

**Glory
In
Galatians**

Glory In Galatians

Salvaging Whole Congregations

By spiritual standards, the apostle Paul was a great, great man. I once heard a liberal, atheistic commentator say that western civilization was built on Moses, Jesus, and Paul. Considering that this commentator was in favor of overthrowing “the existing social order,” his statement was certainly a backhanded compliment to the work and impact of the man originally known as Saul of Tarsus. Teaching and preaching in synagogue after synagogue, arguing with the skeptics in the streets, forcibly pressing the claims of Christ, even when on trial, and writing his explosive letters even from prison, this man - through the grace of Christ - turned the world upside down. Forced by the church at Corinth to re-establish his credentials as an apostle of Christ, he compared his work with the other apostles of the Lord: “By the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me did not prove vain; but I labored more than all of them, yet not I, but the grace of God with me” (I Corinthians 15:10). “...*more than all of them*...” What an awesome statement, especially when you consider what great men “them” referred to.

It was this same apostle who tramped into the Galatian region of what is now central Turkey, preaching the gospel of the glory of Christ, and with his traveling companions, establishing many congregations from about 45 AD onward. Thousands upon thousands eventually heard, and were “immersed into Christ” (Galatians 3:27).

But there arose a problem; a virus of false doctrine began infecting these congregations. This deadly virus - requiring that all Gentile Christians be circumcised and keep the Law - produced a spiritual epidemic as widespread as any small pox plague, and threatened the extinction of whole congregations in the Galatian region. “I am amazed,” opened the apostle Paul, “that you are so quickly deserting Him who called you by the grace of Christ, for a different gospel” (Galatians 1:6).

To check this plague, to salvage this whole series of congregations, and to set forth the blessings of the gospel as contrasted to the Law, the apostle - inspired by the very Spirit of God - sent forth this letter to the Galatians. Thus he begins: “Paul, an apostle (not sent from men, nor through an agency of man, but through Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised Him from the dead) and all the brethren who are with me, to the churches of Galatia...” (Galatians 1:1,2).

- **Paul’s credentials** - This man is up front; his first word is *Paul*. The Galatians, knowing what this man had done among them, would lift their heads from their troughs at the mention of his name. He followed that beginning with “an apostle,” claiming his authority directly from Jesus, risen from the dead, and from the Father, who raised Jesus from the dead.
- **From no human agency** - No missionary society or association sent Paul. He was sent by the design and word of the Almighty Himself. The point that the apostle was driving at was clear: the message he was about to deliver carried the entire authority of God.

This epistle to the first century brethren is both powerful and punchy. Warning that those who did not listen would be severed from Christ, the apostle really delineates between faith and law, and opens the door of freedom in Christ. Let us step through and learn.

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The Authority Of Christ

In matters of religion, it is always a question of authority. And it is of paramount importance, because the eternal destiny of men's souls rides on the answer to the question. But there have always been those who have stepped up to God's platform, and pretended to speak God's truth. "I did not send these prophets," said the Lord through Jeremiah, "but they ran. I did not speak to them, but they prophesied" (Jeremiah 23:21). But it was not just a problem in Old Testament times. Referring back to the times in Israel when the pretenders spoke, the apostle Peter warns: "But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will also be false teachers among you, who will secretly introduce destructive heresies . . ." (II Peter 2:1).

So, who has the authority to speak? Who has the authority to deliver the message of sound doctrine? What is the source of this teaching? The problem in the churches of Galatia began when some Jewish "Christians" came down from Jerusalem, and started teaching that the Gentile Christians had to be circumcised and keep the law of Moses. Even though they stated this position strongly, was it correct? In a letter to Timothy, Paul writes, "But the goal of our instruction is love from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith. For some men, straying from these things, have turned aside to fruitless discussion, *wanting to be teachers of the Law*, even though they do not understand either what they are saying or the matters about *which they make confident assertions*" (I Timothy 1:5-7).

The apostle Paul, therefore, has to speak strongly to the Galatian congregations which are in grave danger of falling from the faith of Christ. And he begins by establishing his authority as an apostle of Jesus, and Jesus' authority to speak from beyond the grave. Of himself, he speaks of being sent out, not by men or any human agency, but by Jesus Christ, and from God, who raised Jesus from the dead. "Grace to you, and peace," he says, "from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father, to whom be glory forevermore. Amen" (Galatians 1:3-5).

- **Jesus gave Himself for our sins** - What a price to pay! He gave *Himself* for *our* sins! The message of Jesus' death on the cross was well-known to the Galatians, but those who seek to establish the Law must eliminate or minimize the cross. What price did Moses pay? What death did he die? What did he give? Where is the story of his cross? *Jesus* gave Himself for our sins.
- **Jesus was raised from the dead** - Not only did Jesus give Himself on the cross, but He was totally triumphant because He was raised from the dead. By contrast, where is Moses? The last we heard, Michael the archangel and the devil were arguing about his body. And when Moses and Elijah appeared in a glorified state on the so-called mount of transfiguration, the message to the apostles there was to listen to the voice of the Son of God. And He still speaks - from heaven!
- **Jesus delivers us from this evil age** - The Law offered no deliverance, only condemnation. Jesus is our Deliverer; He is the Deliverer of Israel!

Jesus has the authority to speak through the apostle Paul to the Galatians, and to us. Let us listen, heed, and obey, that we may live!

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Deserting Christ

Some things amaze us. It is amazing to watch a small child grow up into an outstanding young man or a fine young lady. It is amazing to see flowers blooming in the spring, or the first robins braving the remnant's of last winter's snow. Just the other evening I was amazed to see a "moonbow" - a clear moon shining into a passing rainstorm and forming a rainbow from reflected moonlight. Amazing!

But not all amazement stems from those things which are pleasurable. Sometimes the destruction that takes place during an African country's revolution amazes us. Sometimes the sudden suicide of a teenager close to you is amazing. The apostle Paul felt this type of amazement toward the congregations of Galatia: "I am amazed that you are so quickly deserting Him who called you by the grace of Christ, for a different gospel; which is really not another, only there are some who are disturbing you, and want to distort the gospel of Christ" (Galatians 1:6,7). This was spiritual suicide on a mass scale. Amazing!

The elements of the gospel run like a regular pattern of shining thread through the garment of the Galatian epistle. Christ "gave Himself for our sins," emphasizes the apostle. God the Father "raised Him from the dead." The purpose was to "deliver us from this present evil age." All this was "according to the will of our God and Father, to whom be the glory forevermore" (Galatians 1:1-5).

Neither those elemental things of the world which bound the Gentiles, nor the law of Moses which bound the Jews offered relief for the sin-stricken individual. Those who labored in the law were, in the words of the apostle Peter, under "a yoke which neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear" (Acts 15:10). So when Paul came preaching the good news of Christ, the grace of Christ was obviously distinct from the condemnation of the law.

- **The gospel includes what Christ did** - 1) Christ lived in the flesh. 2) Christ died on the cross. 3) Christ was buried. 4) Christ rose from the dead on the third day. 5) Christ appeared in the world following His resurrection. 6) Christ ascended to glory. 7) Christ has sent His Holy Spirit to both Jew and Gentile, upon their individual obedience to the gospel.
- **The gospel includes what man's response must be** - 1) He must believe the message of Christ. 2) He must repent. 3) He must confess that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. 4) He must be immersed in water for the forgiveness of his sins, and to receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. 5) He must perform deeds appropriate to repentance.
- **The gospel includes blessings from God for those who obey it** - 1) Forgiveness of sins. 2) The indwelling Holy Spirit. 3) Grace in which we stand.

The perversion of the gospel in the first century churches of Galatia was not that they left immersion into Christ out of the plan. The perversion was that they added circumcision and law-keeping to the gospel due to pressure from the Jews with whom they associated. And when they bent away from the words of God, they deserted Christ who called them by His awesome, fathomless grace, to preach a man-made presentation palatable to those with whom they associated.

Amazing! Spiritual suicide on a mass scale. Total abandonment of Christ for a distorted, perverted, twisted gospel.

But, of course, it could never happen now.

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Disturbing Elements

The discovery of the planet Pluto is hailed as one of the great scientific accomplishments of all time. Disturbances in the orbit of the eighth most distant planet in the solar system, Neptune, indicated that there was yet an unidentified ninth planet. Calculating from those disturbances, astronomers were able to confirm the existence and location of Pluto in 1930.

Disturbances were affecting the spiritual orbit of the churches in the Roman province of Galatia. The apostle Paul was able to calculate the impact of those disturbances, pin-point their source, and pronounce a judgment upon those who produced the perturbations. Speaking of those who were distorting the gospel by bending to Jewish pressure and requiring circumcision and law-keeping, Paul writes, "But though we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to that which we have preached to you, *let him be accursed*. As we have said before, so I say again now, if any man is preaching to you a gospel contrary to that which you received, *let him be accursed*. For am I now seeking the favor of men, or of God? If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a bond-servant of Christ" (Galatians 1:8-10). Strong words from a strong apostle, backed by a strong God.

In these congregations, there were those who were distorting the gospel to accommodate pressure from the Jewish element, those who sought approval from men rather than from God. In the churches today there are many who are distorting the gospel to accommodate denominationalism; those among us who are in the process of going out from us, men and women who love the approval of men rather than God, and *who are accursed*. Here are some of the types of pressures that cause men today to pervert the gospel:

- **Roman Catholicism** - The western representative of the mother of harlots continues to hold great sway in the "religious domain." Her doctrine of baby sprinkling continues to be the standard for many. She continues to work to draw her daughter denominations back under her influences, so much so that some "restoration churches" have adopted her pagan candlelight "communions" and her "advent Sundays." Those who cause grave disturbances among us have twisted the gospel so that Catholics can be accommodated, accepted as "Christians," and not to be "judged."
- **Protestantism** - The modern "fundamentalist" or "evangelical" believes he can be saved by "accepting Jesus" into his heart. Later he may be immersed as some sort of unscriptural "outward sign of an inward grace," or "a public testimony to others that he has been saved." This false doctrine has widespread acceptance, so much so that many "restoration" preachers have adopted this unbiblical terminology, and inform us that these denominationalists are to be accepted as "Christian" and not to be "judged."

It is true that the Pope and Catholic priests, the Billy Graham's and Jerry Falwell's preach a false or distorted gospel. But the thrust of the Holy Spirit's statement here in Galatians 1:6-10 is that those among "us" - those who come and preach among "our" congregations this perverted gospel - are *anathema!* These modern antichrists are usually "big names," driven by who knows what human ambitions. As the apostle John says, "They went out from us, but they were not really of us; for if they had been of us, they would have remained with us; but they went out in order that it may be shown that they are not all of us" (I John 2:19).

Stay with the apostles' doctrine and fellowship!

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Pleasers Of Men

Sooner or later every person makes a choice. He is either willing to sacrifice everything this earth has to offer in order that he might attain to the resurrection of the righteous, or he is willing to sacrifice heaven for the sake of some sort of earthly gain. Either he is going to do what he does to please God, or he is going to seek his reward from men. "Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God" (James 4:4). And the Almighty, in His infinite wisdom, works things after the counsel of His will so that we all at some point in our lives are in a position where we are forced to make the fatal choice, to choose death or life. This includes preachers.

There was a good-sized movement in the Galatian congregations to accommodate their Jewish associates. Many of the Christians were at first Jews, and undoubtedly many of them had close friends and relatives who never believed the gospel. These first century Jews persecuted Christians, putting them to death, unless the Christians would essentially repudiate the cross of Christ and become a sect of the Jews. Thus many who preached in Galatia accepted this compromise in order to grow bigger congregations and to escape the suffering. As Paul wrote farther along in this Galatian letter: "Those who desire to make a good showing in the flesh try to compel you to be circumcised, simply that they may not be persecuted for the cross of Christ" (Galatians 6:12).

The apostle Paul had made his stand. There would be no perversion of the gospel for him. "For am I now seeking the favor of men, or of God? Or am I striving to please men? If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a bond-servant of Christ" (Galatians 1:10).

But these words should cause moderns to pause and reflect. While the Jews in our neighborhoods are not persecuting us in our time, there are great pressures to be pleasers of men rather than pleasers of God. The Father allows it to be this way. And the example of the Galatians before us is that not only preachers may bend the gospel to be accepted by those around them, but a whole congregation - indeed, whole groups of congregations - can be swept along into this compromise of the gospel. The following warnings must be heeded by all:

- **Distorters of the gospel are accursed** - "But even though we, or an angel from heaven, should preach a gospel contrary to what we have preached to you, let him be accursed [*anathema*]" (Galatians 1:8).
- **Perverters of the gospel are slaves to their own appetites** - "Now I urge you, brethren, keep your eye on those who cause dissensions and hindrances contrary to the teaching which you learned, and turn away from them. For such men are slaves, not of our Lord Christ but of their own appetites; and by their smooth and flattering speech they deceive the hearts of the unsuspecting" (Romans 16:17,18).
- **God sends a deluding influence on those who are not truth-seekers** — Speaking of the coming of one whose activity was in accord with Satan, Paul writes that this one has "all the deception of wickedness for those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth so as to be saved. And for this reason God will send on them a deluding influence so that they may believe what is false, in order that they may all be judged who did not believe the truth, but took pleasure in wickedness" (II Thessalonians 2:10-12).

God will let you personally be tested. God will send deluding influences through your congregation, and the other congregations with which you associate. You had better make up your mind whether you are going to please men or God.

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Paul's Gospel Credentials

Truth is opposed by Satan. And truth is opposed by those in Satan's grip. When someone takes a stand for truth, you can be certain that at least one person from Satan's crowd will work to discredit the one who stands for truth. Thus, everywhere the apostle Paul preached, there were those who attempted to discredit him personally, and discredit his message.

