jesus.” Earlier the Galatians felt that Paul had providentially come into their midst as a messenger. Certainly they did not respect him on a level with Christ, for Paul always pointed out the *primacy* of Jesus. Rather, the Galatians felt that Paul had the same wonderful message, and they *enthusiastically* received it. Thus they had regarded Paul as God’s messenger and similar to Jesus as far as his thinking and teaching were concerned.

Gal. 4:15 Where is then the blessedness ye spake of? for I bear you record, that, if it had been possible, ye would have plucked out your own eyes, and have given them to me.

The Galatians were so impressed with Paul on his earlier visit—they were so enthused with his message—that they would have “plucked out” their own eyes and given them to him! If transplants had been possible back there, several donors would have gladly given at least one of their eyes to Paul to restore his sight to normalcy. That is how much they *respected* him. Imagine—they would have *willingly sacrificed* in this manner on his behalf while they were alive and healthy!

The zeal of the Galatians was *great* while Paul was with them. But what happened after his departure and a year or two had gone by? Their memories grew dim, and their zeal abated. Paul was now concerned lest he had labored in vain (verse 11). There was a real problem.

“Where is then the *blessedness ye spake of?*” Paul reminded the Galatians of the *happiness and joy* they had experienced in receiving his message.

Gal. 4:16 Am I therefore become your enemy, because I tell you the truth?

“Am I therefore become your *enemy*, because I tell you the *truth?*” What was Paul saying in effect?

Comment: Verse 17 is related to verse 16. For “*They zealously affect you, but not well,*” the Living Bible has, “*Those false teachers who are so anxious to win your favor are not doing it for your good.*” In other words, in the meantime, after Paul’s earlier visit, the false teachers had tried to turn the Galatians against him. These Judaizing Christians were influencing the Galatians to regard Paul as their enemy.

Reply: It seems strange that many people are not truly observant. As an example in one sphere of activity, people read, but do they *analyze* what they read, especially if the document is of substance? Do they *reflect or meditate on* the written words? In an effort to straighten out the Galatians, Paul asked, “Am I now your enemy because I am trying to tell you the truth about what has happened since my departure from your midst? Back there you thought I was like an angel, like Christ Jesus, but now you regard me as an enemy. Why do you assume this attitude?” He was trying to make the Galatians think and listen to him. In fact, he was such a blessing originally that they were willing to give their eyes to him, but now they would not even give him an adequate hearing because, as has been stated, false teachers had come in and gotten their ear and were instructing them and turning their affection away from him.

Gal. 4:17 They zealously affect you, but not well; yea, they would exclude you, that ye might affect them.

“They zealously affect you.” The false element was inspiring the Galatians with wrong thinking.

Comment: Romans 10:2 expresses the principle, “For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge.”

Those who were producing this estrangement, this changed attitude, were not wishy-washy. Indeed they were very zealous in their discussions with the Galatians. Ostensibly they had a zeal for the Lord that impressed the Galatians. These false teachers were Christian Jews who were going back to the thinking of the Law. They were trying to saddle the Galatians with the ordinances of the Law plus additional creedal restrictions in connection with their Christian behavior.

One cannot be too consecrated or too dedicated to the Lord. However, one must be careful that the efforts are for the Lord and not for individuals who are not strictly in harmony with him.

Gal. 4:18 But it is good to be zealously affected always in a good thing, and not only when I am present with you.

We have to be careful with the Living Bible because it takes certain liberties in the translation, but it is good for verses 17 and 18. “Those false teachers who are so anxious to win your favor are not doing it for your good. What they are trying to do is to shut you off from me so that you will pay more attention to them. It is a fine thing when people are nice to you with good motives and sincere hearts, especially if they aren’t doing it just when I am with you!” In other words, when this false element saw that Paul was coming, they were suddenly especially solicitous for the Galatians, currying them with favor, buttering them up, and giving advice supposedly for their good to keep them in the truth. But actually, the false teachers feared what Paul would say and do if he came in their midst. They did not have a *real* interest in the Galatians—they merely *simulated* interest at a time when they felt it was expedient to behave that way. *This was hypocrisy!*

It is one thing if a person is truly interested in other people—if his motive is sincere and the interest is sustained. However, these false teachers had ulterior motives; they feigned interest only when it was propitious to do so. In short, they did not have the eternal welfare of the Galatians at heart.

Gal. 4:19 My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you,

What was Paul saying in effect? How do we empathize with what he was telling the Galatians? Paul had originally expended much time and effort with the Galatians and had achieved results. Upon finding that the results were fizzling, he now asked, “Do I have to go all through this *again?*” He was experiencing a feeling of frustration and exasperation after all his labor on their behalf. He did not speak empty words, for he had suffered *much*: shipwreck, beatings, hunger, imprisonment, poverty, misrepresentation, slander, etc. Paul was not like a *paid* minister or professor—he was not salaried. Rather, he did his preaching and teaching at *self*-expense and *suffering*. For example, in order to catch a boat to an island off the coast of Asia Minor, he walked 30 miles one night after preaching all day and up until 2 or 3 a.m. He even labored with his own hands for necessities. (Paul said that a faithful minister could receive gifts and support, but he preferred to serve at his own expense.) Incidentally, if financial support is given, it should be *spontaneously* rendered and not given as a fixed salary. “God loveth a cheerful giver” (2 Cor. 9:7). Spontaneous giving is more satisfying to everyone—to the giver, to the recipient, and to the *Lord*, who is observing what is being done.

Gal. 4:20 I desire to be present with you now, and to change my voice; for I stand in doubt of you.

If Paul came in person, he would treat the Galatians differently in order to correct them; that is, he would correct them in a different tone of voice. He would rather come as a friend and treat them as dear children, but admonitions were necessary. He had to speak sternly.

Gal. 4:21 Tell me, ye that desire to be under the law, do ye not hear the law?

Gal. 4:22 For it is written, that Abraham had two sons, the one by a bondmaid, the other by a freewoman.

Gal. 4:23 But he who was of the bondwoman was born after the flesh; but he of the freewoman was by promise.

Gal. 4:24 Which things are an allegory: for these are the two covenants; the one from the mount Sinai, which gendereth to bondage, which is Agar.

Gal. 4:25 For this Agar is mount Sinai in Arabia, and answereth to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children.

Gal. 4:26 But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all.

In verse 21, Paul was referring to the ordinances that *God* had instituted back in the Old Testament. Since the Christian Jews desired to be under that Law, Paul would now use a line of reasoning to show that even the Law, which *they* were trying to follow, supported *him*, and not the false teachers.

Paul asked in effect, “Do you desire to be under the Law? Then let us go back to that Law.” Then he referred to what happened to Abraham, who had two sons, Ishmael and Isaac. Ishmael was born of Hagar (Agar), an Egyptian “bondwoman,” and Isaac was born of Sarah, the “freewoman.”

Paul was saying that these relationships were an allegory, which was designed to be a picture. The two women, these two mothers, represent two covenants. (1) Hagar, the Egyptian slave girl, Abraham’s concubine, represents the Law Covenant, which was given to Moses at Mount Sinai. (2) Sarah, Abraham’s wife, the one he especially loved, represents the Grace Covenant. Ishmael was the first son born to Abraham, but God had determined that Abraham would have a *particular* son, Isaac. Not only was Sarah an old woman in her nineties, but also she was barren, so it seemed impossible for her to have a child. Moreover, Abraham was almost 100 years old. Nevertheless, Sarah had Isaac, the child of promise—the promise God had given to Abraham, before he had any children, that in him and his seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed. Who would have expected that this old couple would have such a child? Isaac was truly a *miracle* child, particularly from the woman’s standpoint.

In this allegory, Mount Sinai corresponds to the Law Covenant. Accordingly, Hagar is called the “Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children”; that is, she pictures the Law Covenant, the *earthly* Jerusalem. However, Sarah is called the “[new] Jerusalem which is above [and] is free, which is the mother of us all”; that is, she pictures the Grace Covenant, the *spiritual* Jerusalem, in the Gospel Age.

Notice that Paul said Hagar is “mount Sinai in Arabia.” At one time, the desert of Sinai was a portion of Arabia. (Today we think of Saudi Arabia as being much farther east and a little south of the Sinai peninsula.) Earlier in this *same* epistle, Paul said that he had spent parts of three years in “Arabia” (Gal. 1:17). Therefore, we feel that Paul actually went to Mount Sinai during

that portion of his life. It would have been logical for him to go there, for he was a Pharisee of the Pharisees and more zealous in keeping the Law than others (Acts 23:6; Gal. 1:14; Phil. 3:5,6). He had even persecuted Christians, pursuing them up to Damascus. He was a *real Jew*, a Jew of the Jews. With this background, it was only natural for Paul, in trying to get away from the world and go into the wilderness, to make his destination Mount Sinai, a holy place where God had spoken in the past. There Paul quietly studied, meditated, and reappraised his whole life.

As a little review, verse 21 introduced the subject of the significance of Hagar's and Sarah's each representing a covenant. Paul asked, "Do ye not *hear the law*?" The Law embraces the allegory of the two covenants as well as the religious ceremonies and practices and the pictures and types, plus the Ten Commandments. Paul continued, "For it is written [in the Book of Genesis], that Abraham had two sons, the one by a bondmaid, the other by a freewoman." Therefore, the Law also includes the history in Genesis—in fact, it includes the whole Pentateuch, the first five books of the Bible. Next Paul drew the analogy with regard to Hagar's representing the Law Covenant and Sarah's representing the Grace Covenant, the covenant under which the superior seed is established.

As the free Jerusalem that is above, Sarah is the "mother of us all"; that is, she is the "mother" of all the consecrated of the Gospel Age, the mother of both the Little Flock and the Great Company. While special emphasis is on the Christ class, the Great Company is also represented under the Grace Covenant, albeit in a secondary sense. (Incidentally, Sarah's name is not mentioned, but the account is obviously referring to her.) From the *present* standpoint, the Grace Covenant is the mother of *all* the consecrated, of all who are called, in the Gospel Age. But from the *final* standpoint, the Sarah Covenant embraces only those of the consecrated who make their calling and election sure.

Similarly in regard to the Passover picture, the firstborn class embraces both the Little Flock and the Great Company. Both classes are "passed over" by the "destroying angel." In the type, only the firstborn sons were liable to death by the destroying angel. Thus two pictures include the Great Company.

Gal. 4:27 For it is written, Rejoice, thou barren that bearest not; break forth and cry, thou that travailest not: for the desolate hath many more children than she which hath an husband.

The "barren [one] that bearest not" is told to *rejoice*. In the type, Sarah mourned because she had no children. Hagar, the bondmaid, had a child before Sarah did, so why was Sarah told to rejoice? She was given this instruction because *ultimately* she would have more children than Hagar.

Verse 27 has puzzled many. Hagar and Sarah each had only *one* child, so how would Sarah have *more* children?

"The desolate [Sarah] hath many more children than she which hath an husband [Hagar]." The King James and some of the other translations can sound confusing—for Sarah, who was married to Abraham, seems to be the one who "hath an husband," whereas Hagar was a bondmaid. The Living Bible is good: "That is what Isaiah meant when he prophesied, 'Now you can rejoice, O childless woman; you can shout with joy though you never before had a child. For I am going to give you many children—more children than the slave-wife has.'"

In addition, the King James can be explained this way. When Hagar brought forth Ishmael, barren Sarah thought of that slave girl as being on more intimate terms with Abraham than she was. Even though Sarah was the wife, she thought Abraham's affection would be directed more toward Hagar for bearing him a son. She feared that her barrenness would alienate her

from Abraham. In time, therefore, Sarah asked permission to have Hagar cast out.

Verse 27 sympathizes with Sarah's longings for a child of promise—the child whom God had promised but who had not yet become a reality. Sarah was barren and desolate, so when Hagar bore Abraham a son, Sarah feared Hagar would be knit to Abraham as in a husband-wife relationship. Even though Sarah was technically the wife and Hagar was the concubine, Sarah thought Hagar would become more like a wife than she. Sarah's feelings and fears, as well as the scorn and ridicule she received from Hagar with regard to Ishmael, caused her to think it best if Hagar and Ishmael left the household completely. (Hagar and Ishmael both looked down on Sarah, who was supposed to be the honorable one but felt alienated instead.) The Lord concurred and instructed Abraham to follow Sarah's advice. God told Abraham not to worry about Hagar and Ishmael, for He would give Ishmael adequate reward and make of him a great nation (Gen. 17:20; 21:1-21).

We should keep in mind the question Paul asked in verse 21: "Do ye not *hear the Law?*" Since the Law was *of God*, it was really the *Law* that told Hagar to leave. Sarah made the suggestion, but the *Lord* agreed with her advice. Although she had reacted emotionally, God approved because the situation furnished a picture. Thus the *Law* stated the matter, not just Sarah.

Sarah and Hagar each had *one* son, but we need to consider the next generation. Ishmael had 12 sons, and they were the origin of the Ishmaelites, who settled mostly in the desert country toward the east (Gen. 17:20; 25:6,12-16). In contrast, Isaac had only two sons: Jacob and Esau. Thus far verse 27 seems to be a discrepancy in saying that Sarah would have more children than Hagar, for the ratio was 1:1 and 2:12. However, God said to Esau and Jacob that He would make *each* of them a nation—the same thing He had said of Ishmael (Gen. 35:11). Esau and Jacob each had 12 children. And in the third (or grandson) generation, 70 souls came out of Jacob and went down to Egypt (Gen. 46:27). Moreover, God said that He would make a *great* nation of these 70 souls, and the Jacob line multiplied exceedingly in Egypt (Gen. 46:3; Exod. 1:7). Hence, from a literal standpoint, the Sarah seed *far outnumbered* the Hagar line in succeeding generations; the Isaac line began to overtake the Ishmaelites. Also, Hagar's line (through Ishmael) became nomads, or bedouins, in the desert, and that type of life was not conducive to numerical prosperity.

Verse 27 is true *both literally and spiritually*. (Of course the spiritual application comes later.) Thus this verse must be considered on *various levels*, the literal being the bottom level wherein the Sarah children literally *far exceeded* the Hagar children. The next level is the picture where Hagar represents the nation of Israel underneath the Law Covenant, and Sarah represents *all* Christians under the Grace Covenant in the Gospel Age. On this level, Christianized Gentiles *far outnumber* the Jews, whether the comparison is nominal Christians with nominal Jews or spiritual Israelites indeed (true Christians) with fleshly Israelites indeed (true Jews). Truly consecrated Christians (Little Flock and Great Company) outnumber the Ancient Worthies plus those of the Jewish Age who correspond to the Great Company. (As stated in the *Reprints*, we do believe there will be 144,000 Ancient Worthies, as well as 144,000 Little Flock, but the numbers comprising the two "Great Company" classes will differ, with the far larger number occurring in the Gospel Age.) Therefore, both literally and symbolically (or figuratively), the Sarah seed outnumbers and supersedes the Hagar line.

The introduction of Keturah, Abraham's third wife, demonstrates this disparity even more. Nowhere did Paul say that Keturah represents a covenant, but the logic is obvious. If Hagar represents the old Law Covenant and Sarah represents the Grace Covenant, then Keturah would represent the New Covenant. Keturah had six children, who picture the world of mankind under the New (Law) Covenant, which will include all who obey its terms, not just Jews. However, Paul compared only Hagar and Sarah here in Galatians—they are the ones he

included in the old Law Covenant picture he was presenting.

There is a third level. Those of the Sarah class who develop into the Little Flock will be the “mother” class, the “second Eve,” who regenerate the entire human family. Thus the Eve class will be the mother of thousands of millions, the mother of the whole human race. Jesus, the Second Adam, will be the Father of the human race, and the Church will be the mother. In this way too, the Sarah seed will far outnumber the Hagar line.

Even still higher, on a fourth level, the Sarah seed will, after the Millennium, create other beings on other planets. The Sarah seed class will eventually populate the universe. On this level, the Sarah seed will so far outnumber the Hagar line that a comparison cannot even be made, for the Hagar line is limited to planet Earth. Ultimately, in each solar system in the universe, at least one planet (or possibly two planets) will become habitable.

What covenant are the Ancient Worthies developed under? In the Kingdom Age, they will *temporarily* be underneath the New Covenant. Even though they will come out of the grave perfect, they will still be under the New Covenant until the end of the Millennial Age. However, in regard to their initial development, some Ancient Worthies, such as Enoch and Noah, were developed long before the Law Covenant was given. (The Law was not given until approximately 2,000 years after Adam sinned.) Other Ancient Worthies were underneath the Law, but they were not judged according to that Law. We are told that Abraham “believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness” (Gal. 3:6). God looked on the Ancient Worthies as “friends” or “servants”; He could not regard them as sons because Jesus had not died yet (James 2:23; Heb. 3:5,6). Hence the Ancient Worthies were not developed under the Law because what about those *prior to* the Law? They were dealt with *apart from* the Law, even though many were Jews. The Abrahamic Covenant is a different picture, in which there is both a heavenly seed and an earthly seed. The picture is complicated because the Ancient Worthies will ultimately get a spiritual resurrection. Anyway, Paul does not go into the Ancient Worthies in this comparison in Galatians chapter 4.

In conclusion, the Ancient Worthies were (and are to be) developed *apart from* both the old Law Covenant and the New (Law) Covenant, although they *temporarily* were (and will be) under both. They were developed *by faith*, even though they lived in an age of works under the Law. Abraham is the “father” of the *faithful* class (Rom. 4:16). Thus the Ancient Worthies are really an *exception* all down the line.

Because of Genesis 17:8, the Pastor concluded that the Ancient Worthies will get a spiritual resurrection after the Kingdom Age. “And I will give unto thee, *and to thy seed after thee*, ... all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God.” The Pastor felt that Abraham represents a spiritual seed class and that even though the Ancient Worthies will be dealt with on the earth during the Kingdom, they will get a spiritual change at the end of the Kingdom. Abraham is guaranteed *temporary* possession of the land, but that land will be left behind to his posterity when he and the other Ancient Worthies get their spiritual resurrection. Abraham “looked for a city ... whose builder and maker is God” (Heb. 11:10). He desired “a better country, that is, an heavenly” (Heb. 11:16). In other words, there is both a spiritual and an earthly call of the Abraham class.

Q: If we say the Ancient Worthies were developed *apart from* the Law Covenant, then wouldn’t they also be dealt with *apart from* the New Covenant?