And so it was among the congregations in Galatia. Although it was the apostle's preaching which caused - directly or indirectly - them to come into existence. Paul's name, and therefore his preaching, was being destroyed by enemies of the gospel who had a hidden personal agenda. The apostle found it necessary to bring his personal history before the Galatian Christians in order to establish his gospel credentials, and the truth of his gospel message.

- **The gospel preached by Paul did not come from man** - "For I would have you know, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man. For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ" (Galatians 1:11,12). To add credibility to this point, the apostle goes on with his history.
- **Paul was at first a persecutor** - "For you have heard of my former manner of life in Judaism, how I used to persecute the church of God beyond measure, and tried to destroy it" (Galatians 1:13).
- **Paul was rapidly advancing up the Jewish social ladder** - "I was advancing in Judaism beyond many of my contemporaries among my countrymen, being more extremely zealous for my ancestral traditions" (Galatians 1:14).
- **Paul's "call" came from God** - "But when He who had set me apart, even from my mother's womb, and called me through His grace, was pleased to reveal His Son in me, that I might preach Him among the Gentiles" (Galatians 1:15,16).
- **It was a long time before Paul met any of the other apostles** - "I did not immediately consult with flesh and blood, nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me; but I went away to Arabia, and returned once more to Damascus. Then three years later I went up to Jerusalem to become acquainted with Cephas [Aramaic name for *Peter*], and stayed with him fifteen days. But I did not see any other apostles except James, the Lord's brother. (Now in what I am writing to you, I assure you before God that I am not lying.) Then I went into the regions of Syria and Cilicia. And I was still unknown by sight to the churches of Judea which were in Christ" (Galatians 1:16-22).

The apostle Paul makes it quite clear that his gospel came by revelation from Christ personally, and he could not have received all that he knew from the other apostles. His credentials to preach the gospel came from Jesus Himself. All in his hearing, then, should listen!

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Called An Apostle

One of the great, inspiring stories in the Bible is what God did with the apostle Paul. In his own words, he was “a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent aggressor” (I Timothy 1:13). And yet, by the grace of God, this man became the most powerful promulgator of the gospel to ever follow in the footsteps of Christ.

None of our circumstances are, from God’s perspective, chance. It was not by chance that we were born in our respective countries, it was not by chance that we were born to our respective parents, nor was it by chance that we were born at this time in history. As David, the sweet psalmist of Israel sang, “Your eyes have seen my unformed substance; and in Your book they were all written - the days that were ordained for me, when as yet there was not one of them” (Psalm 139:16). As we live and move and have our being in the unseen God, as we make our choices by our own free will, He still accomplishes His will by His predetermined plan and foreknowledge. Thus Saul of Tarsus was set apart, even from his “mother’s womb” (Galatians 1:15) to be an apostle of Christ. But he had some roads to take, and some choices to make before this apostleship transpired.

- **His background** - Saul of Tarsus was born a Roman citizen in Tarsus of Cilicia (present south-central Turkey). He was born sometime after Christ to Jewish parents, whose ancestry was traced to the tribe of Benjamin. The men in his family were strict Pharisees, and at a fairly young age Saul was sent to Jerusalem to be educated, eventually sitting under the tutelage of the great Jewish rabbi Gamaliel.
- **His persecution of the church** - Shortly after the church began at Pentecost, 30 AD, Saul took a leading role in attempting to destroy Christianity. He led the crowd which stoned Stephen, he drove most of the church out of Jerusalem, and he carried his persecution to other cities.
- **His conversion** - Saul met the Christ just outside the city of Damascus within a couple of years after the church’s beginning while on a search and destroy mission. The Lord blinded him, forced him to the ground, and told him to go to Damascus where someone would tell him what to do. A disciple of Christ, Ananias, sent by the Lord Himself, spoke to Saul, “And now, why do you delay? Arise, and be immersed, and wash away your sins, calling on His name” (Acts 22:16). He arose and was immersed, and immediately began to proclaim Jesus in the Damascene synagogues.
- **As a teacher** - Saul went to Arabia from Damascus, where he possibly was permitted by revelation to walk through the events of Jesus’ earthly life, and from there he “returned once more to Damascus” (Galatians 1:17). This time at Damascus he had to be lowered over the wall in a basket in order to escape the Jews in the city, and he went up to Jerusalem, where Barnabas presented him to Peter and to James (an elder in the Lord’s church at Jerusalem, and brother of the Lord). Because the Jews were trying to kill him in Jerusalem, the brethren sent him home to Tarsus in Cilicia. As the congregation in Antioch of Syria began to develop, Barnabas went to Cilicia and brought Saul to Antioch where the two of them spent an entire year with the church, “and taught considerable numbers” (Acts 11:26).

At this point in Saul’s life he had not yet assumed his full authority and power as an apostle. The Lord was still arranging circumstances for this great lion of God to blossom forth.

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Called An Apostle (Cont'd)

Saul of Tarsus was “set apart,” even from his mother’s womb, to be an apostle (Galatians 1:15). But many events transpired in the life of Saul before he assumed his full authority as an apostle of the Christ who met him on the road to Damascus. Born of Israelite parents in Tarsus of Cilicia, educated in Jerusalem, “a Pharisee of Pharisees,” Saul began persecuting the church at his first contact with it. But Jesus turned him around at Damascus, and from that point Saul began to proclaim Jesus in the synagogues. After spending time in Arabia, he came back to Damascus. From there he went down to Jerusalem, and shortly thereafter was shipped to his home town of Tarsus. Barnabas brought Saul from Tarsus to Antioch of Syria, where the two of them spent a year with the church and taught considerable numbers. As he later described these events to the Galatians: “Then I went into the regions of Syria and Cilicia. And I was still unknown by sight to the churches of Judea which were in Christ; but only they kept hearing, ‘He who once persecuted us is now preaching the faith which he once tried to destroy.’ And they were glorifying God because of me” (Galatians 1:21-24). And Saul’s time as a teacher continued.

- **As a teacher** - While Saul was teaching considerable numbers in Antioch of Syria, a great famine came “all over the world” (Acts 11:28). The brethren in Antioch, consisting of many of Gentile background, sent a contribution to help the brethren in Jerusalem, and Barnabas and Saul carried the money to the elders. When they returned from Jerusalem, they met with the leaders of the church at Antioch for a time of fasting and prayer. “Now there were at Antioch, in the church that was there, prophets and *teachers*, Barnabas and . . . Saul. And while they were ministering to the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, ‘Set apart for Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.’ Then, when they had fasted and prayed and laid their hands on them, they sent them away” (Acts 13:1-3).
- **As a preacher** - It was at this point, I believe, that Saul was appointed a preacher. Saul and Barnabas were teachers (possibly prophets) up to this point, but now under direction of the Holy Spirit, the other leaders of the church laid hands of appointment on them, and sent them out *as apostles of the church in Antioch* (see Acts 14:4). Thus, as they traveled through Cyprus, they were evangelists, or preachers, establishing new works for the Lord.
- **As an apostle of Christ** - It was on the western end of Cyprus that Barnabas and Saul encountered a Jewish false prophet named Bar-Jesus who was opposing their efforts before the proconsul. At this point, Luke, the inspired historian, indicates the shift in Saul’s status at his filling with the Holy Spirit by a name change: “But Saul, who was also known as Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit . . .” (Acts 13:9). Up to this point the record has consistently been “Barnabas and Saul.” But the holy writ now shifts to “Paul and his companions” (Acts 13:13), and from this point on Paul is the “chief speaker” (Acts 14:12).

With the full authority as an apostle of Christ, able to perform all the signs of an apostle, Paul is now able to fully carry out the preaching of “our Savior Christ Jesus, who abolished death, and brought life and immortality to life through the gospel, for which *I was appointed a preacher and an apostle and a teacher*” (II Timothy 1:10,11).

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And On To Jerusalem

“Then after an interval of fourteen years I went up again to Jerusalem,” writes Paul to the churches of Galatia. Why so much emphasis on Jerusalem?

The Christian congregations in Galatia had been started by the apostle Paul on his first missionary journey with Barnabas. Many of their converts were Gentiles, and Paul never required them to be circumcised or to keep the law of Moses. But later men came into the Galatian region and began to teach that Christianity was really just a sect of the Jews, and that Christians were to be circumcised and keep the law of Moses. Because Jerusalem was the center of Judaism, and therefore where there were tendencies for Christians from Jerusalem to lean toward Judaism, Paul - in order to establish the validity of his upcoming points - had to describe some of the events which occurred in that city.

After his immersion into Christ in Damascus, Paul writes, “I did not immediately consult with flesh and blood, *nor did I go to Jerusalem* to those who were apostles before me” (Galatians 1:16,17). After spending time in Arabia, and returning to Damascus, the apostle finally went to Jerusalem. “Then three years later I went up to Jerusalem” (Galatians 1:18). But in his writing he makes it clear that the information he received was not from mere flesh and blood, but from Lord Jesus Himself. After spending time in Tarsus and Antioch of Syria, Barnabas and Saul were sent out by the Holy Spirit to carry the gospel into the Galatian region on Paul’s first missionary journey. “Then after an interval of fourteen years I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, taking Titus along also. And it was because of a revelation that I went up” (Galatians 2:1,2).

- **There were big problems in Antioch** - “And some men came down from Judea and began teaching the brethren, ‘Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved.’” (Acts 15:1). That is a strong statement! These men from Jerusalem were insisting that circumcision and thus a return to the law of Moses was required to go to heaven. This, of course, was contrary to the teaching of Paul and Barnabas. “And when Paul and Barnabas had great dissension and debate with them, the brethren determined that Paul and Barnabas and certain others of them should go up to Jerusalem to the apostles and elders concerning this issue” (Acts 15:2). Even the word of the apostle Paul did not carry sufficient weight in Antioch to solve this problem!
- **There were big problems in Jerusalem** - “And when they arrived at Jerusalem, they were received by the church and the apostles and elders...But certain ones of the sect of the Pharisees who had believed, stood up, saying, ‘It is necessary to circumcise them, and to direct them to observe the Law of Moses.’” (Acts 15:4,5).

The Lord wanted Paul to go up to Jerusalem to help solve the problem there as well as in Antioch; as he put it, “And it was because of a revelation that I went up.” The result: “The apostles and elders came together to look into this matter” (Acts 15:6).

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Circumcision And Law

There is always some fleshly reason for false doctrine. The apostle Paul warned Timothy, “For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves *teachers in accordance to their own desires*; and will turn away their ears from truth, and will turn aside to myths” (II Timothy 4:3,4). So when men came into Antioch or Syria, or the churches of Galatia, or remained in Jerusalem, and taught that Christians had to be circumcised and keep the law of Moses - regardless of how complicated their arguments or how spiritual their pretensions - Paul makes it clear that their motive was to avoid persecution or censure from the Jewish community. He writes, “Those who desire to make a good showing in the flesh try to compel you to be circumcised, simply that they may not be persecuted for the cross of Christ” (Galatians 6:12).

Early in the history of the church there were many who maintained, even in the presence of the apostles, that disciples of Christ were to be bound under the law. As recorded in Acts 15, a conflict in Antioch over circumcision resulted in Paul and Barnabas being sent to Jerusalem to solve the problem. But there were those in Jerusalem of the party of the Pharisees (who had been immersed into Christ) who maintained, “It is necessary to circumcise [the Gentile Christians], and to direct them to observe the law of Moses” (Acts 15:5). As a result of all this controversy, the apostles and elders came together to look into the matter. As the apostle Paul somewhat disgustedly indicated, “But it was because of the false brethren who had sneaked in to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ, in order to bring us into bondage” (Galatians 2:4).

As the inspired apostle in this epistle is preparing to cut the ground from underneath the Judaizers, he chronicles these steps:

- **His personal history and background** - Saul of Tarsus was a well-pedigreed Jew who was zealous for his ancestral traditions and a persecutor of the church.
- **He did not receive his information from the other apostles** - In his writing Paul makes it clear that he essentially stayed out of Jerusalem, and that he received his gospel by revelation from Jesus Christ Himself.
- **The meeting in Jerusalem** - As a result of the aforementioned problems in Antioch, after a fourteen year interval, Paul and Barnabas went up to Jerusalem, taking Titus, a Gentile Christian, along with them also. “And it was because of a revelation that I went up; and I submitted to them the gospel which I preach among the Gentiles, but I did so in private to those of reputation, for fear that I might be running, or had run, in vain. But not even Titus who was with me, though he was a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised” (Galatians 2:2,3).

God was working through Paul, apostle to the Gentiles, and through “those who were of reputation” (Peter, John, James, etc.) sent to the Jews, to solve problems both in Jerusalem and Antioch. The fact that these two separate entities preached the same gospel and did not require Titus to be circumcised should shut the mouths of those who would argue otherwise everywhere!

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False Brethren Sneaking In

Unity of the Spirit does not require unity with false brethren. In fact, the teaching of the Holy Spirit in Galatians emphatically emphasizes that there cannot be unity with those who are under law rather than under grace.

It has been said that a Christian is a brother with anyone who has been immersed into Christ. This is unbiblical. The Judaizers of Jerusalem, Antioch, and Galatia were immersed into Christ, but the word of God calls them “false brethren” (Galatians 2:4). These were men who compromised the teachings of the New Testament so as to avoid persecution. These were men who looked at things from a fleshly perspective rather than being able to see with spiritual eyes, a spiritual perspective born from a view of the Christ in glory.