A: Yes. They will be under the New Covenant temporarily, and they were under the old Law Covenant temporarily—but they were developed *by faith*, even though they lived in an age of works under the Law.

Gal. 4:28 Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise.

We, the consecrated of the Gospel Age, are the children of the promise *made to Sarah* that she would have more children than Hagar. Of barren Sarah, Paul said, “Rejoice, thou barren that bearest not; break forth and cry, thou that travailest not: for the desolate hath many more children than she which hath an husband” (verse 27).

Gal. 4:29 But as then he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit, even so it is now.

Just as Ishmael and Hagar persecuted Isaac, so natural Israel was the particular persecutor of Christians in the early Church. In fact, that was the main problem of the Galatians, who had trouble either (1) from Jewish Christians who were wobbly and never really became children of faith or (2) from Jews who had never adopted the Christian religion and opposed it as a dangerous heresy.

“If ye be Christ’s, then are ye Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise” (Gal. 3:29). The analogy is to The Christ, Head and body. Therefore, Isaac represents not just the Church but *Jesus and the Church*. Just as Abraham was Isaac’s father, so God is the Father of The Christ. Therefore, Abraham represents God in this allegory. In other words, *The Christ*, Head and body members, is *the seed* that God has been planning since before the world was prepared for man (Eph. 1:4,5; Rev. 13:8). In addition to Jesus, the true Christian Church was preconceived in the mind of God “before the foundation of the world.” Thus *The Christ* is a predetermined class begotten of God—and hence is the class of promise. As Isaac was the son of Abraham, so *The Christ* is *The Son of God*.

Gal. 4:30 Nevertheless what saith the scripture? Cast out the bondwoman and her son: for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the freewoman.

Although Sarah first said, “Cast out the bondwoman and her son,” God concurred. He told Abraham to obey her advice because Ishmael would not be “heir” with Isaac.

Gal. 4:31 So then, brethren, we are not children of the bondwoman, but of the free.

We, the consecrated of the Gospel Age, are children of Sarah.

Gal. 5:1 Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage.

The chief problem in Galatia was that some were trying to make the believer think he was underneath the Mosaic Law and, therefore, liable to all its ordinances and ceremonies, plus the necessity or obligation for all males to be circumcised. It is true that circumcision was instituted before the Law, but it was carried into the Law. The ritual was instituted in Genesis, which is part of the Pentateuch, and the *whole Pentateuch* was the Law from the standpoint that Paul used here. In other words, sometimes, as in this case, we have to take into consideration the context in which something is done. Even though we draw valuable lessons and corelations with other pictures, we first have to ascertain if we have gotten the correct thought that was *originally* applicable.

Gal. 5:2 Behold, I Paul say unto you, that if ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing.

Gal. 5:3 For I testify again to every man that is circumcised, that he is a debtor to do the whole law.

Paul was *firm* on the matter of circumcision. If one were deceived into thinking that Christians have to come under the yoke of the Law, then Christ would profit him *nothing*. Character and doctrine are both important, and here Paul showed that doctrine is *very important*, for a Christian cannot make his calling and election sure if he is mixed up on this subject. One who believes he is under the Law may get life, but he cannot be of the Little Flock, for the Christ calling—“Christ in you, the hope of glory”—would profit him nothing (Col. 1:27). The hope of being members of that future class would be profitless.

Why did Paul advise Timothy, a Christian Jew, to be circumcised yet tell Titus, a Greek Christian, not to be circumcised? Timothy was circumcised quietly and not under pressure. In this case, circumcision was a wise stratagem. Since Timothy was born a Jew but was never circumcised, this would have been an immediate stumbling block and deterrent to his efforts to preach the gospel to Jews. By being circumcised, Timothy was not admitting that the Law required circumcision for Christians. On the other hand, if Paul had advised Titus to get circumcised when he was a *Greek*, the act would have implied that Gentile Christians should be circumcised in order to be *bona fide*. It would indicate that they were obliged to undergo the Jewish ritual of circumcision. When one comes into Christ, he is neither Jew nor Gentile, for God deals with each one as an *individual*.

Comment: Taken out of context, verse 2 could be misunderstood as forbidding Christians to be circumcised—period!

Reply: That is true.

Comment: The Living Bible is good for verse 2: “Listen to me, for this is serious: *if you are counting on circumcision and keeping the Jewish laws to make you right with God, then Christ cannot save you.*”

Reply: If the *motivation* of circumcision for the Christian is to *obey the Law*, then the individual misunderstands the subject, and verse 3 shows he is then required to keep the *whole Law*. “For I testify again to every man that is circumcised, that he is a debtor to do the *whole law*.” If the Christian’s motivation for circumcision is to obey the Law, then he is indebted to the Law and should also observe holy days, eat only clean meats, etc. The individual would be trying to justify himself by works. However, circumcision for *sanitary* reasons is permissible—that is a different subject.

Verse 3 is emphatically repetitious: Paul was saying, “*Again I am telling you!*” “*To repeat again!*”

Gal. 5:4 Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace.

Christ is of no effect to those who believe they are justified by the Law.

Comment: Those Galatians who first correctly understood this matter and then went into error were responsible, for they had “fallen from grace.”

Reply: Yes. When Paul originally preached the gospel to the Galatians, he had preached a correct message, but now they had fallen into this other situation. There was hope for those who were *temporarily* off the course doctrinally, for they could be straightened out and recovered. However, to *remain* in this error for the rest of their life would mean a fall from

grace with no possibility of making the Little Flock.

Gal. 5:5 For we through the Spirit wait for the hope of righteousness by faith.

Paul was saying, “We are waiting for the hope of *actual* righteousness in the future.” God deals with us now according to our heart intentions, but the hope is that we will be faithful unto death and thus obtain actual justification, actual righteousness, in the next life. Those who are faithful in Christ and in grace will then indeed be actually and literally justified forever. “We through the Spirit wait for the *hope* of righteousness by faith.” Having offered us this proposition in the present life, God is dealing with us in a tentative manner.

Gal. 5:6 For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love.

Verse 6 is a qualifying statement lest we take things out of context and draw wrong lessons. Whether or not one is circumcised does not determine whether he is a Christian.

Why did Paul bring “love” into this situation? Only a few times in Scripture are faith and love purposely mixed this way, being in the same frame of reference. Paul had been talking about justification (righteousness) by *faith* and not by works, when all of a sudden, he said, “Faith ... worketh by love.” There was turmoil in the ecclesias in Galatia. (This condition in Asia Minor occurred 50 or so years earlier than what the Apostle John spoke of in his epistles and hence was a different situation.) To understand the turmoil, we will read Galatians 6:12,13, “As many as desire to make a fair show in the flesh [in the ecclesias], they constrain you to be circumcised; only lest they should suffer persecution for the cross of Christ. For neither they themselves who are circumcised keep the law; but desire to have you circumcised, that they may glory in your flesh.” Paul was talking about Jews who had accepted Christ and then subsequently went back to the Law. The Judaizing Christians were exerting pressure on the Gentile Christians to be circumcised. And what was their motivation? They were trying to avoid persecution. Moreover, although they were urging obedience to the Law, they themselves did not keep it. At least momentarily, the great majority were guilty of this error and had thus fallen from grace. Therefore, this situation was serious. In fact, it was so desperate that Paul did not know how to extricate the Judaizing element except to try to reindoctrinate them with truth and show they would lose out on the high calling if they did not change their attitude.

Comment: Paul said that if he were there in person, he would change his voice and thunder at them. The epistles are sobering. Even with the apostles on the scene and teaching the early Church, errors in both doctrine and conduct were, at times, adversely affecting the majority.

Reply: We are not beyond that condition today. The Laodicean period is one of contentment, with Christians feeling they are clothed and rich with a sufficiency of truth and understanding. The majority can be wrong, so we should beware.

Therefore, “faith ... worketh by love” was a pertinent statement because of the prevalent friction in Galatia whereby Christians who had not acquiesced to circumcision were being constrained to do so. The great majority had given in and fallen from grace by going over to this new doctrine, but instead of stopping there, the Judaizing element exerted strong pressure on the others to be like them. Paul was saying, “The very ones who promote this error are not keeping the Law.” Sometimes, we need to back off and study a situation to understand what is happening. He was saying, “You were under the Law before the gospel was preached to you. Then you accepted Christ with great joy and were even willing to pluck out your eyes for me, but now you have drifted back into the very condition you were in before I knew you.”

There is an emotional display in the New Testament epistles, but sometimes when we read, we do not get the intonation of the apostle's voice. If Paul were reading the epistle himself, we can be sure that his inflection and manner would be very meaningful.

Comment: Paul was not spelling out here the fact that if this situation was not corrected, the ones who were holding to truth might have to separate, but that is certainly implied. It would be intolerable for a small minority to sit under this constant pressure week after week.

Reply: That is correct. Some had not fallen in the classes in Galatia, but Paul was showing the general condition.

Comment: An ecclesia principle should be, “*Stand fast* therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free” (Gal. 5:1). If we were in a class where that liberty ceased to exist, we would have to leave and go elsewhere.

Reply: Yes, we should have dwelled a little more on the subject of liberty in verse 1 of this chapter. The reason for standing fast is to preserve liberty. Paul was saying, “Those of you who *have not yet yielded* to this erroneous type of thinking on the Law—whoever you are—should stand and remain fast in that liberty. And those of you who *have succumbed* should reassert yourselves and come back to the situation you had when you first accepted Christ. Then be determined not to henceforth fall away from grace.” Thus there were two applications to “standing fast.”

The implication is that if those who had fallen from grace did not repent—if the situation was not corrected—the faithful would have to separate, for it would be intolerable for a little minority to remain under that constant pressure. As verse 9 says, “A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump.” The faithful Christian does not want to stay in that leaven; he must get out.

Gal. 5:7 Ye did run well; who did hinder you that ye should not obey the truth?

“Ye did run well” indicates that the Galatians had previously correctly understood the matter of the Christian not being under the Law. Also, this statement indicates a time interval between their initial conversion and the writing of this letter. The only question would be, How much time? Some assign a later date than we would be prone to accept. At the end of the epistle, we will try to show some evidence to support our reasoning.

“Who did hinder you that ye should not obey the truth?” This was a stern remark in the sense that Paul was challenging those who were urging circumcision for the Christian and obedience to the Law. He was asking, “*Who among you are teaching this error?*” He was trying to cause consternation in the group, particularly among those who were responsible for this wrong teaching, and to let them know he would not treat the matter lightly. The false teachers would benefit if they realized that he *meant business*. Paul’s strong writing was needed, for it would encourage any who were thinking of repenting or any who had not yet yielded to the error. In other words, if any were inclined to repent or give in on this point, then casting fear and concern was the best method to bring this about.

Gal. 5:8 This persuasion cometh not of him that calleth you.

The error came not from God.

Gal. 5:9 A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump.

Verse 9 expresses an axiom or principle. Here the principle applies to *doctrine*; in 1 Corinthians

5:6, it applies to Christian walk and *character*.

Comment: It is good that Paul expressed this principle in regard to two different circumstances, for over the years, Christians tend to emphasize just conduct and morals or just doctrine, whereas both have to be guarded.

Gal. 5:10 I have confidence in you through the Lord, that ye will be none otherwise minded: but he that troubleth you shall bear his judgment, whosoever he be.

Paul had confidence that the minority who had not yielded to this error would continue to stand fast and resist. As verse 1 said, “Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage.” He also hoped that some who had yielded would repent and return to their former belief. If they had taken the step without much assurance because of being weak or wobbly in their conscience or faith, they might be persuaded to return to the correct doctrine.

Notice the stern wording of the second half of verse 10: “He that troubleth you shall bear his judgment, whosoever he be.” Considerable responsibility was incurred by the *leaders* who hindered the Galatians by promoting this doctrinal error.

Gal. 5:11 And I, brethren, if I yet preach circumcision, why do I yet suffer persecution? then is the offence of the cross ceased.

Why did Paul say, “If I yet preach circumcision”?

Q: Did some who misunderstood what Paul was teaching say, in his absence, that he was advocating circumcision?

A: That is a possibility, but it is more likely that the Judaizing element felt their doctrine did not conflict with Paul’s teaching on grace.

In order to appreciate and understand this Epistle to the Galatians, especially certain succinct statements, we should correlate Paul’s reasoning here with that in his Epistle to the Romans. A comparison of both letters gives us the degree of Paul’s intent.

The word “yet” can have another application, namely, the thought of “in addition.” The false element taught that while one had accepted Christ as Savior, *in addition* he had to keep the ordinances of the Law of Moses in order to obtain justification.

Not enough information is given to be conclusive, but it is possible verse 11 is saying that some who were promoting the error claimed Paul believed the same as they did. In that case, he was now refuting their attempt to give his stamp of approval to the false teaching. They claimed that Paul agreed with them, and in his absence, they exerted pressure on the others to agree that Christians should also be under the Law to obtain justification. (See verse 4, where Paul soundly rejected this idea.) The concepts of works versus grace are in direct conflict and cannot be combined under the Christian faith.

Paul asked, “If I yet preach circumcision [that is, if I yet preach the ordinances of the Law and the necessity to obey them], why do I yet suffer persecution? then is the offence of the cross ceased.” By preaching salvation through grace and faith in Christ Jesus (instead of the Law), Paul brought persecution on himself, whereas those who preached the Law as a means of salvation avoided persecution. Thus this *false* gospel was *easier* to preach because it brought *less* persecution. In other words, *much* of Paul’s persecution was incurred because of his making a

clear-cut distinction between being under the ordinances of the Law and being under grace.

Comment: It is interesting that Paul, who previously, before becoming a Christian, was such a *staunch* supporter of the Law, now saw the Law in its proper perspective.

Reply: Yes, it is an incongruity that unlike Paul, his current accusers had not been Pharisees of the Pharisees. His zeal had far surpassed theirs.

The doctrine of free grace in Christ is related to the Cross. “Then is the offence of the cross ceased.” We immediately think of 1 Corinthians 1:23, “But we preach Christ *crucified*, unto the Jews a *stumblingblock*, and unto the Greeks foolishness.” A *Manna* comment mentions how the Cross is a stumbling block to both houses of Israel.

Gal. 5:12 I would they were even cut off which trouble you.

The pronoun “they” refers to a *number* of individuals in the province of Galatia who taught the false doctrine that the Christian must obey the ordinances of the Law. One or more individuals in each of the several ecclesias in Galatia promoted this false teaching. Paul desired that these opponents of the doctrine of free grace in Christ would be “cut off,” that is, *disfellowshipped*. Earlier, in Galatians 1:9, Paul had said, “As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed.” The Galatians were *not in any way* to countenance the proponents of such doctrinal error. A “proponent” would be one who is more *crystallized* in his thinking and actually *preaching* the doctrine, rather than just being sympathetic to it.

Thus there is a time to take a strong stand. In the present-truth movement, if a strong stand is taken, it would more likely be along the lines of doctrine than moral conduct, yet the Scriptures show that *both* are important. However, in every case, the matter should be weighed very carefully before considering the other party “accursed.” With regard to doctrine, only a *serious* error would require disfellowshipping. For instance, Paul said that we should not destroy our brother with knowledge but that we should “let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind” (Rom. 14:5). There should be a give-and-take on doctrine and matters of conscience *unless fundamentals are involved*. The importance of the doctrine or morals issue has to be weighed. Here in Galatians, the *basic platform* of faith was being tampered with: justification by faith versus justification by the works of the Law. Incidentally, works based upon a *foundation of faith* are proper. In other words, a *live* faith has works, and a *dead* faith has no works (James 2:26). Works must be *based* on faith, and under the Law, that was not the case.

In summary, we are not to support proponents of serious doctrinal error. There is a time to take a strong stand on issues of both moral conduct and doctrine. But before separation and disfellowshipping, we should carefully consider the matter, which must be a *serious* one.

Gal. 5:13 For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another.

Notice, we “have been called unto liberty,” but that liberty can be carried too far. “Use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh.” Paul stated this same thought in Romans 6:1, using different words: “What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?” In other words, in Christ was deliverance made possible from the Law, but we are not to use grace and liberty as a *license* to do whatever we want. We must not feel that because grace abounds, we can sin willfully and grace will forgive us. Paul made a distinction between liberty and license, which is *uncontrolled* liberty. In contrast, scriptural liberty is *controlled* liberty.

“Use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another.” Love should be used in the *exercise* of liberty. For example, love means that we should yield to our brethren on opinions but not on principles. We are not to yield if, in so doing, we would be violating our own conscience, and we should not destroy our brethren by overriding their conscience. For example, in his first letter to the Corinthians, Paul said that one individual ate meat for conscience’ sake toward God, and another did not eat meat for conscience’ sake toward God. In such a case, we are to let each one be persuaded in his own mind. That issue pertained to conduct within the class, and those with more knowledge of Scripture were not to destroy those with less knowledge by taking too strong a stand. Those with knowledge could talk with strength yet manifest that they still loved the others as brethren. Teachers, especially, must be careful not to infringe on the liberty of others. When they get on the platform, they must not put a yoke of bondage on those who want to stand fast in their liberty. If teachers try to *force* their views on others, a *principle* is being violated.

And another aspect must be considered. A distinction should be made between (1) a newly consecrated one who does not see a point of truth but who has been in relative darkness all along and is in need of enlightenment and (2) one who has been consecrated for some time, once clearly understood the matter, and then went into darkness on that point. Especially with the newly consecrated, we should not keep harping on something that is not principle. The circumstances are to be weighed, for there are instances when we should discern and make a difference. In other words, the *same* degree of sternness should not be applied to everyone. However, if *teachers* invade the liberty of the ecclesia, they *must be stopped* regardless of their motive.

Therefore, “by love serve one another” means that before we do anything too precipitously, too hastily, we are to consider whether our action will really benefit the other party, whether our attitude will truly enlighten him—or whether we will damage the party or destroy his faith altogether so that on this subject henceforth, no one will be able to approach him because of the way we handled the matter. We do not want to completely turn him off.