In this section of the Galatian epistle, Paul described the nature of events which resulted in a meeting of the apostles and elders in Jerusalem. His point was that the same principles applied to the churches in Galatia:

- **It was because of false brethren** - The problems did not arise from Paul’s working with the Gentiles or with Peter and the other apostles’ working with the Jews. The problem arose because of these false brethren who were causing the ruckus, destroying the faith of some, and bringing in false teaching.
- **Who had sneaked in** - As usual, the false brethren with their false teaching came in quietly, under the cover of darkness, so that most brethren were not aware that there were enemies in the camp. “For many walk,” wrote Paul to the Philippians, “of whom I often told you, and now tell you even weeping, that they are enemies of the cross of Christ, whose end is destruction, whose god is their appetite, and whose glory is their shame, who set their minds on earthly things” (Philippians 3:18,19).
- **To spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus** - This liberty is not devoid of responsibility. This is liberty in which the individual Christian exercises initiative in imitation of the Lord Himself, and voluntarily picks up his cross and follows Jesus.
- **In order to bring us into bondage** - The purpose of the spies was not to understand the liberty of Christ, but to bring all the first century Christians back into bondage, bondage to the flesh.

Paul was a strong contender for the faith. There were those in the first century who did not appreciate his intensity, or his “great dissension and debate” with those who opposed what he knew to be the teaching of God. “But we did not yield in subjection to them for even an hour, so that the truth of the gospel might remain with you” (Galatians 2:5). Praise God that he did not yield!

Glory In Galatians

To The Jew And The Gentile

God almost always uses at least two witnesses. “I am He who bears witness of Myself,” said Jesus, “and the Father who sent Me bears witness of Me” (John 8:18). By the cross-hairs of two witnesses, God can clearly target His message to the “foolish men and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken” (Luke 24:25).

Thus, when the Almighty wanted to establish that Gentiles, as well as Jews, were justified by faith in a spiritual circumcision rather than that which is performed in flesh by human hands, He brought to bear the witness of apostles to the Jews as well as the witness of the apostle to the Gentiles. When Paul wrote to the Galatian brethren, he made it clear that he had no extensive contact with the other apostles, and that his information came directly from Jesus Christ Himself. So as he continued to establish his credentials to the churches in the Galatian region, he gives those two independent witnesses strong definition:

- **Peter and John’s credentials did not overawe Paul** - “But from those who were of high reputation [Peter and John] - what they were makes no difference to me, God shows no partiality - well, those who were of reputation contributed nothing to me” (Galatians 2:6). When those men and Paul sat down in Jerusalem as recorded in Acts 15 to compare notes, they found that they preached the same gospel, and that there was no information which had been given to Peter and John which had been withheld from Paul.
- **Peter and John saw that Paul had a God-given mission** - “But on the contrary, seeing that I had been entrusted with the gospel to the uncircumcised, just as Peter had been to the circumcised (for He who effectually worked for Peter in his apostleship to the circumcised effectually worked for me also to the Gentiles), and recognizing the grace that had been given to me, James [the Lord’s brother and elder in the church in Jerusalem] and Cephas [Peter] and John [the apostle], who were reputed to be pillars, gave to me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship, that we might go to the Gentiles, and they to the circumcised” (Galatians 2:7-9).
- **There were no doctrinal problems** - “They only asked us to remember the poor - the very thing I was eager to do” (Galatians 2:10). When the “pillars” in Jerusalem found that Paul’s message was the same as theirs, that strengthened their confidence. Their concern from that point was not doctrinal; they just asked for help for their poor. This gave rise to the big offering, which Paul collected from the Gentile congregations, and mentioned in a number of his letters.

Having focused the message of the two witnesses of the message to the Gentiles, Paul was about ready to take aim on the Galatians. But before he could do that, he had one more graphic illustration concerning Peter and the Gentile Christians.

Glory In Galatians

Paul Rebuking Peter

Sometimes in spreading the word of God, there are some *tough* situations to be dealt with. Picture Peter and Paul face to face, and not privately, but in the “presence of all”, with Paul having to rebuke Peter. The room would have been charged with major electricity; it would have been one of the most difficult things that Paul ever did; and Peter would have had to take the rebuke and instruction with meekness, without anger, without attacking Paul, and without throwing some kind of a fit and leaving the church.

This incident showed how strong the pressure was upon Jewish Christians, how deeply ingrained the tradition of remaining aloof from the Gentiles was, and how powerfully this problem affected the first century church. But, let Paul explain:

- **Paul’s strength and right position** - “But when Cephas [Peter] came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he stood condemned” (Galatians 2:11). Peter was in serious trouble, and his error was critical to the church. Praise God that Paul was strong enough and scripturally correct in dealing with Peter on this one.
- **Peter’s yielding to pressure from the Jews** - “For prior to the coming of certain men from James, he used to eat with the Gentiles; but when they came, he began to withdraw and hold himself aloof, fearing the party of the circumcision” (Galatians 2:12). When the Jews from Jerusalem showed up in Antioch, the pressure was so strong that Peter bent.
- **The rest of the Jewish Christians followed Peter’s poor example** - “And the rest of the Jews joined him in hypocrisy, with the result that even Barnabas was carried away by their hypocrisy” (Galatians 2:13). This was not just a matter of poor judgment or differing opinions; this was a matter of *hypocrisy!*
- **Paul’s rebuke** - “But when I saw that they were not straightforward about the truth of the gospel, I said to Cephas in the presence of all, ‘If you, being a Jew, live like the Gentiles and not like the Jews, how is it that you compel the Gentiles to live like Jews?’ “ (Galatians 2:14). What a shot!

This matter of the Jewish Christians’ holding themselves aloof from the Gentile Christians, and not eating with them, was an issue that was called by Paul “the truth of the gospel.” By not eating with the brethren from among the Gentiles, those of Jewish background were requiring in a subtle way that the Gentiles be circumcised and keep the Law of Moses. This was contrary to the base that God had laid in the days of Abraham before the foundation of the Israelite nation, and was a reversion to an attempt of justification by law.

We must pay close attention to the things to follow in the Galatian letter, for herein the apostle will lay out the difference between faith and law. This was the most difficult struggle in the first century church, and it is the most difficult struggle today!

Glory In Galatians

Justification By Faith

Suppose that you were a Gentile Christian in Antioch in the first century. When you first were immersed and added to the church, the apostle Peter and Barnabas would occasionally sit with you. But, you notice, as soon as some brethren come down to Antioch from Jerusalem, Peter and Barnabas won't eat with you or even talk to you anymore. You wonder what the problem is, because you haven't done anything wrong that you know about.

Then one evening, there is a meeting of the whole congregation. After the preliminaries are over, the apostle Paul says to Peter in the presence of all, "If you, being a Jew, live like the Gentiles and not like the Jews, how is it that you compel the Gentiles to live like Jews?" Then you begin to realize the spiritual infection in the church, and you want to understand how the apostles will resolve it. You and the honest-hearted Galatians of a little later time will earnestly desire to understand the obviously grave and eternal issues here, and you will pay close attention to Paul's teaching.

- **The advantage of being a Jew** - "We are Jews by nature [Paul and the other apostles], and not sinners from among the Gentiles" (Galatians 2:15). Without the restraint provided by the Law, the Gentile nations were given over to a depraved mind. Jews, by contrast, were not "sinners." They had a moral code to which they at least outwardly subscribed, and recognized a responsibility toward the one true God. As Paul wrote to the Galatians, he indicated that his conversation with Peter before the Antiochan assembly included this point about himself and Peter.
- **Being a Jew does not make a person justified before God** - "Nevertheless knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the Law but through faith in Christ..." (Galatians 2:16). A man could be a "good Jew," keeping the feasts, new moon festivals, and Sabbaths, and holding to the dietary and cleanness restrictions, and he would not be justified before God. The only way to be justified before God is *by faith in Christ!*
- **Even the apostles had to be justified by faith** - "...even we have believed in Christ, that we might be justified by faith in Christ, and not by works of the Law..." (Galatians 2:16). Here the inspired apostle really begins to establish the exalted position of faith in Christ, and in the process destroys the pre-eminence of Law.
- **The Law justifies no one** - "...since by the works of the Law shall no flesh be justified" (Galatians 2:16). The Law is obviously a dead system to one who truly wants to be justified before a holy and righteous God.

Using himself and Peter as examples, Paul grabbed Peter by the bit and jerked his head around to where it faced toward the front again. And by using this true life illustration in this letter to the Galatians, he jerked their heads around also. Law is dead; justification is by faith in Christ.

Glory In Galatians

Faith: A Picture Of The Glorified Christ

“Faith,” writes the author of Hebrews, “is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen” (Hebrews 11:1). The great theme of the apostle Paul’s letter to the Galatians is justification by faith in Christ versus the destructive effects of a failed law. The problem was that many in the Galatian congregations were attempting to require that Gentiles coming into Christ be circumcised and keep the law. But the Holy Spirit makes it clear: “We may be justified by faith in Christ, and not by works of the Law, since by works of the Law shall no flesh be justified” (Galatians 2:16). So, what is this *faith* in Christ? What is this that is the assurance of things hoped for and the conviction of things not seen?

A godly faith through the ages has always been a picture that began with information from God. Biblical faith has never been a “blind faith,” a leap into the unknown. Faith began with revelation from God in the form of physical pictures that were not seen, and culminates with faith in Christ, a spiritual picture not seen with the physical eye. Note these examples of how God built faith in the minds of men, and an increasing faith for mankind as a whole.

- **Noah** - “By faith Noah,” we are told, “being warned by God about things not yet seen, in reverence prepared an ark for the salvation of his household, by which he condemned the world, and became an heir of the righteousness which is according to faith” (Hebrews 11:7). God warned Noah about the impending Flood, and gave him the picture of the ark for his deliverance. Note that the picture was given by God and implanted in Noah’s mind. But Noah had to hold on to that picture through difficulties unmentioned in order that the ark might actually become a reality. Noah had the *conviction* to drive his picture to its conclusion, and that which was by faith was *a sure thing!*
- **Moses** - “By faith Moses,” we are told, “when he had grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter; choosing rather to endure ill-treatment with the people of God, than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin; considering the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt; for he was looking for his reward. By faith he left Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king; for he endured, as seeing Him who is unseen” (Hebrews 11:24-27). Moses was given a picture, by God, of being the deliverer of Israel from Egypt. But Moses had to hold on to that picture through major difficulties in order that the deliverance of Israel might actually become a reality. Moses had the *conviction* to drive his picture to its conclusion, and that which was by faith was *a sure thing!*

By their faith Noah and Moses were justified. They endured, looking to their respective rewards, holding and holding and holding on to the picture which God had given each of them.

So, what is the picture for the Christian?

Glory In Galatians

What Is Faith?

“A man is not justified by the works of the Law but through faith in Christ Jesus” (Galatians 2:16). Anyone truly interested in going to heaven will perk up his ears at this inspired statement, and will begin to wonder what faith really is in contrast to works of the Law.

Faith is a picture given by divine inspiration. Noah was given a picture of the ark; by holding to that picture, he built the ark and delivered himself and his family. Moses was given a picture of being the deliverer of Israel from Egypt; by holding to that picture, he left Egypt and took the people to the edge of the promised land.

- **Abraham** - To Abraham it was said, “A father of many nations I have made you” (Romans 4:17). Without a son of promise, Abraham held this picture, held this picture, and held on to this picture. And even after Isaac was born, still Abraham had great tests to his faith to undergo. “By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac; and he who received the promises was offering up his only begotten son; it was he to whom it was said, ‘In Isaac your descendents shall be called.’ He considered that God is able to raise men even from the dead; from which he also received [Isaac] back as a type” (Hebrews 11:17-19). “In hope against hope [Abraham] believed, in order that he might become a father of many nations” (Romans 4:18). But he held on to his picture, and is regarded by scripture as the father of the faithful.
- **Christians** - What is the picture for the child of God today? An ark? Delivering people from Egypt? Having a son by which you become a father of many nations? Obviously not! Here is the picture: “Therefore if any man is in Christ, *he is a new creature*; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come” (II Corinthians 5:17). The old man of sin was buried in the waters of immersion, and a new, triumphant creature is raised to walk in newness of life! This new being, specially created by God, considers himself as dead to sin, and alive to God in Christ Jesus. This new creature, by the power of the Holy Spirit in conjunction with the word of God, is “being transformed” into the image of the glorified Christ (II Corinthians 3:18).

This is the ultimate picture! A little old ark is nothing compared to the image of Christ in glory! A little old deliverance of 2.5 million or so people is nothing compared to the image of Christ in glory! And even the great image of Abraham as a spiritual father of many nations is nothing compared to the image of Christ in glory!

The purpose of all the previous examples of faith is to prepare the child of God at the end of the ages for being able to accept that the greatest of all pictures is applied to him. Gone are physical boats; gone is the physical nation; in their place is a personal picture of the image of Christ to be desired and reached for by a truly spiritual man. This is justification by faith.

Glory In Galatians

God Is Able!

In hope against hope Abraham believed. First, he was without an heir for many, many years. And when Isaac was finally born according to promise and grew to manhood, God required that Abraham offer Isaac by Abraham's own hand on Moriah's mount. In hope against hope Abraham believed that God through Isaac would make him a father of many nations, even if He had to raise Isaac from the dead. "With respect to the promise of God, [Abraham] did not waver in unbelief, but grew strong in faith, giving glory to God, and being fully assured that what He had promised, He was able also to perform. Therefore it was reckoned to him as righteousness" (Romans 4:20-22). That's the key: *being fully assured that what He had promised, He was able also to perform!*

So, what has God promised the Christian?

Consider first these steps in the life of Christ:

- **Christ walked in the flesh** - "The Word became flesh, and dwelt among us" (John 1:14). By this fashion, He was indeed made for a little while lower than the angels. In the flesh He suffered as man suffers, and in the flesh He died, as man dies. "Therefore, He had to be made like His brethren in all things, that He might become a merciful and faithful high priest" (Hebrews 2:17).
- **Christ experienced a bodily resurrection** - "Touch Me and see," He said, "for a ghost does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have" (Luke 24:39). But this was a transition body; He could pass through walls, and appear or disappear immediately.
- **Christ ascended to glory** - "Glorify Me together with Yourself, Father," prayed our Lord west of the Kidron, "with the glory which I had with You before the world was" (John 17:5). Jesus had to ascend to enter that glory. As He told Mary at the empty tomb, "I have not yet ascended to the Father" (John 20:17). But when He walked with the apostles to Olivet east of Jerusalem, and a cloud received Him out of their sight, He took His seat on the throne in glory as High Priest and King, "He who is the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords; who alone possesses immortality and dwells in *unapproachable light*; whom no man has seen or can see" (I Timothy 6:16). This is the glory of the eternally risen Christ, as John the Revelator speaks of it: "And His face was like the sun shining in its strength" (Revelation 1:16).