In addition to sinning promiscuously and feeling we will be forgiven, there are other ways of using liberty as “an occasion to the flesh.” Paul provided a whole list in verses 19-21 and 26. *Malice* and *ill will* are ingredients in much of this list, and so are *pride* and *vainglory*. The listing is “adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, [and] revellings.” As an example of pride, the opponents of Paul, who were teaching false doctrine about the Christian having to obey the ordinances of the Law, *prided* themselves on espousing a *neglected* doctrine (the Law). They liked being looked up to as “proper” guides of faith to the class. Moreover, the very ones who preached the Law were not really practicing what they preached; they were not good exemplars of the Law.

Gal. 5:14 For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.

Q: How would we explain this verse, “For *all* the law is fulfilled in ... [the commandment] Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself,” especially when Jesus summed up the Law in *two* commandments (“Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind” and “Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself”—Matt. 22:37,39)? Phillips Modern English translation has, “For after all, the whole Law *toward others* is summed up by this one command, “Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.”

A: The King James faithfully translates the *Greek* in this verse, but Phillips faithfully translates Paul’s *thought*. Thus we can see the value of comparing the apostle’s utterances in his various

epistles. When Paul said, “*all the law,*” he was writing with regard to the subject matter of *how we treat one another*. Loving one’s neighbor embraces most of the Ten Commandments and the “works of the flesh” (listed in verses 19-21), which deal with our relationship *toward others*. For example, if we love our neighbor, we do not covet his goods, money, property, etc. If verse 14 were taken out of context, the statement would not be true.

Gal. 5:15 But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another.

On one occasion, Jesus showed how biting and devouring one another can happen, although he did not use the word “consume.” “But whoso shall offend [stumble] one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea” (Matt. 18:6). Death with a millstone, riveting one to the bottom of the ocean, would be much better than the real punishment for stumbling someone, which is Second Death. Therefore, the “offending,” the stumbling, that the Master was speaking of does not mean merely hurting the feelings of a person, because some are sensitive and hurt when they are properly corrected. If we render a proper and needed correction, we are acting aright—as long as we speak the truth in love. However, if we stumble someone in the sense of causing him to go out of the truth into Second Death, we, too, will go into Second Death. If we cause someone to perish, we will share the same penalty. The Law teaches this very principle—that a person who murders another is put to death himself. The principle is the same with the new creature, only on a higher plane.

We must know the Scriptures in order to determine when to take a strong stand. Otherwise, we might take a strong stand for the wrong reason and stumble someone. On the other hand, if a strong stand should be taken and we neglect to do so, we incur responsibility. The Apostle James said we should pray for wisdom along this line.

There are different degrees of lack of development where one does not attain the prize of the high calling because he did not sufficiently heed the Word to be made a minister of Christ in the next age. But responsibility is also incurred for causing injury to another wherein the one at fault receives the same fate. Some testify later that they will have no more association with the Truth movement because of what Bro. A or Sr. B did. But the point is, What exactly caused them to go out of the truth? The Scriptures say that in many cases, one is led astray by his *own* lust, so the going astray may not be Bro. A’s or Sr. B’s fault. Hence blame is often *wrongly* ascribed to others when it actually is one’s *own* fault. But if it is true that a person left the truth because of something a brother or a sister did, then that individual will share the fate and degree of judgment.

Comment: If one is disfellowshipped on *proper* scriptural grounds and never repents, that is not the fault of the ecclesia.

Comment: If someone states that he left the brethren because of Bro. C, we are responsible for searching out the matter and for *clearing* that brother’s name if the situation merits it. If a derogatory accusation is made about a brother or sister, we are obligated to search out and stop the slander if it be untrue.

Reply: The Law stresses this principle, saying that if a party hears of another’s guilt and does not search it out, that party will incur the same judgment. It is one thing to claim to be justified by the letter of the Law, by deeds, but the *principles* of the Law are another matter. The Law is *God’s mind, His thinking*, on various subjects, and those principles do not change. Those same *principles* will be put into operation in the Kingdom but under a new arrangement, under the New (Law) Covenant.

Being “consumed one of another” applies in a drastic sense. If we destroy someone as a new creature, we will receive a similar fate. A single “bite” is one thing, but a *process* of biting that leads to “devouring,” or destroying, is another matter. “Devouring” is a *series* of bites leading to the destruction of the carcass, the life of the animal. Each offense (bite) incurs more responsibility. Incidentally, a fratricidal spirit can develop in a class if they have no faith and love and do not handle matters according to God’s instruction.

Gal. 5:16 This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh.

Gal. 5:17 For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would.

Gal. 5:18 But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law.

Verses 16-18 are again a parallel to Paul’s thinking in Romans, although some of the terms are different. The “Spirit” excels the Law; it is a higher idealism. We should exercise ourselves to try to attain the goal of the Spirit. As long as we are going energetically in that direction, we will do the best we possibly can with regard to obeying God’s laws and precepts; that is, from the standpoint of *God’s principles*, we will try to obey because in being led of the Spirit, we are being led by the calling of God, which is grace in Christ Jesus. God makes provisions for the failures of our flesh, but our goals, aspirations, and efforts must be in the right direction. If we are thus “led of the Spirit,” we are not under the condemnation of the Law.

Gal. 5:19 Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness,

Gal. 5:20 Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies,

Gal. 5:21 Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.

The last clause is significant, showing the apostle’s disapproval of the “works of the flesh”: “They which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.” To oppose these “works,” we *walk* after the Spirit. This is a walk of liberty in Christ whereby our shortcomings are covered (forgiven) *if* our heart intentions are pure.

Verses 19-21 list various “works of the flesh.” Paul did not explain each one because they “are manifest”; that is, everyone knows generally what these words are describing, even though the terminology may vary a little in the various translations.

Gal. 5:22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith,

Gal. 5:23 Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.

In verses 19-21, Paul categorized the “works of the flesh.” In now categorizing the “fruit of the Spirit,” he showed that there is a radical difference in behavior or deportment. The contrast is ill will, strife, disputation, etc., versus love, peace, joy, goodness, etc., for one another in the truth. In other words, verses 22 and 23 describe exemplary conduct in one form or another that is a *fruit* and not a veneer.

Comment: Scofield makes a nice comment on these two verses. “Christian character is not mere moral or legal correctness but the possession and manifestation of nine graces: love, joy, peace (character as an inward state); long-suffering, gentleness, goodness (character and expression toward man); faith, meekness, temperance (character and expression toward God). Taken together, they present a moral portrait of Christ and may be taken ... as a definition of fruit. This character is possible because of the believer’s vital union to Christ and is wholly the fruit of the Spirit in those believers who are yielded to him.”

Gal. 5:24 And they that are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts.

Those who are Christ’s “have crucified the flesh.” The thought is that they will *continue* to crucify the flesh with its affections and lusts. In other words, this effort is ongoing for the Christian. The old man is a monkey on our back in one way or another throughout our Christian walk, and we do not get full liberty until actual death. The old man is wily and always thinking of its own interests, which are contrary to the Spirit. The battle between the flesh and the Spirit is not over until death. Those who have the Spirit of God want to combat what they do not like in their own character.

Gal. 5:25 If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.

In verse 25, Paul’s point was, “If [we say] we live in the Spirit, let us also *walk* in the Spirit,” for our conduct should *match* our profession. Sometimes when we are together with brethren, we get a lovely euphoria, but that influence wears off quite quickly when we go back into the world for, say, secular employment. The analogy is something like the difference between reading and studying. Reading is a superficial, cursory examination of God’s Word, whereas study is done with purposed intent. We read in order to be more familiar with God’s thinking—what He approves and disapproves—so that we can do the same, but we need to start with self, with our own vessel.

Gal. 5:26 Let us not be desirous of vain glory, provoking one another, envying one another.

Then he said, “Let us not be desirous of vain glory [of excelling in disputation], [thoughtlessly] provoking one another [to their damage and detriment], envying one another.” Paul was describing a negative and/or evil condition of heart, envy being one example. He continued to give general counsel to a group that was much in need of help.

What people think of us now is really meaningless because measured against eternity, the present life is like a puff of wind. Therefore, to have vainglory in the present life at the expense of the possibility of having glory in the future is foolishness. We want to have the long-range view, for the will of God for us is our *sanctification* (1 Thess. 4:3).

Comment: The opposite of “provoking one another” in this context is to provoke one another “unto love and to good works” (Heb. 10:24).

Reply: Yes, here the provoking is from a negative standpoint. We are not to provoke one another into disputes, which lead to wrath and railings.

Gal. 6:1 Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.

Verse 1 applies to a sin committed because of Adamic weakness or a sudden impulse. It is not a disfellowshipping situation. In other words, this “fault” is more than just a little dig and less than a serious sin that must be brought before the Church; it is something in between. Also,

this sin does not refer to a habitual and premeditated wrongdoing. The word “overtaken” suggests that it is not a normally practiced sin or fault.

Q: Would an example of this type of sudden sin be Peter’s dissimulation? He was eating with Gentiles in Antioch when Jewish brethren came in and saw him. Peter got up and left the Gentiles as if he were ashamed, and Paul had to rebuke him; that is, Paul “restored” Peter by immediately calling attention to the wrong that was done. Ordinarily Peter probably would not have reacted thus, but he was surprised when the Jewish brethren suddenly walked in and indicated disapproval for his fraternization with Gentiles.

A: Yes, that would be a sudden fault, and Paul properly corrected the matter right then and there.

An example of a “fault” could be imbibing too much wine on some occasion and becoming giddy. Another example of a fault could be the uttering of a curse in time of anger. A fault could be any one of a number of things that would need immediate attention and correction done in a spirit of meekness by those who are spiritual. Some translations have “in a spirit of gentleness,” but we would not go along with that thought. Depending on the nature of the fault and the personality of the transgressor, a stronger action must be taken. A person who is given to being forward and aggressive needs correction in a more aggressive fashion but, nevertheless, not with pride. The correction should be done with humility, love, sympathy, and meekness—remembering that we are all weak and imperfect in some respects.

Even though Adamic weakness is a factor and the sin is a sudden impulse (as opposed to premeditation), the fact that a transgression has occurred means that the situation needs correction. Those who are “spiritual” should be instrumental in the restorative work, but who are the spiritual ones? They would be the *more mature* Christians, including sisters depending on the nature of the fault and the seriousness of it. A sister could do the restoring cleverly and tactfully, perhaps by using the “question” form.

Comment: Ideally, an elder should do the restoring, but in fact, it would be the one who understands the matter most clearly from the Scriptures and perceives what is happening and recognizes the need for correction.

Q: Could a fault be where someone is argumentative and absorbing an inordinate amount of time in a study?

A: One might be argumentative, but that is a more chronic thing. However, if in that argumentative disposition, the person overreaches himself and says or does something that is of a more serious nature, being overtaken in a fault, then he would need correction. In other words, it is not just merely a matter of his normal disposition, but he has done something that needs correction.

Comment: A fault in a Christian might be a temper that is not good to be heard by the world.

Reply: Many years ago we were in an ecclesia where something had happened that came up as an issue in a business meeting. Evidently, the matter had so stirred up the members of the class that the meeting was not even opened with prayer. The spirit was so strange that we were dumbfounded. When we called attention to it, the brethren seemed to come to their senses for a while, but it was a real trial. The issue was not premeditated—it just went against the grain of some, and the circumstantial evidence that seemed to point the finger of guilt was not really valid in the final analysis. It just happened to be a peculiar circumstance.

Although verse 1 is vague, it establishes a principle, and this principle should be thought out according to what Paul is saying here. The fault has to be corrected, and those who are spiritual have more responsibility. The correction should be given in a spirit of meekness, not vindictively, with the realization that the same thing could happen under another circumstance to the one doing the correcting. The suggestion is to be given properly “lest thou also be tempted”; that is, if the corrector is too severe, he might be tested along that very same line to bring humiliation.

Q: In regard to the clause about being “tempted,” is the thought that one who does not restore in the spirit of meekness might be overtaken by the spirit of pride?

A: Certainly the opposite of meekness is pride. However, it is possible for something to be done without pride yet in a manner that is more severe than the situation merits.

Comment: A pertinent Scripture with regard to the attitude of the one doing the correction is, “Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall” (1 Cor. 10:12).

Depending on the *degree* of the sins that overtake a Christian, some sins can be treated gently and lovingly, and other sins have to be dealt with sternly. A *repeated* sin is more serious than something done once, and of course a premeditated sin is more serious than a sin committed in a moment of passion.

Gal. 6:2 Bear ye one another’s burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.

Verse 2 is related to verse 1. In the spirit of meekness, we are to be sympathetic with the trials and temptations of others. If we have that consideration, we can be helpful to the brethren. If others sense this spirit in us, they will be more apt to rightly receive and benefit from the help, correction, and advice we give them. As Paul said in Galatians 5:14, “All the law [toward others] is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.” This law about loving our neighbor applies both in and out of the Church.

Gal. 6:3 For if a man think himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself.

Sometimes those who are *least* qualified are prone to give the most advice and do the most criticizing. Paul said that the reverse should be done. Those who are “spiritual,” and thus more experienced in the Christian walk, should restore such a one, for they would be more helpful than those who are immature and new in the way. Sometimes the newly consecrated want to instruct right away on matters they have not thrashed out over a period of time.

For verses 3 and 4, the Living Bible has, “If anyone thinks he is too great to stoop to this, he is fooling himself. He is really a nobody. Let everyone be sure that he is doing his very best, for then he will have the personal satisfaction of work well done, and won’t need to compare himself with someone else.” Although other translations are correct, the Living Bible brings in a new perspective with the word “stoop.” Some brethren do not want to become involved and bear the burdens of others. They think that the matter is not their business and that the brethren should handle it themselves. In other words, they are not sympathetic, and they feel that by empathizing with the circumstance, they would be lowering the standard. They feel that if they recognize or deal with a person who is overtaken in a fault, that association, that condescension, that stooping to give advice, somehow mysteriously lowers the standard. Such thinking is not at all true, *unless* one has committed a very serious crime or transgression that results in a disfellowshipping situation; in that case, fraternization would lower the standard.

Gal. 6:4 But let every man prove his own work, and then shall he have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another.

This instruction is condensed. Paul was saying that we should not compare ourself to another person, for perhaps the other brother is not walking as close to the Lord as he should. For example, he may be very liberal in his thinking and in dealing with himself. Hence he would have a lower standard of walk. The only comparison we should make is with *Christ* or the *standard of God*. Of course we should not ignore one another, but sometimes the conduct of others makes us think and go to the Word. Then we will know whether they are rightly practicing or interpreting the Word and will make the Word our standard. If we find we are following the Lord's instruction to the best of our ability, we can feel a measure of confidence that we have made some progress.

Gal. 6:5 For every man shall bear his own burden.

Verse 5 does not contradict verse 2, for the Greek words translated "burden(s)" are different in each verse. Verse 2 pertains to a sin burden, a "fault," a transgression, that needs correction. In verse 5, the thought is that every Christian is responsible for his own deeds. We are each responsible before the Lord as to the nature of our character building based on the standard in Holy Writ, and that character building should not necessarily be predicated on what others say, do, or teach but on what the Word of God sets as the standard.

Comment: Verse 2 stresses sympathy; verse 5 emphasizes personal responsibility.

Gal. 6:6 Let him that is taught in the word communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things.

Verse 6, a well-known text, is tied in with verses 4 and 5. What is this "communication"? Leaders in the nominal Church like this text, for they apply it to money, salary, and increments in connection with their ministry. It is true that the word translated "communicate" is sometimes used in the New Testament to mean the distribution of alms, but that is not the emphasis here. Almost all nominal ministers would seize on this Scripture to their advantage to prove that the clergy should be given recognition and that the recognition should be shown in temporal things.

The one who is taught should communicate with the one who teaches, but in what way? In fellowship and study, there should be a sharing of ideas. However, it is the *elder* who does the *teaching*. Nevertheless, if a wrong doctrine, concept, etc., is taught, the wrong should be corrected in the best way possible. Therefore, although "teaching" is not shared, a wrong can be pointed out—with a sister being more careful than a brother.

Notice, the instruction is to "communicate ... in all good things," that is, in all things that are of *profit*. In other words, we should not argue for the sake of argument. We are not to cause a debate, try to inject humor, or have a combative spirit. The communication should be on *constructive* and *wholesome* matters. However, if error is taught, it is good to try to straighten out the error, especially if it is dangerous. But we should keep in mind that some errors are not that vital. Thus we are to allow liberty on *minor* differences. All opinions can be expressed, but we are not to press for just our own interpretation. Nor should an elder try to make every thought yield to his strict interpretation.

One might have a thought on a verse that differs from what we or the group thinks, but that does not mean there should be a debate. We could simply call attention to the difference, but it is not necessary to press the point. On the other hand, one in the class might have such a

sensitive conscience that he cannot accept anything in silence lest it be considered wrong before the Lord. If an elder pressed an issue with emphasis, then we would have to respond to show that at least we had a different thought. Our response could be done very simply, and then we would not be responsible. If the elder says, “We all agree,” then we should speak up to the contrary. However, if the elder permits leeway and says, “It appears that this might be such and such,” then it may be more prudent to remain silent. Incidentally, sometimes it is important to get the teacher to clarify what he is saying.

There are times when someone not qualified is assigned to teach a certain subject, yet he may present the subject dogmatically. This can be embarrassing, but nevertheless, those being taught have a right to “communicate,” whether brother or sister. (Notice that no gender is given with regard to the instruction to communicate, so this is proper for sisters too.) A simple statement could initiate the communication, such as, “I have a problem seeing it that way.”

There are other types of “communication” as well, for example, encouragement, which is constructive communication. Suppose an elder gave a talk that was very beneficial on a troublesome issue. It is helpful if the one being taught goes privately to the speaker to encourage him and to tell him the talk was a blessing. And if the talk was not a blessing, the one being taught can still go to the speaker privately and explain what troubled him. Either way, the sharing or communicating should be profitable.

Gal. 6:7 Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.

This principle is applicable to all mankind, although here it is especially pertinent to the consecrated because the end of sowing to the flesh is death—Second Death (see verse 8). With regard to what a person does—whether in the Church or in the world—he is not scot-free, for there is cognition of deeds. However, the *degree* of responsibility may be greater for one who is consecrated.

The expression “be not deceived” is used elsewhere in Scripture (see 1 Cor. 6:9; 15:33). And Romans 12:19 states, “Vengeance is *mine*; I will repay, saith the Lord.” God is not mocked!

Gal. 6:8 For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.