This image of the Christ in glory is also the image of the new creation in Christ. When a child of God beholds by faith the unseen Christ in glory as revealed in scripture, he is - by the power of God - transformed into the same image!

This is new covenant faith; to behold the image of the glorified Christ, and believe that what transformation God has promised to perform *He is able to perform!* Understand, believe, and hold on!

Glory In Galatians

Faith Holds On

Faith is greatly different than law. Law is centered on performance; faith is centered on a picture. Law demands performance now, but never achieves that performance; the picture developed by faith produces real performance later, the time gap being covered by a little thing from God called *grace!* Because of the weakness of the flesh, the law could not produce the kind of people who could keep it, but those raised, justified, and transformed in faith by the Spirit of God fulfill the righteous requirement of the law (Romans 8:3,4).

But faith requires holding on to the God-given picture against all odds and against all obstacles. There is no way in which Noah would have been justified had he lost his picture and not built the ark. There is no way in which Moses would have been justified if he had lost his picture and not delivered Israel. There is no way in which Abraham would have been justified if he lost his picture and refused to offer Isaac on the mount. There is no way in which the Christian will be justified if he loses his picture of himself being transformed into the image of the glorified Christ. He must continue to believe against all odds and against all obstacles that God is able to perform what He has promised! This then is the justification by faith spoken of by the apostle Paul in his letter to the Galatians.

Consider some of these scriptural comparisons of the weak law and the powerful picture of faith:

- **Physical circumcision versus spiritual circumcision** - “In Him you were also circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, in the removal of the body of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ; having been buried with Him in immersion, in which *you were also raised up with Him through faith in the working of God*, who raised Him from the dead” (Colossians 2:11,12). What is a mere physical dropping of a bloody foreskin to the ground in comparison to the removal of the body of the flesh and being clothed with the glorified Christ? “Beware of the dogs, beware of the evil workers, beware of the false circumcision; for we are the true circumcision, who worship in the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh” (Philippians 3:2,3).
- **Fading, dim glory versus unfading, brilliant glory** - “For if the ministry of condemnation [the Law] has glory, much more does the ministry of righteousness [faith in the glorified Christ] abound in glory. For indeed what had glory [the Law], in this case has no glory on account of the glory that surpasses it [faith]. For if that which fades away was with glory [the Law], much more that which remains is in glory [faith]” (II Corinthians 3:9-11).

Those who were zealous for the Law were zealous without knowledge. They were trying to achieve that which could not be achieved in the way they were going about it. “By the works of the Law shall no flesh be justified.” Our only way is to hold to the picture of our Christ who is no longer in the flesh, “that we may be justified by faith” (Galatians 2:16).

Glory In Galatians

Justified By Faith

Over the centuries, there have been few who would believe. Man has said, "I must see with my own eyes. I must hear with my own ears. I must touch with my own hands. Then I will believe." But this really is not true; those in general who did see, hear, and touch soon forgot, and went back to their old wicked ways. By God's design, because of the nature of man, faith is something that must be pursued. "And without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who *seek* Him" (Hebrews 11:6). Faith is generated by the word of God, as God parades His witnesses one by one before the eyes of the one who so deeply desires to understand that he will take the time to sit through their testimony.

God, then, is willing to justify those who desire to seek His face enough to find it in the image of the glorified Christ. As His servant Paul established for us: "For God, who said, 'Light shall shine out of darkness,' is the One who has shown in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ" (II Corinthians 4:6). By having and holding this image of the invisible God, "we may be justified by faith in Christ" (Galatians 2:16).

- **Not by works of the Law** - Someone who attempts to be justified by works of the law is really ignoring what faith in God is all about. Imagine the difference in a husband-wife relationship where in one instance the wife says to the husband, "See what a good person I am," in contrast to one in which the wife says to her man, "I believe in you."
- **By the works of the Law shall no flesh be justified** - The all wise and knowing Father in heaven has made it clear that no flesh shall be justified in His sight by "being good." All those "good" Jews will not be justified in His sight. All those "good" Orthodox souls will not be justified in His sight. All those "good" Roman Catholics, all those "good" Protestants, and all those "good" people of sundry stripes will not be justified in His sight. By the works of the Law shall no flesh be justified.

As Paul nailed Peter to the wall in Antioch of Syria, he was reminding him and the church of that powerful principle. The tendency of man is to try to justify himself and his circle - his family or his acquaintances - by some external, man-made standard. Law-keeping is man's attempt to substitute for what God really desires.

All through the ages, those who were of the faith of Abraham sought the face - the glory - of God. "Then Moses said, 'I pray, show me Your glory!'...But He said, 'You cannot see My face, for no man can see Me and live' " (Exodus 33:18,20). "For the Lord is righteous; He loves righteousness; the upright will behold His face" (Psalm 11:7). "Father," said Jesus, "I desire that they also, who You have given Me, be with Me where I am, in order that they may behold My glory..." (John 17:24).

Those who are justified by faith are those upright ones who have turned to the Lord in repentance and immersion in the name of Jesus. Those who are justified by faith are those who have continued to seek His face at the table of the Lord, in the Holy of Holies through prayer, and in reading His word. We appeal to you: Seek the glory of God in the face of Christ, and be justified by faith on His terms.

Glory In Galatians

The Son Who Loved Me

God is love. He loves us. And the heavenly Father wants to be loved. (Is there something wrong with this desire of His?) Therefore He set in motion the principle of justification by faith to produce the appreciation for what He has done, knowing that this will in turn lead to love for Him. “For this reason it is by faith, that it might be in accordance with grace, in order that the promise may be certain...” (Romans 4:16). Faith in God is therefore on an individual basis, producing love for God on an individual basis.

And, praise God! for His lovingkindness is from everlasting to everlasting, that He is willing to justify the individual on the basis of his faith. So the washed, the sanctified, the justified consist of all sorts of undesirable types - sinners from among all ranks of men. “But if, while seeking to be justified in Christ, we ourselves have also been found sinners, is Christ then a minister of sin?” (Galatians 2:17). The “law-keeper” would point with disdain at those justified in Christ, parade his “superior” character before them, and particularly in his own mind, then try to claim that - if “those other people” are justified, Christ is a minister of sin. Paul cries out, “May it never be!” Then he proceeds to methodically tear apart such a charge.

- **Paul will not rebuild the Law** - “For if I rebuild what I once destroyed, I prove myself to be a transgressor” (Galatians 2:18). “We know the Law is good,” he said in another place, “if one uses it lawfully, realizing the fact that Law is not made for a righteous man, but for those who are lawless and rebellious...” (I Timothy 1:8,9). The purpose of the Law is to convince each man of his own sin, apprise him of the danger of his condition, and make him recognize his need of the Savior. Once he has been immersed into Christ, however, he is set free from the Law, for to him the Law has been destroyed on the cross of Christ. So the condemnation in Paul’s statement is very strong—If I rebuild the Law, I simply prove myself to be a transgressor. Paul therefore was not going to bring the Law back to apply in his life or the life of any other faithful Christian.
- **By the principle of the Law, Paul died to the Law** - Paul explained in more detail in his letter to the Roman congregation that the Law requires that a woman’s husband be dead before she can marry another man. “Therefore, my brethren, “ he intoned, “you also were made to die to the Law through the body of Christ, that you might be joined to another, to Him who was raised from the dead, that we might bear fruit for God” (Romans 7:4). When each of us participated in the death of Christ in immersion, we each died to the Law in order to be married to Christ. As the same apostle wrote to the Galatians, “For through the Law I died to the Law, that I might live to God” (Galatians 2:18).

The Law is impersonal justice. The Law condemns. Christ is not a minister of sin - He delivers from the wrath of the Law those whose conduct in Christ would still be condemned by the Law.

But listen to the personal care exhibited for each believer in these words: “I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me, and delivered Himself up for me” (Galatians 2:20). Do you appreciate this, and respond appropriately?

Glory In Galatians

Living By Faith

The power of the cross is in the death of the Law. That is why the cross is the first point in the proclamation of the gospel. In using the Law “lawfully,” a teacher of the word of God brings his hearers to a point of conviction by the Law wherein they recognize that they are sinners. When his hearers cry for release from their bondage to sin, then the cross looms overhead in its proper proportion. At that point in preaching, the apostle Paul did not want to resort to mere human philosophies as a band-aid to cure the violent hemorrhaging of sin: “For I determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified” (I Corinthians 2:2).

Because the power of the cross is the death of the Law, the cross is also the central feature in a scriptural discussion over the problems with “law-keepers” and Judaizers. The apostle Paul’s instructions to the Colossians are powerful on this point: On the cross, Christ “canceled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us and which was hostile to us; and He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross” (Colossians 2:14). Thus no one was to act as a Christian’s judge with regard to external practices of the Jewish Law - the food and drink regulations, new moon festivals, or Sabbaths. No one could require the Christian to observe them because they were “things which are a mere shadow of what is to come” (Colossians 2:17).

So, in his discussion of the Law with the Galatians, the preaching of the cross is the apostle’s first major thrust in calling them back to the ways of God.

- **Crucified with Christ** - “For through the Law I died to the Law,” wrote Paul, “that I might live to God. I have been crucified with Christ” (Galatians 2:19,20).
- **Having been crucified, a person is free from the Law** - “It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me.” Since the person no longer lives, he is no longer under Law. He is uncondemned because it is Christ, the sinless Son of God, who actually lives in that body.
- **The Christian lives by faith** - Rather than living by Law, “the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself up for me.” What the physical eye sees is the same old body under Law; what faith “sees” is a vibrant new being formed in the image of God’s radiant Son.
- **Grace saves the child of God** - The disciple of Christ recognizes that if he were to be judged by the Law, he would be condemned. Therefore, he is very appreciative that God is willing to suspend judgment by interposing the cross. This gift - this grace - from God is very precious, and to be carefully guarded. “I do not nullify the grace of God; for if righteousness comes through the Law, Christ died needlessly” (Galatians 2:21). Paul recognized that if man’s righteousness could be accomplished by man, then the death of Christ was unnecessary. He was not willing to join the Judaizers in nullifying the grace of God.

When Paul saw that Peter was not straightforward about the power of the cross to justify the Gentile as well as Jew, then the apostle to the Gentiles leveled a broadside at Peter in the presence of all in Antioch clearly establishing that the Law was gone, and was not to be bound upon anyone.

Live by faith. Righteousness is not found in a vain attempt at law-keeping.

Glory In Galatians

Bewitched

Get ready for some first century style preaching. Paul laid the foundation for his power delivery in recounting his own past history as a zealous Jew. After describing his own turning to Christ and receiving his gospel from Christ by revelation, he directed his attention to the Acts 15 discussion of the Law vs. faith in Jerusalem. Then he discussed his “nailing Peter to the wall” because Peter was carried away by the hypocrisy of certain Judaizers who came to Antioch and refused to eat with the Gentile Christians. The apostle closed his introduction by pointing out that the cross of Christ brought the grace of Christ to him, and that he would not nullify that grace by turning back to the Law.

“You foolish Galatians,” cries the apostle, “who has bewitched you, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified?” (Galatians 3:1). *Bewitched* is a strong word, indicating strong delusion. Someone switched pictures—Jesus was originally clearly portrayed as crucified; then someone was able to brush that away, and replace it with a darkened circumcision. Whole congregations were in grave danger, and the apostle cared enough to use strong language, and ask some tough questions to get them back on the narrow way.

- **Receiving the Spirit** - “This is the only thing I want to find out from you: did you receive the Spirit by works of the Law, or by hearing with faith?” (Galatians 3:2). The first century Christians were clearly taught that the importance of immersion was not so much on remission of sins [do not misunderstand or underrate the importance of remission] as it was on receiving the indwelling Holy Spirit. Forgiveness cleansed the body so that it was a fit dwelling place for the Spirit of God. “If anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ,” Paul cautioned the brethren in Rome, “he does not belong to Him” (Romans 8:9). The Law never promised the Spirit; only the obedience of faith did.
- **Born of the Spirit** - “That which is born of the flesh is flesh,” said our Lord to Nicodemus, “and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit” (John 3:6). Obviously a fleshly birth is insignificant in the justification of God. Since no flesh shall be justified by works of the Law, what is needed is a spiritual birth, to be born of water and Spirit in immersion. “Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh?” (Galatians 3:3). Such a reversion was revolting!
- **Reminder of past persecution** - The Jews persecuted the Christians because of their picture of a suffering Messiah, a crucified Christ, and the subsequent death of the Law. The Galatian Christians likewise suffered at these Jews’ hands. “Did you suffer so many things in vain - if indeed it was in vain?” (Galatians 3:4). Their compromises now would eliminate suffering from the Jews, but would also render their earlier suffering worthless.
- **The Spirit performed confirming miracles in the first century** - “Does He then, who provides you with the Spirit and works miracles among you, do it by works of the Law, or by hearing with faith?” (Galatians 3:5). The purpose of the miracles was to confirm the message of Christ crucified, then glorified - the central points of faith.

Honest answers to those questions would draw the Galatians back to faith, and cause their ears to hear the distant call of Paul.

Glory In Galatians

Faith Wins

In a contest between faith and law, faith wins. Because the Law tends to produce instant and more tangible results, men generally choose law over faith. The Galatian Christians, because of pressure from the Jews with whom they associated, drifted from faith back into law. This was a serious problem, because those who attempt to be justified by law are lost, and Paul's concern for them shows: "My children," he calls, "with whom I am again in labor until Christ is formed in you" (Galatians 4:19).

The apostle, then, had a series of serious questions for these brethren in these several congregations. Did you receive the Spirit by Law, or by faith? Having begun by the Spirit (who comes through faith), are you being perfected by the flesh (a reversion to the Law and external things like circumcision)? Did you suffer for the faith in vain? Does He who provides the Spirit to you, and works miracles among you, do it under faith or under Law? In each case, these rhetorical questions point to the great superiority of faith over law.

The apostle proceeds from those questions to discuss the faith of Abraham as a foreshadow of the Christian's faith in God:

- **Abraham believed God** - It is one thing for people to say that they believe in God; it is another to believe God. Faith has to do with believing what God has said. "Even so Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness" (Galatians 3:6).
- **Abraham's sons are not those of physical birth** - God gave the covenant of physical circumcision to Abraham. From that point on, Abraham's physical descendants circumcised the males on the eighth day after their birth. The Jew took false pride in his circumcision, proudly proclaiming that it made him a descendent of Abraham. (Does a person's great ancestry mean that he is a great person, or is he to be judged on his own merits?) Paul destroys this false pride, and send this arrow through the balloon of those who would require all believers in God to be circumcised: "Therefore be sure it is those of faith who are sons of Abraham" (Galatians 3:7).
- **God has a plan** - Before the Israelite nation existed, before even Abraham was circumcised, God had called Abraham out of Ur of the Chaldees with these words: "And in you all the families of earth shall be blessed" (Genesis 12:3). God's plan from the beginning was to save the Gentiles of the earth, and to use the Israelites as physical examples to communicate deeper spiritual truth, and to write the Old Testament in the process. Paul drives this point home, quoting Genesis 22:18: "And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, 'All the nations shall be blessed in you' " (Galatians 3:8).
- **The blessing of Abraham comes through faith, not through law** - It was a sad situation in the congregations of the province of Galatia that law should be placed in opposition to faith; the Law was intended to lead to faith in Christ. But those who held to the Law and opposed faith produced the warfare, and the apostle had to make the point strong for those hard-headed, stiff-necked, uncircumcised in heart and ears people: "So then," he writes, "those who are *of faith* are blessed with Abraham, *the believer*" (Galatians 3:9).

In a contest between faith and law, faith wins. Be certain that you understand the difference, and the underlying principles of each. Many in the first century church did not understand, and the error is oft repeated in the twentieth century.

Glory In Galatians

Under a Curse

The Law is a curse. Strong words, if you think about it. Ground that is cursed produces no fruit. The ground was cursed because of Cain, and he spent the rest of his life as a vagabond because the ground would yield nothing to him; he was forced to beg from his relatives, who all remembered what he did to Abel. And the Law does not curse the ground; the Law puts *people* under a curse!

Faith produces a blessing, in great contrast to the Law. “So then,” the apostle had written, “those who are of faith are blessed” (Galatians 3:9). On the hand of faith a blessing; on the hand of the Law, a curse. Which shall we choose?

- **Those under law are cursed** - Those who wanted to be under Law did so because they wanted to please the Jewish community with which they associated. This brought certain earthly blessings, such as alleviation of persecution and suffering from the hands of the Jews, but it brought heavenly condemnation. “For as many as are of the works of the Law are under a curse; for it is written, ‘Cursed is everyone who does not abide by all things written in the book of the Law, to perform them’ “ (Galatians 3:10). It is evident that only One Man ever abided by all the things written in the book of the Law; all the rest have fallen well short of the glory of God, and thus fall justly under the condemnation of the Law.
- **No one is justified by Law** - Paul has to stress this point, that all fall short. “Now that no one is justified by the Law before God is evident; for ‘The righteous man shall live by faith’ “ (Galatians 3:11). It was evident that no one is justified by law, because the Law itself said, “The righteous man shall live by faith” (Habakkuk 2:4). This “live by faith” is in contrast to “die by law.”
- **The Law is not faith** - There is a big gap between faith and law. “Justification by Law,” to use Paul’s words, is an attempt to enter the presence of God based upon a person’s own excellent and flawless performance. “Justification by faith” is the result of the earnest desire of a stricken individual to see the face of Christ, with the New Testament of the Christ being able to judge the true intentions and thoughts of the claimant’s heart. “However, the Law is not of faith; on the contrary, ‘He who practices them shall live by them’ “ (Galatians 3:12). And if you do not practice – keep - all of them, you are under a curse.
- **Christ redeemed us** - But, praise God, our Lord Jesus was willing to die on the cross to deliver us from the eternal capital punishment that breaking the Law of God requires. “Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us - for it is written, ‘Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree’” (Galatians 3:13).

Those who would attempt to be justified by law have no need of Christ. Those who would be justified by faith are clearly in need of the substitutionary death of Christ on their behalf, and are thus earnestly desiring to see the face of the One who redeemed them from the curse of the Law.

Glory In Galatians

The Purpose Of God

When God tells you why He does something, you should listen up! For most of the operations of the Almighty, there is no explanation; He just acts. But once in awhile, He lets us in on a secret; once in awhile He lets us know His reason for working after the counsel of His own will. And when He lets us know, we should pay attention, very close attention.

In Galatians 3, through the inspired pen of the great apostle Paul, we are permitted to know why the Father has established His redemption of mankind. He has already hinted at God's purpose when he opened this chapter with his questions: Did you receive the Spirit by works of the Law, or by hearing with faith? Does He who provides you with the Spirit...do it by works of the Law, or by hearing with faith? But in verses 13 and 14 the Holy Spirit Himself brings out the divine purpose for redemption: "Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us - for it is written, 'Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree' - *in order that* in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith."

- **Redemption is a vehicle** - As great and wonderful as the redemption of God is, and the release of the captives from slavery to sin, the Lord makes it clear that redemption is subordinate to another purpose. He informs us that Christ redeemed us in order that the blessing of Abraham should come upon the Gentiles. If I were to drive my car to the store for groceries, my purpose in going is to get groceries; my car is simply the vehicle (although an important vehicle) to get me there. In the same way, redemption is simply the vehicle (although a critically important vehicle) for a stated purpose.
- **The blessing of Abraham** - Paul earlier in Galatians 3 noted that "the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, 'All the nations shall be blessed in you.' " *Redemption is not the blessing of Abraham; redemption is in order that the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles!* So what is the blessing of Abraham?
- **The promise of the Spirit** - The purpose of God is that each follower of Christ might be indwelt with the Spirit of God. If anyone does not have this Spirit, he does not belong to Christ. Through the Spirit, all of God dwells within the true believer, as our Lord Himself said, "If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and *We* will come to him, and make our abode with him" (John 14:23). The blessing of Abraham, stated in parallel construction, is "that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith."

The purpose of God is that we might be indwelt with the Spirit of God. Redemption's plan, grand though it is, is simply the means by which the body is cleansed of sin, that it might be a fit dwelling place for the Spirit of God. How great, then, and how important is this indwelling of the Holy Spirit!

Glory In Galatians

The Promise Of God

God keeps His promises. “If we are faithless,” wrote Paul to Timothy, “He remains faithful; for He cannot deny Himself” (II Timothy 2:13). And God has made promises. To Israel belonged “the adoption as sons and the glory and the covenants and the giving of the Law and the temple service and *the promises*” (Romans 9:4). One of those promises was that God was going raise Jesus from the dead and seat Him on the heavenly throne. “And we preach to you the good news of the promise made to the fathers,” spoke the apostle Paul to the synagogue of Pisidian Antioch, “that God has fulfilled this promise to our children in that He raised up Jesus, as it is also written in the second Psalm, ‘You are My Son; today I have begotten You’ “ (Acts 13:32,33). Jesus indeed, having Himself received the promise of the Holy Spirit, was seated on the throne, fulfilling what was promised, “I will give You the holy and sure blessings of David” (Acts 13:34).

But for each one who would turn from his wicked ways, the Father in heaven has what He calls *the promise*. And this *the promise* is the indwelling Spirit of God. Note the emphasis really given at the first proclamation of the gospel on the day of Pentecost, 30 AD: “Repent,” said Peter, “and let each of you be immersed in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For *the promise* is for you and your children, and for all who are far off, as many as the Lord our God shall call to Himself” (Acts 2:38,39). This emphasis on the promise of the Spirit is brought out by other scriptures:

- **Ephesians 1:13,14** - “In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation—having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the *Holy Spirit of promise*, who is given as a pledge of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of God’s own possession.” The Holy Spirit was promised in the Old Testament; He is granted to the believer in Christ at his immersion into Christ, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of salvation.
- **Hebrews 11:39,40** - After a listing of God’s greatest men from the Old Testament records, the writer notes: “And all these, having gained approval through their faith, did not receive *the promise*, because God had provided Someone better for us, so that apart from us they should not be made perfect.” Was the promise eternal life? No, for Abraham and Isaac and Jacob were declared by our Lord Jesus to be “the living” (Matthew 22:32). What the Old Testament greats did not receive was the promise of the indwelling Spirit, as Jesus indicated on the feast of booths about six months before His crucifixion: “If any man is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, ‘From his innermost being shall flow rivers of living water’ “ (John 7:37,38). To which John added, “But this He spoke of the Spirit, whom those who believed in Him were to receive; for the Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.”

Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law so that we might receive the promise of the Spirit. Let us endeavor to understand and appreciate the great significance of this information from God.

Glory In Galatians

The Sons of Abraham

The indwelling Spirit was promised through Abraham. Abraham, of course, welcomed the promise from afar, not quite understanding what had been promised. So the gospel was preached beforehand to Abraham. "In you *all the families of the earth* shall be blessed" (Genesis 12:3). As He said in another place, "I will make you the father of a *multitude of nations*" (Genesis 17:5), and because Abraham believed God about this very promise, "it was reckoned to him as righteousness" (Galatians 3:6). And the word of God, looking to the acceptance of the Gentiles by the faith, preached the gospel to Abraham, "*All the nations* shall be blessed in you" (Galatians 3:8). What a shot in the face these scriptures would be to those Galatian Christians who were compromising the faith which was to come to the Gentiles so that they could be accepted by *Jews!* Consider these points:

- **God spoke of the Gentiles before there was an Israelite nation** - When God called Abraham from Ur, he had no descendant; there was no Israel. Yet in the very first record of God's communication with this man of faith, the Father laid in place a foundation stone speaking of the justification of the Gentiles of the world.
- **The promise to Abraham was not Christ in the flesh** - At a surface reading of Genesis 12:3 and Genesis 22:18, where God promises that through Abraham all nations would be blessed, someone may well think that it is referring to the coming of Christ in the flesh. "Christ came through Abraham," a person may comment. But Christ in the flesh *never came to the Gentiles!* His own words were, "I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (Matthew 15:24). It is *Christ in the Spirit* who has come to the Gentiles.
- **The blessing of Abraham was to the Gentiles** - "Abraham is our father," cried the Jews (John 8:39). In consequence they expected that the blessing of Abraham was to come to them. But the apostle Paul is quite emphatic: "Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law . . . in order that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles" (Galatians 3:13,14).

The Old Testament scriptures foretold the inauguration of a new and better way. The Old Testament scriptures foretold the coming of the Spirit of Christ. "And I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes" (Ezekiel 36:27). The Old Testament scriptures looked to the justification of the Gentiles by faith. The churches in Galatia were way off track in looking back into the physical rites of circumcision and participation in Old Testament sacrifices. "Therefore," Paul warned them, "be sure that it is those who are of faith who are sons of Abraham" (Galatians 3:7).

Glory In Galatians

The Covenant With Abraham

Contracts are serious documents. And they are binding. Many an individual over the centuries has entered lightly into a contract, and found later in court just how binding and serious the contract was. Be sure to read the fine print!

God the Almighty, when He does business with man, also operates by contract. The technical name for the contract with God is *covenant*. In business it takes the nature of a contractual will, and it is also called a *will* or *testament*. Listen as the apostle Paul lays the groundwork for a sensible discussion with the Galatian Christian on the subject of *contract*:

- **Even man's contracts cannot be changed** - "Brethren," the apostle appeals, "I speak in terms of human relations; even though it is only a man's covenant, yet when it has been ratified, no one sets it aside or adds conditions to it" (Galatians 3:15). If you can't make changes in a ratified covenant with men, how much less can you make changes in a covenant ratified by God. Paul's point here is going to be, however, that God has bound Himself by contract.
- **The covenant was made with Abraham and his seed** - "Now the promises," instructs Paul, "were spoken to Abraham and his seed. He does not say, 'And to *seeds*,' as referring to many, but rather to one, 'And to your *seed*,' that is, Christ" (Galatians 3:16). Throughout the Genesis account, God is recorded as making covenants with Abraham. In chapter 15, for example, Abraham set up animals in halves, and God passed through, making His covenant with Abraham. "On that day God made a covenant with Abraham, saying, 'To your seed I have given this land . . .'" (Genesis 15:18). If a person were to look at the Old Testament alone, he would think that God was promising the physical land of Canaan to Abraham's physical descendants, the children of Israel in the flesh. The Holy Spirit is emphatic, however, as He communicates through the inspired Paul, that the covenant and promises were with Abraham and Christ! "And in your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed" (Genesis 22:18).
- **The covenant with Abraham came before the Law** - Bringing the subject back to the relationship of the covenant with Abraham and the Law, Paul writes: "What I am saying is this: the Law, which came four hundred and thirty years later, does not invalidate a covenant previously ratified by God, so as to nullify the promise" (Galatians 3:17). The Law was given in 1446 BC (from I Kings 6:1). Backtracking 430 years puts us at 1876 BC, which is in the time of Jacob. By this means the Holy Spirit establishes that the covenant with Abraham was also made with Isaac (Genesis 26:24) and Jacob (Genesis 28:13). The apostle's driving point here, however, is that God made and ratified a covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and that covenant (which cannot be set aside or have conditions added to it) was in existence long before the Law of Moses.