Verse 8 is related to verse 1. If one is “overtaken in a fault,” those who are spiritual should “restore” him. Therefore, if the fault is not corrected, the Lord will hold the party or parties accountable. In other words, if one is overtaken by a fault, it is the *duty* of the spiritual ones to correct him in the spirit of meekness. But if the Church fails to correct the errant one, God is still not mocked; that is, He will not forget the transgression and will render His own correction or chastisement in due time. If not checked early, the transgression becomes more serious. Therefore, when God has to render the correction, the judgment will be more severe, leading possibly to Second Death if the transgression is along the lines of the flesh, for example.

Comment: Even if the Church brings the sin to the attention of the errant one, the transgressor may still harbor the sin in his heart. God would know this, even if the Church does not.

Reply: If one is not merely overtaken in a fault but actually *practices* the fault, then the sin continues and is *multiplied*. If not corrected, the result would be extinction eventually.

This is a battle of the flesh against the Spirit. The Spirit is not necessarily victorious in every single battle, but the overall effect is that of overcoming if we would be faithful. (If we were

always victorious, we would not need the robe of Christ's righteousness.) The danger is that in time, *simple* transgressions can become *major* transgressions. We are sowing a crop, and the crop will result in fruitage either good or bad depending on how we live our consecrated life.

Gal. 6:9 And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.

“He that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting ... if we faint not” (verses 8 and 9). In other words, we will reap everlasting life *if we do not faint in sowing to the Spirit*. We must *continue* our fight unto death; there must be a *continuance* in winning battles against the flesh. If the fight is faithfully and patiently pursued, we will reap everlasting life. By implication, sowing to the flesh is not as hard to do, but nevertheless, it is a *continuity*. If we persist in sowing to the flesh, we will reap death (“corruption”).

Notice that verse 8 uses the term “life everlasting,” showing that we must be *overcomers* to get life in *either* the Little Flock or the Great Company. Stated another way, even to be of the Great Company class, this battle must continue. If we faint permanently, we go into Second Death.

Now let us consider verse 9 from the standpoint that the epistle was written to the Galatians. The problem with the church in Galatia was that some were always pressuring the group, saying that the Christian had to obey the Law as well as Christ. To gain the crown, the false leaders were saying one had to be “circumcised,” i.e., be subject to the ordinances of the Law. Evidently, the great *majority* were so influenced. That is why Paul wrote, “I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel” (Gal. 1:6). In other words, “You ran well for a while, so why, in such a short time, have you departed so far out of the way? You were freed from the Law, and now you are again in bondage to it.” Paul's words suggest that almost en masse, the Galatians were influenced by the false teachers.

Q: Paul said, “In due season we shall reap, if we faint not.” Is the “due season” in this life or in the Kingdom?

A: It is primarily in the Kingdom, but in some instances, there can be a partial fulfillment in the present life. For example, the situation in Galatia probably became so intolerable that it caused a split between those who held fast to Paul's teachings and those who followed the Law. Those who remained sympathetic to Paul would thus have a season of refreshing, with those of like precious faith meeting together in peace.

The epistle ends with Paul's saying in effect, “I have had it! I have given you this advice again and again. From now on, do not bother me on this subject anymore.” Paul felt he had discharged his duty in writing this epistle, which treats the whole issue. At the end, he said, “Do not bother me again, for I have discharged my responsibility. I will continue to preach the same way and let those who disagree with me do what they think is right. Henceforth I will not be bothered by you, and you will not be bothered by me.” He did not want to thrash this issue anymore, for he had adequately addressed it.

Because Paul thus washed his hands of the Galatians and never returned, some feel this epistle was written from Rome, but we think it was written earlier, as will be discussed at the end.

Since so many of the Galatians had returned to bondage under the Law, Paul cautioned the few who had not succumbed to “stand fast” in the liberty wherewith Christ had made them free (Gal. 5:1). In trying to bolster the few, he told them not to get weary in “*well doing*,” not to faint in their fellowship where the Law was harped on continually. This advice helped them to be staunch; they were encouraged to *know* that the Lord *approved* of their stand. Paul urged

them to *continue* to be faithful to that which they had received. They were not to get weary in the presence of ecclesia pressure and yield to the influence of these false teachers. From that standpoint, the “let us not be weary in well doing” may be in regard to not only morals and Christian walk but also doctrinal pressures being brought to bear within the class.

Q: Do the elders today do their utmost to advise, encourage, and correct the flock?

A: The problem is that some seek out and help the flock but only on *their* terms. In such cases, interest in an individual is minimal unless it is on their terms; otherwise, the situation is considered hopeless. However, there is a happy medium. Paul charged the elders of Ephesus, when they kneeled down to pray at the seashore before he went to Jerusalem, with oversight of the flock but not in a domineering way (Acts 20:17-38). The elders were to look out for God’s Church—to nurture its development and to be concerned for the spiritual interests of those underneath their influence. The other extreme is the Nicolaitan spirit of complete dominance. Elders should have not only the proper disposition but also the proper doctrines and advice. The responsibility is great, and carelessness or neglect is serious. Wrong advice is bad, but no advice is also a problem. There should be advice, but it should be the *Lord’s* advice.

Gal. 6:10 As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.

“Let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.” Was there any special application to the Galatians, or is this general advice? Verse 10 is tied in with verse 9, “Let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.” Those Galatians who were faithful with regard to harassment from Jewish proselytes needed a great deal of patience. Doing good to the household of faith meant it was God’s purpose for them to be patient toward those of like precious faith, i.e., as far as they could afford to do so.

As general advice, we are to especially lay down our life on behalf of the household of faith. In addition to that particular emphasis, we are to “do good unto all” as there is opportunity.

Comment: Proverbs 3:27,28 is pertinent: “Withhold not good from them to whom it is due, when it is in the power of thine hand to do it. Say not unto thy neighbour, Go, and come again, and tomorrow I will give; when thou hast it by thee.”

The term “household of faith” applies *only to the consecrated*. “As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men [both the consecrated and the unconsecrated], [but] especially unto them who are of the household of faith [the consecrated].” In practice, when some who are unconsecrated manifest a hearing ear, we do good unto them in the hope that they will go on to consecration. In principle, we deem it a privilege to help those who are approaching consecration. Nevertheless, that is not what Paul was saying in verse 10. He was just expressing a general rule to do good to everybody and especially to the consecrated.

Gal. 6:11 Ye see how large a letter I have written unto you with mine own hand.

With Paul’s handicap of poor eyesight, this letter to the Galatians was a long one for him to write by himself. He also wrote the Epistle to Philemon (see Philem. 19). The usual practice was for Luke to record his thoughts.

When Paul said, “Ye see how large a letter I have written unto you,” was he referring to the length of the letter or to the size of the writing? Both thoughts are presented in the translations of this verse, and it does not hurt to have both in mind. The Pastor reasoned that, because of weak eyesight, Paul used large letters and characters when he did his own writing so that he

could see what he was doing. Back there that was an expensive way to write, for parchment was very costly.

Paul was probably saying, “You can see by the large size of the letters that it is *I* who am writing this *long* epistle to you, not someone else. I am *personally* writing to you.” This explanation embraces both thoughts. Paul himself took the time and made the effort, and the large handwriting was the evidence.

Gal. 6:12 As many as desire to make a fair show in the flesh, they constrain you to be circumcised; only lest they should suffer persecution for the cross of Christ.

This verse hit the nail on the head, for many would have said, “I am not afraid of persecution. I did not get circumcised just to avoid persecution.” However, the truth of the matter was that they had *compromised* certain truths so that they would not have problems and persecution.

Basically, the Jewish Christians who were promoting circumcision were doing so for two reasons: (1) to escape what they felt was unnecessary persecution and (2) to be popular and acceptable to Jews. In other words, these Jews would accept a *compromised* gospel of obeying the Law as well as accepting Christ. But Paul made a *clear and distinct separation* between the gospel of Christ and salvation under the Law.

The teachers of error desired “to make a fair show in the flesh” through their bearing, eloquence, etc. The thought is that they had a pleasing exterior; they put up a good front and were popular.

Gal. 6:13 For neither they themselves who are circumcised keep the law; but desire to have you circumcised, that they may glory in your flesh.

It was necessary for Paul to point out that those who did the talking were not themselves obeying what they advocated for others. This is true today as well. Some who talk a lot and are fussy in enunciating certain principles do not heed their own advice. The principles may even be right ones, as was the case with the scribes and Pharisees in Jesus’ day, but it is hypocritical to preach something and not practice it. Jesus said of the scribes and Pharisees, “Ye say one thing and do another.” What they said, they should have done!

But here, what the Jewish Christians were advocating was *untrue*. In regard to doctrine, we should observe the source of the teaching and then consider all circumstances. Stated another way, if we were studying a particular subject and an explanation sounded reasonable, we should ask, “If I accept this reasoning, where will it lead?” This approach is wise with a new teaching because error can sound plausible at times. If accepting a teaching leads to things that are wrong, then we know it is erroneous and must be rejected. Sophistry *sounds* wise and plausible when, in fact, it is not. Many people accept things simply because they sound reasonable, and as a result, they are led into error. Unfortunately, they can get so enmeshed in a doctrine that they cannot extricate themselves.