God made a covenant by which He bound Himself in the days of Abraham. That covenant, with all the promises and obligations pertaining thereunto, was really with Abraham's seed, Christ!

The ground on which those who falsely gloried in the Law of Moses stood has fairly been cut out from underneath them. It is obvious that the covenant of Christ has much higher standing than the Law! And the contract with God is binding!

Glory In Galatians

Based On Promise

You receive the good news. A rich relative you had forgotten about made his exit from earth, and in his will he left you \$1,000,000! What was really interesting about this will is that if there had been no document, and the assets would have been distributed according to standard state law, you would not have inherited at all; your relationship to your relative was too distant. But because you were nice to this relative when you were a child, he promised to give you a piece of the inheritance; you forgot about it, but he didn't.

“For if inheritance is based on law, it is no longer based on a promise; but God has granted to Abraham by means of a promise” (Galatians 3:18). Twenty centuries before Christ, God made a promise to Abraham and Abraham's seed. “In your seed,” the Almighty had said, on the mount called Moriah, “all the nations of the earth shall be blessed” (Genesis 22:18). God made the promise to Abraham and to Abraham's seed (Christ) on the basis of His personal choice; the Law by contrast is impersonal. Those Jews who did not intend to be in favor with God of course wanted their eternity determined by the impersonal law; what they desired was the statement that “You are a Jew by physical birth; therefore you are God's chosen.” Such a blatant disregard for fellowship with God was never God's intention.

- **Not through law** - “For the promise to Abraham or to his seed that he would be heir of the world was not through Law, but through the righteousness of faith” (Romans 4:13). The reason that God chose Abraham was that Abraham believed God. Because of this special characteristic of Abraham, God promised Abraham and Abraham's seed the inheritance. The Law by contrast is really impersonal, but offers a vain hope to those who intend to be justified by physical inheritance; the Law only justifies those who keep it perfectly. Righteousness comes through a special promise from God, a righteousness based on faith.
- **That the promise may be certain** - “For this reason it is by faith, that it might be in accordance with grace, in order that the promise may be certain to all the descendants, not only to those who are of Law, but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham...” (Romans 4:16). All kinds of people result from physical inheritance. Generous men spawn conniving, stingy offspring. Wise men father fools. So a law of physical requirement is not going to guarantee that the individual is desirous of fellowship with God; only that which produces faith in God based on what God has said will guarantee the selection of those who want to see God's face.

In the wisdom of God, He has produced a system of faith, similar to the faith of Abraham, that the promise might be to a certain type of person. “For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly; neither is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh. But he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that which is of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter [of the Law]; and his praise is not from men, but from God” (Romans 2:28,29). Be certain that you are of the right “circumcision,” that you might receive the inheritance you were promised.

Glory In Galatians

Why The Law?

There have always been those who falsely believe they are justified because of some law of physical requirement. Some modern renditions of this theme are, "I was born a Catholic; I was sprinkled a Catholic; I am going to heaven because that is the religion of my ancestors;" or "I was born a Baptist; I accepted Christ into my heart in the Baptist way; I am going to heaven because that is the religion of my ancestors." In the first century, the theme was, "I was born a Jew; I was circumcised as a Jew; I am going to heaven because that is the religion of my ancestors."

As the apostle Paul had attempted to make clear to the Romans (and presumably everywhere he taught and preached), "he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that which is of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter [of the Law]" (Romans 2:29). "Beware," he warned in another place, "of the dogs, beware of the evil workers, beware of the false circumcision; for we are the true circumcision, who worship in the Spirit of God and glory in Christ and put no confidence in the flesh" (Philippians 3:2,3). Those Jews who remained Jews, and who tried to require that Gentiles be circumcised and keep the Law were obviously under the strongest possible condemnation.

- **What was the purpose of the Law** - "Why the Law then?" asks this great lion of God. "It was added because of transgressions, having been ordained through angels by the agency of a mediator, until the seed should come to whom the promise had been made" (Galatians 3:19). The apostle has already made a point clear: the covenant with Abraham was made long before the giving of the Law. The Law was an added, separate document, given for the purpose of highlighting men's transgressions, so that they would recognize their need for a Savior, and God's saving grace.
- **The Law is an inferior document, given through a mediator** - "For the Law was given through Moses," the apostle John reminds us; "grace and truth were realized through Jesus Christ" (John 1:17). The Law was given to a people who were outside the favor of God, and who therefore needed a shield from the wrath of God. Thus the Law was ordained through angels, as one buffer zone, by the agency of a mediator, Moses, as the second set of insulation. The new covenant, however, which came through Christ, the seed to whom the promise had been made, needed no mediator, since Christ and God are one. "Now a mediator is not for one party only; whereas God is only one" (Galatians 3:20). This covenant, originally promised through Abraham, is so superior to that which came through Moses that there is no comparison as to the value of each.

The pressures of the day were very strong upon the church of the Lord to compromise the gospel, and accept the teaching and practice of the Jews around them. Those pressures, in slightly different form, exist today, from the Catholics and Baptists, for example. But let us recognize the great value of that which is given through Christ, and be faithful to that promised to Him, even unto death on earth!

Glory In Galatians

The Failure Of The Law

The whole system of Law is a massive failure. Those religions which intend to convert others to their belief system have to use law to produce a semblance of holiness, otherwise their attempts at proselytizing fail. But law never produces true holiness. Listen again to Paul: "If you have died with Christ to the elementary principles of the world, why, as if you were living in the world, do you submit yourself to decrees, such as, 'Do not handle, do not taste, do not touch!' (which all refer to matters destined to perish with the using) - in accordance with the commandments and teachings of men? These are matters which have, to be sure, *the appearance of wisdom* in self-made religion and self-abasement and severe treatment of the body, but are of no value against fleshly indulgence" (Colossians 2:20-23).

- **The law was added because of transgressions** - People tend to measure themselves by others around them. When the whole world slips deeper into sin, then sin seems not to be sin. The law was brought into the world to bring about consciousness of sin, and awareness for justification from God. "I would not have come to know sin except through the Law," wrote Paul to the Romans (Romans 7:7). "The Law is holy, and the commandment is holy and righteous and good," he adds (Romans 7:12). But to show how evil and destructive sin is, sin is exposed as using the law, which is so good, to kill all mankind. "Rather it was sin; in order that it might be shown to be sin by effecting my death through that which is good" (Romans 7:13). The Law, then, "was added because of transgressions," to expose them as being transgressions against a holy and mighty God.
- **The Law cannot impart life** - "Is the Law then contrary to the promises of God?" asks Paul again. The Law, as we have seen, is good. "May it never be!" he answers. "For if a law had been given which was able to impart life, then righteousness indeed would have been based on law" (Galatians 3:21). Those who try to impose various sets of law on people to produce a holiness acceptable to God make a serious mistake; if any law could impart life, that which was given on Mt. Sinai through Moses would have done so. But the Law becomes a curse: "Cursed is everyone who does not abide by *all things written in the book of the law*, to perform them" (Galatians 3:10).
- **The Law produces a need for Christ** - "But the Scripture [which is the book of the Law] has shut up all men under sin, that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe" (Galatians 3:22).

The Law fails to produce the righteousness required to keep it. The Law fails to impart life. But the Law succeeds in bringing the sinner to his knees before an Almighty God, recognizing his need for, and crying out for, a Savior. "The Law is good, if one uses it lawfully" (I Timothy 1:8).

Glory In Galatians

The Purpose Of The Law

Mankind in general consists of stinking rotten, spoiled, self-centered punks who are used to getting their own ways. These rebellious kids (of any age) are indeed a rebellious house, unknowingly trapped by the deceitfulness of sin, which has wrought its destructive effects in their lives, and the lives of those around them. Bold and unreasoning spiritual skeletons, they are ready to rattle their way into a hell-fired eternity.

God the Father, amazingly enough, loves each of His children. In accordance with the counsel of His will, He injects the thunderbolt of the gospel into the darkness of men's souls, confronting mankind with the striking horror of the effects of their own waywardness, jerking them to reality with vivid displays of the nakedness of their own sin. This, then, is the purpose and function of the law in the preaching of the gospel.

- **The Law makes men aware of their sin** - "I would not have come to know sin except through the Law" (Romans 7:7). In a world where sin is the norm, most do not take seriously those twinges of conscience which strike in the depths of the night. God exposes this sin through the preaching of the law. "The Law is holy and righteous and good . . . Sin [was shown] to be sin . . . through that which is good" (Romans 7:12,13).
- **The Law is to convince men of the error of their ways** - "We know that the Law is good, if one uses it lawfully, realizing the fact the *law is not made for a righteous man*, but for those who are lawless and rebellious..." (1 Timothy 1:8,9).
- **The Law impounds men** - "But the Scripture has shut up all men under sin . . ." (Galatians 3:22). Men are convicted by the Law and found guilty. They are "kept in custody under the law" (Galatians 3:23). Under the prodding of this taskmaster, men open their eyes and find themselves helplessly and hopelessly lost in this dreadful prison camp, slaves to sin, held captive by the devil to do his will.

This is the message of the law - GUILTY! Delivered to the trembling soul in a stark black and white flash, the Law sets the stage for a proper appreciation for the grace of God, a message of mercy transmitted in the comforting pastel hues of Christ's agony on a darkened cross. Christ, the Lamb of God, offered in the symbolism of Passover, is the ultimate peace offering. Through the shedding of His blood, the justly frightened and ashamed sinner may find grace and peace through his obedience to the gospel in repentance and immersion for the remission of his sins.

The Law brings man to consciousness of his sins. The Law brings an awareness of God's justice, and convicts the sinner. The Law demonstrates that the sinner is tightly locked in a prison camp of death, and that the only way out is for Christ to rescue him. "Therefore the Law has become our tutor to lead us to Christ, that we may be justified by faith" (Galatians 3:24). The Law is good, if one uses it lawfully.

Glory In Galatians

Promise By Faith

Man is of flesh, sold into bondage to sin. The weakness of the flesh is clearly established through the case of Adam, who as a perfect man in a perfect place, still committed sin. The Garden of Eden, in the plan of God, was not intended to be the permanent residence of man. Rather, it exposed in a graphic way the serious flaw in man's character, and set the stage for the progressive revelation of the plan of God to remedy the problem.

So man, being of flesh, and through flesh, sold into bondage to sin, has to be delivered of flesh. God has to provide a mechanism for deliverance from the flesh, and He has to provide a means of communicating that spiritual mechanism to men who first begin as men of flesh, but whose understanding can be spiritually upgraded.

- **God deals with sin first** - Rebellious man is, because he is of flesh, by definition, not spiritual. The Almighty first tugs at the heart of this man through his conscience; our man knows when he does right and when he does wrong. But the loving heavenly Father takes it another step; He has the righteousness of His law proclaimed in the face of the offender; He has His referee blow the whistle and cry, "Foul!"
- **God offers forgiveness of sins** - Our man is now interested in something more than fleshly concerns; his interest has been moved from feeding his face to forgiveness of sins. Now God can bring the message of the cross to the forefront, and our man can understand the healing connected with every stripe laid into the quivering muscle of Jesus' back. Now our man can weep upon hearing the anguished scream of our Savior, reverberating in the dark, "My God, My God, why have you forsaken Me?" Now our man can bow low in inexpressible gratitude for the fountain of blood opened in Jesus' side for his impurity and sin.
- **God offers a mechanism by which this forgiveness is individually appropriated** - Our man, in honesty recognizing the danger of his sinful condition, and now aware of the sacrifice of Christ, asks, "What must I do to be saved?" The answer is that he must repent - he must turn from his wicked ways - and, confessing Christ as his Lord, he must be immersed so that his sins can be forgiven (Acts 22:16). "For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For all of you who were immersed into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ" (Galatians 3:26,27).
- **God's purpose was to grant the Holy Spirit** - Our man has been moved far enough now that he is beginning to recognize the importance of fellowship with God. Hence the offer of that fellowship through the indwelling Spirit is of overwhelming value to him who earlier would have shrugged his shoulders at what the Father had tendered. But the thrust of God's offer of the Spirit rings clearly from the first Pentecost of the church forward: "Repent," said Peter, "and let each of you be immersed in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For *the promise* is for you and your children, and for all who are far off, as many as the Lord our God shall call to Himself" (Acts 2:38,39).

Our man is no longer of flesh, no longer sold into bondage to sin. Filled with the Spirit of God, he has now completed the first stage of his journey in God's purpose. "But the Scripture has shut up all men under sin, that the *promise* by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe" (Galatians 3:22).

Glory In Galatians

Sons Of God Through Faith

We must not forget that forgiveness of sins is not God's ultimate purpose. God's purpose of granting the Holy Spirit is stated by the apostle: "But the Scripture has shut up all men under sin, that the *promise* by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe" (Galatians 3:22). The whole scheme of redemption was designed from the beginning to move man from fleshly to spiritual, so that man would be a fit dwelling for God in the Spirit. "Your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you" (I Corinthians 6:19). "Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law...so that we might receive *the promise of the Spirit* through faith" (Galatians 3:13,14).

"But before faith came, we were kept in custody under the Law, being shut up to the faith which was later to be revealed" (Galatians 3:23). Abraham had a faith, but not *the faith*. Moses had a faith, but not *the faith*. *The faith* was only revealed in connection with Jesus Christ.

- **Faith begins with Jesus in the flesh** - "And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us" (John 1:14). "Since then the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise also partook of the same . . ." (Hebrews 2:14). "For many deceivers have gone out into the world, those who do not acknowledge Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh. This is the deceiver and the antichrist" (II John 7).
- **Faith follows Jesus through His death on the cross** - "You foolish Galatians, who has bewitched you, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified?" (Galatians 3:1). "He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross" (I Peter 2:24). "Without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness" (Hebrews 9:22). "One of the soldiers pierced His side with a spear, and immediately there came out blood and water" (John 19:34).
- **Faith watches His burial** - "This man [Joseph of Arimathea] went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. And he took it down and wrapped it in a linen cloth, and laid Him in a tomb cut into the rock, where no one had ever lain" (Luke 23:52,53).
- **Faith believes in His resurrection** - The angel said to the women, "Do not be amazed; you are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who has been crucified. He has risen; He is not here; behold, here is the place where they laid Him" (Mark 16:6).
- **Faith believes He appeared** - "He appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve..." writes Paul (I Corinthians 15:5). "To these He also presented Himself alive, after His suffering," adds Luke, "appearing to them over a period of forty days" (Acts 1:3).
- **Faith sees Him in glory** - "Even though we have known Christ according to the flesh, yet now we know Him thus no longer" (II Corinthians 5:16). "And [Christ] is the radiance of [the Father's] glory..." (Hebrews 1:3). "Fixing our eyes on Jesus, who...has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God" (Hebrews 12:2).

All these things were prophesied in the Law, so that in all respects "the Law has become our tutor to lead us to Christ, that we may be justified by faith" (Galatians 3:24). "But now that faith has come," Paul writes concerning the Christ, "we are no longer under a tutor. For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For all of you who were immersed into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ" (Galatians 3:25-27).

Glory In Galatians

Turning To The Lord In Immersion

The purpose of the Law is to lead us to faith in Christ. Not *a* faith - *the* faith. “We were kept in custody under the Law, being shut up to *the faith* which was later to be revealed” (Galatians 3:23). First century preaching and teaching revealed accurately all aspects of the Christ, including His death, His burial, His resurrection, His appearance, and His ascension to glory as intercessory priest of the order of Melchizedek. God’s goal in this is to produce what He calls *the faith*, and this has to do with seeing Jesus in glory with spiritual eyes - we are to fix our eyes on the Jesus who has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. This process, initiated by God through what is revealed through the Spirit in the written Book, is called *turning to the Lord*.

- **Immersion is the point at which sins are washed away** - The word of God, in spite of all the controversy on the subject, is quite clear. Saul of Tarsus, for example, was told by one Ananias, sent by the Lord Himself, to “Arise, and be immersed, and wash away your sins, calling on His name” (Acts 22:16).
- **In repentance, a person turns away from sin** - Repentance has to do with a change of mind which produces a change in attitude and behavior. “For you first,” Peter told Jews shortly after Pentecost, 30 AD, in the temple, “God raised up His Servant, and sent Him to bless you by turning every one of you from his wicked ways” (Acts 3:26).
- **Each individual must turn to the Lord to be forgiven** - The words of the Lord Himself to Saul of Tarsus on the Damascus Road are plain and clear. Saul was being sent by the Lord to both Jews and Gentiles “to open their eyes so that they may *turn* from darkness to light and from the dominion of Satan *to God*, in order that they may *receive forgiveness of sins* and an inheritance among those who have been sanctified by faith in Me” (Acts 26:18).
- **This “turning to God” is as separate from repentance as immersion** - “Repent, and let each of you be immersed,” reads Acts 2:38. “Repent and return [turn again],” reads Acts 3:19. “Repent and turn to God,” reads Acts 26:20.
- **“Turning to God” is defined by “turning to the Lord”** - The Lord Jesus is “the radiance of [the Father’s] glory, and the exact representation of His nature” (Hebrews 1:3). We have “the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ” (II Corinthians 4:6). An individual turns to God by turning to Christ the Lord.
- **“Turning to the Lord” means to behold the Lord in glory** - “Whenever a man *turns to the Lord*, the veil is taken away...But we all, with unveiled face beholding as in a mirror *the glory of the Lord*...” (II Corinthians 3:16,18).
- **“Turning to the Lord” is the point at which forgiveness of sins is granted** - “Turn again, that your sins may be wiped away” (Acts 3:19). “Turn...to God, in order that they may receive forgiveness of sins” (Acts 26:18).
- **“Turning to the Lord” occurs in immersion** - A comparison of scriptures on immersion’s relation to forgiveness and turning to the Lord for forgiveness shows that turning must take place in immersion.

Just because a person is immersed for the forgiveness of sin does not mean he has turned to the Lord. God wants us to see the glory of God in the face of Christ as we turn to Him. Seeing the glorified Christ through the revelation of Scripture is *the faith*. “You are all sons of God through *faith* in Christ Jesus. For all of you who were immersed into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ” (Galatians 3:26,27).

Glory In Galatians

Clothed with Christ

Many like to quote Galatians 3:26: “For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. But they don’t like to quote Galatians 3:27.

They like Galatians 3:26 about “sons of God through faith” without bothering to give scriptural details as to how a person becomes a son of God through faith. Here is a typical “sinner’s prayer” offered by modern religious wolves to unsuspecting and gullible sheep: “Dear God, I am convinced by your Word that I am a lost sinner. I believe that Jesus Christ died for sinners and shed His blood to put away my sins. I NOW receive Him as my personal Lord and Saviour and will by His help, confess Him before men.” The idea here is that you are instantly “saved” by this inviting Jesus into your heart, and that “baptism is an outward symbol to be participated in later. They like to quote Galatians 3:26, but they don’t like to quote Galatians 3:27 because Galatians 3:27 tells how someone becomes a son of God by faith.

- **Sons of God** - In our lost condition we have nothing to offer God. Our own righteousness, as the prophet says, is “like a filthy garment” (Isaiah 64:6). But God designed His gospel to bridge the gap between us - His enemies - and Him. Blessed indeed is “the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to *His great mercy* has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead” (1 Peter 1:3). Having crucified the flesh, we are, in being born again, are now sons of God, being “born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor the will of man, but of God” (John 1:13). “See,” exults the apostle John. “how great a love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God” (1 John 3:1). From nobody to somebody, from nothing to everything, by the power of God “For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ.”
- **Sons by being clothed in Christ** - Since we have nothing to offer, the Father offered Christ in our stead. Not only did Christ die on the cross for us, but the mantle of Christ Himself descends upon us. Thus when the heavenly Father looks at us, He sees, not an unclothed sinner, but a son of God, someone who by His grace looks like Christ. “For all of you . . . have clothed yourselves with Christ” (Galatians 3:27).
- **Sons by being immersed into Christ** - Modern “accept Jesus into your heart” types hate the description which the Holy Spirit gives as to how an individual is clothed with Christ. “For all of you who were *immersed into Christ* have clothed yourselves with Christ” (Galatians 3:27). There is no means by which a person can be clothed with Christ other than by being immersed into Christ.

What a blessed privilege it is to be able to be called sons of God by being immersed into Christ. How devilish, evil, rotten, and destructive it is for foul, stinking liars to indicate that anyone can be a son of God by faith without his immersion for remission of sins. Let us praise God for His great mercy by trusting what He says in His word, and by taking a strong stand for immersion into Christ

Glory In Galatians

Clothed with Glory

When a lost and dying sinner, properly repentant, is immersed into Christ, he is clothed with Christ. But what is this garment which the “washee” has lately put on? What is this Christ who has descended in Spirit form to cover that which was once a separated being of flesh?

“For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For all of you who were immersed into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ” (Galatians 3:26,27). May we remind the reader that Christ, in order to reveal the Father to us, went through several stages to communicate the truth of God to us:

- **Jesus became flesh** - Our Savior left the glories of heaven to become a lowly man. He emptied Himself, and as the apostle John the aged put it, And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us...” (John 1:14).
- **Jesus died on the cross** - As a lowly man, Christ did the most human thing of all: He died! And He died a horrible death, painful and grisly, while the public thought that He, an innocent man, was a criminal. “And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross” (Philippians 2:8).
- **Jesus was bodily resurrected** - To establish the truth of the resurrection, it was necessary for Jesus to show Himself to chosen witnesses. To these witnesses, it was necessary for Him to present Himself alive, but appearing just as He did in the last few seconds before He expired in order that it might be absolutely clear that the one resurrected was indeed the one who had died. “But God raised Him from the dead, and for many days He appeared to those who came up with Him from Galilee to Jerusalem, the very ones who are now His witnesses to the people” (Acts 13:30,31).
- **Jesus ascended to glory** - The apostles, by revelation from the Spirit, from the day of Pentecost onward, were witnesses of Jesus’ taking the spiritual throne of David in glory. Here in glory, Christ has dropped any appearance of the flesh, and appears unveiled as the blazing light He is, was, and always shall be. As we have followed Him upward through the gospel, we see the Father through the glorified Christ, as the writer of Hebrews explains, And He [Christ] is the radiance of His [the Father’s] glory and the exact representation of His nature...” (Hebrews 1:3).

When the individual is immersed into Christ, the Christ He is clothed with is the *Christ in glory!* This same brilliant radiance which shines in heaven, still veiled for those who are in flesh, now shines in the spiritually formed new creature in Christ. This new creature therefore is no longer of flesh, and not to be considered of flesh. “Therefore from now on we recognize no man according to the flesh; even though we have known Christ according to the flesh, yet *now we know Him thus no longer*” (II Corinthians 5:16). Having thus been clothed with the blazing light of Christ in glory, Christians are sons of light (Ephesians 5:8). Small wonder, then, that the whole creation waits eagerly for the revealing of the sons of God!” (Romans 8:19).

Glory In Galatians

Abraham's True offspring

Sons of light and sons of glory! What an inheritance! Those of us who are immersed into Christ have been clothed with the Christ of glory, and are thereby sons of God by faith. What could a mere fleshly birth, no matter how noble born, be by comparison? What Jewish pedigree, regardless of how pure the blood line, even back to Abraham, could be regarded as of value when placed against being born of God?

- **In Christ, flesh has no value** - "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female: for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 3:28). What a blessing it is for the slave, though his body is chained to servitude under some master, to be more than equal to any king of earth when he sits and participates at the Lord's Table! What a blessing it is to see both slave and master be regarded as spiritual brothers, working together for the spread of the gospel. What a blessing it is to hear of both Greek and Jew, of barbarian and Scythian, sharing in the spiritual blessings of Christ in the heavenly places. What a blessing it is for American and Belorussian Christians to break bread together within sight of the Belorussian Afghan War Memorial. What a blessing it is for women to be granted honor as fellow heirs of the grace of life. Spiritually we are all one in Christ by virtue of a powerful spiritual birth and a powerful spiritual clothing.
- **In Christ, the fulfillment of the promises to Abraham are realized** - "And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise" (Galatians 3:29). Alas, poor Jew, who prided himself on his ancestral lineage, who paid "attention to myths and endless genealogies" (I Timothy 1:4). Alas, poor Judaizer, who prided himself in his circumcision, and becoming a part of the Israelite nation, according to the flesh. God has indeed raised up children to : Abraham from the stones, bringing into Christ the most unlikely of combinations - slave and freeman, Greek and Jew, male and female. But only in being clothed with Christ is one a joint-heir: anyone not so clothed is a stranger and an exile, in darkness, without hope and without God in the world.

Those false brethren - who had sneaked into the churches of Galatia, bringing with them the doctrine that unless one were circumcised and kept the customs of Moses, he would not be saved - those false brethren were throwing away the great spiritual inheritance because they could not see with their spiritual eyes. They were looking to be regarded as physical descendents of Abraham by virtue of an operation performed in the flesh by human hands, rather than being regarded as spiritual sons of Abraham by virtue of a powerful spiritual operation performed by the power of a glorified Christ.

Where do you stand?

Glory In Galatians

Children Are Slaves

Children are slaves. This concept does not go over very well with American young people today, who have the impression that they are “young adults” from about the age of 10. So, children are to honor their father and mother, for this is right. They are to do their chores without complaining; they are to get their homework done on time; they are to show initiative and find ways to help. Children are children because they do not possess the experience and maturity necessary for the judgment required in adult responsibility.

The apostle Paul uses this basic and obvious characteristic of the human race to establish God’s long-term plan with the gospel:

- **A child is a slave** - “Now I say, as long as the heir is a child, he does not differ at all from a slave although he is owner of everything, but he is under guardians and managers until the date set by the father (Galatians 4:1,2). While the child may be the heir to an estate of sheep, camels, donkeys, household servants, shipping, and other aspects of enterprise, he is not going to take over those responsibilities until a certain date of maturity set by the father in the will.
- **The human race is compared to a child growing up** - “So also we, while we were children, were held in bondage under the elemental things of the world” (Galatians 4:3). The apostle is keying off a point he had made earlier; “But before faith came, we were kept in bondage under the law, being shut up to the faith which was later to be revealed” (Galatians 3:23). Before the coming of the gospel of the glory of Christ, men were either under the law of their own conscience as Gentiles, or under the law of Moses as Jews. This bondage is comparable to a child being under the bondage of parents until he is mature enough to assume his responsibilities without being told exactly what to do.
- **God sent Jesus that we might receive the adoption as sons** - “But when the fulness of time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, in order that He might redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons (Galatians 4:4,5). It took the heavenly Father four to five thousand years of working with the human race to get them mature enough to accept the responsibilities of sonship in Christ. But when things were ready, “when the fulness of the time came,” God could send Jesus into the world. Jesus was born of a woman, specified so as to make clear His ability to redeem the Gentiles, and was born under the Law, so as to make clear His ability to redeem the Jews. The whole race of man is to step up and assume the responsibilities of sonship by being adopted into the family of God.

With the emphasis on the maturity involved here, it is clear that children cannot be old enough to be immersed into Christ. If the race of mankind was not yet prepared; if the example of “the date set by the father means anything; then only those who are old enough to live on their own, and assume total responsibility for their lives are old enough to be immersed into Christ.