In regard to the Galatians, a false teaching was coming in from the Jewish element, saying that the Law must be obeyed as well as Christ. The Galatians should have asked, “If this is true, what will it mean to my consecration?” If they obeyed the Law, they would have to obey fast days and sabbaths, be circumcised, attend the Jewish feasts, etc. If they had thought on all of these things in advance, they would have seen the fallacy. Christ did not preach that a Christian should obey all the features of the Law. The Galatians should have asked, “What did it mean when Christ nailed the Law to the Cross?” Sometimes it is good to reflect on statements.

Paul was saying, “You who have been troubled with these Jewish leaders should notice certain things. They do not even practice what they say is so important. They say these things to you because they want you to agree with and respect them as leaders, but they do not follow through.” The leaders *selected* parts of the Law to keep, such as circumcision, but neglected many other features. To be consistent, they would have to obey *all* of the Law.

Consider the doctrine of universal salvation, for example. A brother has said, “When we accepted the truth, it was a great and wonderful blessing, but it is like kindergarten. When we get to know God’s *real* love, then we have no fear at all.” This is the reasoning of universal reconciliationists, who feel there is no such thing as Second Death as we know it and give a completely different explanation. We should then reason that if what they are saying is true, not only would we be making God a *liar*, but also we would be *more loving* than God, for He hates the sinner and will destroy the wicked. We should not be emotionally swayed by how wonderful this “new gospel” is to have *no* fear, for although it sounds good, it discredits the message of truth when we analyze the premise. We must not overmagnify the thought that “God is love” (1 John 4:8). Here Paul was telling the Galatians to *reflect on and consider* what these Jewish teachers were promulgating.

Incidentally, universal salvationists should not be considered brethren. We should not shake their hands, for they are *enemies* of the truth by being more loving than God.

Gal. 6:14 But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.

What is the distinction between (1) the world being crucified to us and (2) our being crucified to the world? Originally, it is a *voluntary* matter for us to decide to consecrate and give up the world. But once we make that decision, it is *obligatory* for us to renounce the world. However, what is the distinction here in verse 14?

Comment: The viewpoint is different, namely, the way the world looks at us versus the way we look at the world. It is the same distinction as the world being dead to us versus our being dead to the world. The world being dead to us means that nothing in the world has any meaning or value to us as a new creature, and our being dead to the world refers to how the world views us; that is, they cannot understand our attitudes, hopes, aims, and ambitions.

Reply: Verse 14 gives two different perspectives. On the one hand, if we are really a faithful Christian, the world is not interested in our fellowship. The world wants no part of us because we are a “wet blanket” at any party or festivity. On the other hand, if the world has no attraction for us as a new creature, then we want no part of it.

Paul said that his only purpose was to glory in the ignominy of the Cross of Christ. His mission in life was to be crucified with Christ (Gal. 2:20).

Gal. 6:15 For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature.

For one who is consecrated, neither circumcision nor uncircumcision really means anything. The real value is whether or not one is a new creature.

Many Protestant scholars feel that the epistles of Romans and Galatians are the best of Paul’s writings for stating the liberty of being a Christian, of being free from the Law. As the hymn goes, “Free from the law, O *happy* condition.” One who has been burdened with the consciousness of sin and then finds the hope of forgiveness and the opportunity for salvation

experiences the *joy* of liberty in Christ more than one who does not give the subject much thought. Scholars say that the Reformation was founded on Romans and Galatians. For example, Romans treats the subject of justification by faith, which is related to liberty in Christ. Verse 15 states this liberty in capsule (condensed) form. What really matters is whether one is right with the Lord. It is immaterial whether one is black or white, male or female, Jew or Gentile, etc., if he is a new creature.

Gal. 6:16 And as many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God.

Verse 16 was a *conditional blessing*: “As many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God.” Elsewhere Paul said, “Lay hands suddenly on no man”; that is, “Be not hasty in giving the right hand of fellowship to someone” because in doing so, we become partakers of his sins (1 Tim. 5:22). If we wish Godspeed to someone who turns out to be a wolf in sheep’s clothing, we incur guilt. Here Paul was giving a conditional blessing: “God bless as many as walk according to this rule.” It would not have been proper for him to say, “God bless you all,” for many were going astray and being deceived. Earlier Paul had said, “O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you?” (Gal. 3:1).

Some might think that Paul was not magnanimous enough. “As many as walk according to this rule” refers to those who were trying to please God by avoiding the works of the flesh and being firm that they were not under the Law but were justified by faith in Christ. Upon these individuals, Paul wished peace and mercy, for they were the true “Israel of God.”

There is a slight touch of sarcasm in the expression “Israel of God.” The Jewish leaders who urged circumcision for the Christian but were not that circumspect in keeping the Law considered themselves Jews, the Israel of God. However, Paul was saying that they were not the Israel of God, for that term belonged to those who walked according to the commandment he had laid down.

Gal. 6:17 From henceforth let no man trouble me: for I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus.

Verse 17 was Paul’s final say in the matter. He had suffered much for the Lord in putting forth the gospel, and this was all he intended to say to the Galatians. A note of *finality* is indicated here, for Paul had done all that he could. He had endured scorn and persecution and had labored mightily with them in doctrine. He had done as much as he could, and this was it!

Earlier in Galatians, Paul had said (paraphrased), “I am at an impasse here. I do not know what else to tell you, for that is how far astray some of you have gone.” He was trying to reach those who were willing to listen because for them there was some hope. Sadly, these individuals were a distinct minority. Other translations bring out this thought more clearly than the King James.

“I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus.” “Marks” were scars of service that showed ownership, such as a brand. Paul was saying that just as a literal slave’s literal brand was an evidence of who his owner was, so he was a bond servant of Christ in the truest sense of the word, and his persecutions and sufferings for Christ were evidences of ownership. Paul bore the figurative mark, or brand, of the Lord Jesus. His “slave” ownership by Jesus was seen in the sufferings he endured for the sake of the Cross.

Gal. 6:18 Brethren, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen.

Verse 18 is qualified by verse 16. Paul was *not* giving this benediction to all of the Galatians.

Origin of Paul's Epistle to the Galatians

At the end of this epistle in some King James Bibles is the statement "Unto the Galatians written from Rome." However, we do not think the letter was written from Rome for several reasons.

Paul was in Rome at the *end* of his ministry. Twice he was imprisoned there and then executed, but the interval of time including (1) his first arrest and release and (2) his subsequent reimprisonment and execution by Nero was probably only three years at the most.

Evidence in the Epistle to the Galatians shows that Paul did all he could for the Galatians and then decided to let the matter rest with his final statement (Gal. 6:17). The Book of Acts shows that his final visit to the Galatians took place at the beginning of his third missionary tour. "And when he had landed at Caesarea, and gone up, and saluted the church, he went down to Antioch. And after he had spent some time there [at Antioch], he departed, and went over all the country of Galatia and Phrygia in order, strengthening all the disciples" (Acts 18:22,23). This is the last mention of Paul's having been in Galatia. His third missionary tour took quite a long time. From Galatia, he went to Phrygia, which borders Galatia on the west.

Paul next went to Ephesus. In other words, on his third missionary journey, he went from Caesarea to Antioch to Galatia to Phrygia, and then down to Ephesus, where he learned that Apollos had been there. "And it came to pass, that, while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul having passed through the upper coasts came to Ephesus" (Acts 19:1). Paul spoke in the synagogue at Ephesus for three months and then continued in the city for two years. "And he went into the synagogue, and spake boldly for the space of three months, disputing and persuading the things concerning the kingdom of God.... And this continued by the space of two years; so that all they which dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks" (Acts 19:8,10). In all, Paul was in Ephesus for about three years. He planned to return home through Macedonia, making a big circuit route (Acts 20:3). He went from Ephesus to Troas and then up into Macedonia before working his way down toward Corinth and then eventually back home.

It was after strengthening the disciples in Galatia that Paul wrote the epistle to them, saying, "I am amazed how in such a short time you have departed from the faith. Who has bewitched you?" (Acts 18:23; Gal. 1:6; 3:1 paraphrase). Paul got news of what had happened in Galatia from others, and then he washed his hands of them after making a final statement to them in his letter, which urged the few remaining loyal ones to continue to stand fast in the liberty of Christ. The bulk of the Galatians had been deceived.

But the question is, Where was Paul when he wrote the letter to the Galatians? The letter was probably written during the three years he stayed in Ephesus. The other possibility would be later in Athens, where he was alone while waiting for Silas to meet him. (Incidentally, it appears that Silas never came.) Paul then went to Corinth, where several brethren joined him, and on to the seashore, Jerusalem, imprisonment, a long boat ride back to Rome, and imprisonment again. Therefore, the Epistle to the Galatians was written at either Ephesus or Athens.

Additional Thoughts on the Covenants

In Galatians chapter 4, where Paul gave the allegory of Sarah, Hagar, and Abraham, the warning was that, like Hagar, the Galatians would be cast off by the Lord if they continued

under bondage to the Law. First, Paul used the allegory to show that the Scriptures—the very Law of which they thought so highly—taught there were two types: (1) a covenant of grace and (2) a covenant of bondage. Christians are under the Grace Covenant.

The Old Testament itself taught that there would be a *new* arrangement. For example, “Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a *new* covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah” (Jer. 31:31). In other words, someday the old Law Covenant would phase out of existence. The Grace Covenant and the New Covenant, which are two *new* arrangements, are both taught in the Old Testament.