Glory In Galatians

God Has Sent Forth The Spirit

The message of the New Testament is *the promise*. The purpose of remission of sins is that we might receive the promise (Galatians 3:22), and this promise is the indwelling Spirit of God (Galatians 3:13,14).

The apostle Paul in his letter to the Roman Christian community establishes the significance of this point. However, you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not *belong to Him*" (Romans 8:9). The point is clear, and powerful: if someone is not indwelt by the Holy Spirit, he does not belong to Christ; he is not a Christian! The apostle uses the same language in his letter to the Galatians: "And *if you belong to Christ*, then you are Abraham's offspring (Galatians 3:29). This belonging to Christ is accomplished by the Spirit of Christ, and the redemption offered on the cross is so that the body might be a fit dwelling place for this Spirit.

- **Christ redeemed us** - Earlier in this letter, the apostle has informed us, "Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us" (Galatians 3:13). The cross of Calvary became the redemption center for all mankind, where our worthless sins could be traded in for eternal life, where "Him who knew no sin" was made "to be sin on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him (II Corinthians 5:21). Having our bodies cleansed of sin, we are thus prepared to receive the Spirit.
- **God then sent the Spirit** - "God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, in order that He might redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons. And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, 'Abba! Father!'" (Galatians 4:4-6).
- **A son is delivered from slavery** - "Therefore you are no longer a slave, but a son; and if a son, then an heir through God" (Galatians 4:7). What a difference between a slave who rows the boats of Roman warfare, and a son who possesses a vast estate. What a much greater difference between a slave of sin, and a son of God!

The Law never promised the Spirit. The circumcision and the customs of the Law proffered by the Judaizers did not promise the Spirit. Only the faith derived from the glorified Christ promises the Spirit of glory. Individuals are sons of God by this faith, having been immersed into Christ, and they are the ones who have the Spirit of God's Son crying out in fellowship with God the Father! Only those indwelt by the Spirit are sons of God; only those indwelt by the Spirit of God are heirs through God.

Glory In Galatians

I Fear For You

There is such a thing as ignorance. Those who are ignorant simply are not in possession of some of the facts, whether by intent or neglect. Thus Paul and Barnabas could say to the ignorant men of Lystra, “In the generations gone by He [God] permitted all the nations to go their own ways” (Acts 14:16). But the gospel was preached to disperse the clouds of ignorance. “Therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring to men that all everywhere should repent, because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead” (Acts 17:30,31).

This glorious gospel had come to the Galatian region. Men from the ranks of the Jews and the clutter of the Gentiles had obeyed the gospel, and upon their immersion into Christ, had the Spirit of God’s Son Himself sent into their hearts, crying out, “Abba! Father!” But before the preaching of the gospel, they had been in slavery to the Law of Moses or the Law of conscience. “However,” writes the apostle, “at that time, when you did not know God, you were slaves to those which by nature are no gods. But now that you have come to know God, or rather to be known by God, how is it that you turn back again to the weak and worthless elemental things, to which you desire to be enslaved all over again? You observe days and months and seasons and years. I fear for you, that perhaps I have labored over you in vain” (Galatians 4:8-11).

- **Slaves to those which are “no gods”** - Those idols which the Gentiles worshipped were obviously not gods at all. But it was not so obvious to those whose tradition was steeped in the worship and sacrifices at idol temples. Those who presented offerings to Zeus and sacrifices to Mercury generally engaged in such activity because it was the custom of the time, just as many who claim to be Christians today participate in Halloween and other ungodly holidays because it is the accepted “norm”. However unwittingly such sacrifices were offered, the result was the same, *slavery!* The Jew, likewise, was in slavery. He claimed to worship the great “I AM”, but his participation in the days and months and seasons and years established his slavery to that which was intended to point to freedom in Christ. Both Jew and Gentile were slaves to those, which were no gods.
- **To be known by God** - There is only one God, and one God is all there will ever be. Since He is the first and last, the beginning and the end, it is all important to be known by Him. The saddest eternal words will be, “I never knew you. Depart from Me, you workers of iniquity.” When a properly repentant individual is immersed for the remission of sins and to receive the gift of the Holy Spirit, He then comes to know God, and then and only then does God know him.
- **Turning back to slavery** - What a great blessing, to know the way of salvation, to know the way to be known in the courts of heaven! Knowing this, how could one in his right mind turn back to the ways which tread down the dark stairs to certain death? But some did then, and some do now, “turn back to the weak and worthless elemental things,” and forge again the chains of their own slavery. They could no longer claim ignorance.

Pressure on the religious front is always strong. When one loses his focus on the picture of the glorified Christ, he is subject to the winds of doctrine which blow strongly over the surface of this hostile planet. The hurricane was blowing in the churches of Galatia, and many were suffering the loss of their eternal homes. “I fear for you,” Paul wrote, “that perhaps I have labored over you in vain.” May these words not be said of you, personally, today!

Glory In Galatians

Enslaved Again!

Slavery! What a terrible picture! Man reducing his fellow man - equally created in the image of a spiritual God - to a condition somewhat less than animal. Whether it be darkies drudging in the stuffy heat of the old South's plantations, or whites cringing under the lashing whip of Roman servitude, slavery is a mocking affront to the equality of worth of each human life in the sight of the Creator.

Why does God allow it to exist on earth? He never specifically answers the question, but a general thrust of the word of God is that the physical realm has lessons to be learned which are then to be applied to the unseen spiritual realm. Physical death and its attendant suffering point the way to a horrible eternal, as yet unseen, second death and excruciating suffering in the lake of fire. In the same way the horrors of slavery in the physical realm direct the thinking man's attention to the significance of spiritual slavery. Against the backdrop of man's bondage to man, the words of Jesus starkly finger an even crueler master: "Truly, truly, I say to you," He intoned, "everyone who commits sin is the slave of sin" (John 8:34). And enslavement to sin is far worse than enslavement to man.

- **Christ's purpose is to set us free** - "The slave does not remain in the house forever; the Son does remain forever," spoke our Lord. "If therefore the Son shall make you free, you shall be free indeed" (John 8:35,36). Truly free, indeed!
- **All men end up in bondage** - The picture of slavery to sin threads its desultory way through the tapestry of scripture, particularly in Galatians. "The Scripture has shut up all men under sin . . ." (Galatians 3:22). "While we were yet children, [we] were held in bondage under the elemental things of the world" (Galatians 4:3). The "children" here has reference to the concept that until a child is capable of standing on his own, he is in bondage to parents or other responsible elements in his life. In the same way the "elemental things of the world," the law of conscience for the Gentile, and the Law of Moses for the Jew, held all mankind in bondage to sin until the Christ could come to let the captives free.
- **Why would someone return to slavery?** - Having total freedom in the days of the U.S. republic, why would someone return to the bondage of European serfdom? "How is it," the apostle Paul asked, "that you turn back again to the weak and worthless elemental things, to which you desire to be enslaved all over again?" (Galatians 4:9). Why would someone deliberately settle the yoke of slavery to the Law around his neck when he could be a free man?

There are those who prefer the security of serfdom under the Law. They prefer the security of leeks and onions and garlics from the beneficent hand of Pharaoh, and the security of knowing that they will be working for their welfare in Egypt's brickyards. They prefer to avoid the persecution and suffering which come with the freedom of the sons of God, accepting as dumb oxen the comfort for non-persecution and slavery under law. Their table indeed has become a snare to them, and they will bend their backs forever.

But the sons of God prefer spiritual freedom, even unto physical death. Come, brethren, to the spiritual frontier. Life is hard, and the challenges are great, but with the sword of the Spirit in one hand, and the plowshare of truth in the other, we can secure for ourselves and our posterity the blessings of spiritual liberty.

Glory In Galatians

Remember Who Loves You

The Christians in the congregations of Galatia were abandoning their freedom in Christ. The false brethren who had sneaked in to spread discontent over the hardships on the spiritual frontier, coupled with persecution from their Jewish neighbors and relatives, produced a mass movement to become circumcised and to keep, in a nominal way, the external customs of the Law. The boats were being loaded for a return to slavery, and standing to stem the stampede was the lonely figure of the apostle Paul. Gesticulating to the crowd to stop, he exposed their enemies, illustrated their condition, and appealed to them on the basis of his love for them.

- **“I fear for you”** - In a sincere admonition, his cry illustrated the seriousness of their condition. They were about to be lost forever, as indicated by Paul’s statement that perhaps his labor over them was in vain. Their return to the observation of Jewish feast days, the new moon festivals, and the seven year cycles indicated how they had bowed to pressure from the Judaizers.
- **“I beg of you”** - “I beg of you, brethren,” appealed Paul, “become as I am, for I also have become as you are.” The apostle called them upward to his faith and understanding, reminding them that to reach them, he came down to their level. He made it clear that his concern was not over a simply personal matter, and that he had fond affection for them in his personal memories. “You have done me no wrong,” he assured them, “but you know that it was because of a bodily illness that I preached the gospel to you the first time; and that which was a trial to you in my bodily condition you did not despise or loathe, but you received me as an angel of God, as Christ Jesus Himself” (Galatians 4:12-14). What the apostle’s illness or his bodily condition was, we do not know (it may have been something to do with his eyes), but it is clear that Paul remembered fondly his reception among the Galatians.
- **“I bear you witness”** - The apostle called them back to those former days in an attempt to get them to listen to him as he wrote: “Where then is that sense of blessing you had? For I bear you witness, that if possible, you would have plucked out your eyes and given them to me” (Galatians 4:15).
- **“I have become your enemy?”** - Paul and his message did not change over the intervening years. What happened? “Have I therefore become your enemy by telling you the truth?” (Galatians 4:16). When people get the mindset to go in an unscriptural direction, the one who tells them the truth is regarded as an enemy. Some “other guys” were putting tremendous pressure on the Galatian Christians, having wormed their way into a position of influence. “They eagerly seek you,” Paul warned in general terms, “but they wish to shut you out, in order that you may seek them” (Galatians 4:17). These “other guys” were playing a lock-out game in order to manipulate the brethren.
- **“I am again in labor”** - The hunt was on for the Galatians’ souls. The wolves in Galatia were seeking them, and so was Paul. “But it is good always to be eagerly sought in a commendable manner, and not only when I am present with you. My children, with whom I am again in labor until Christ is formed in you - “ (Galatians 4:18,19).

The names have changed, but the game remains the same. As Paul appealed to the churches in Galatia, remember who loves you, and seeks you commendably.

Glory In Galatians

Until Christ Is Formed In You

You can have it, and you can lose it. It can burn brightly, and it can fade away. You can stand firm in it, or you can drift from it. What is *it*?

It is faith in the glorified Christ. *It* is the picture of the brilliant, blazing light of the exalted Son of God, seen only with the enlightened eyes of the heart. *It* is seeing Him, who is the radiance of the Father's glory, the image of the invisible God.

When an individual is immersed into Christ, he is clothed with the current Christ. He is not clothed with a Christ who is still walking in the flesh; he is not clothed with a Christ who still hangs on a cross; he is not even clothed with a Christ like Mary Magdalene saw next to the empty tomb. None of these is the current Christ. The current Christ is radiant in risen splendor, exalted far above the heavens. "Even though we have known Christ in the flesh," wrote Paul to the Corinthian brethren, "yet *now* we know Him thus no longer" (II Corinthians 5:16). Thus, when a heart-stricken sinner obeys the gospel of the glory of Christ, he is wrapped in the shining spiritual mantle of this Christ in glory! This process, described in different scriptures in different words, is "forming Christ in you."

- **Transformed into the image of Christ in glory** - Understanding that the completed Bible, the New Testament in particular, is the mirror in which we can clearly see, we comprehend the thrust of Paul's statement: "But we all, with unveiled face beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit" (II Corinthians 3:18). Here the Holy Spirit is described as the transforming agent in the formation of our character in the image of the glorified Christ.
- **Conformed to the image of Christ** - "For whom He foreknew," writes the apostle to the Romans, "He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the first-born among many brethren" (Romans 8:29). This conforming process is not limited to a future instant transformation; as we have seen from II Corinthians, it is going on now. As Christ is the first-born from the dead, begotten primarily in the glory of His ascension, so we, the church, are known as "the church of the first-born" (Hebrews 12:23).

The gospel of the glory of Christ was preached among the Galatians. When they were immersed, they were indeed immersed into this Christ of glory, the radiant image of Jesus the Son of God was implanted in their minds, and they became sons of God by faith. But Judaizers came, preaching a different gospel. They bewitched the Galatian Christians, and focused their attention elsewhere - dragging their minds back into circumcision and the Law. The result: the image of Christ faded, and they lost their faith.

You can have it, and you can lose it. It can burn brightly, and it can fade away. You can stand firm in it, or you can drift from it. "My children, with whom I am again in labor until Christ is formed in you..." (Galatians 4:19).

Glory In Galatians

Missing The Allegory

Perplexed! Puzzled! The apostle Paul could not believe that those whom he taught could be misled so easily. To them the radiant, powerful, forgiving Christ has been publicly proclaimed in contrast to the dried up, rattling husk of the law, and yet the Galatians were choosing to return to the law in their attempt to be saved and avoid persecution. "My children," appealed the apostle, "with whom I am again in labor until Christ is formed in you - but I could wish to be present with you now and to change my tone, for I am perplexed about you" (Galatians 4:19,20). Paul knows his tone is tough, but he is trying to salvage whole congregations which had been pulled into this orbit of false teaching.

"Tell me," he writes, "you who want to be under law, do you not listen to the law?" (Galatians 4:21). The law here is going to include the book of Genesis.

- **Father Abraham had two sons** - "For it is written that Abraham had two sons, one by the bondwoman and one by the free woman. But the son by the bondwoman was born according to the flesh, and the son by the free woman through the promise. This is allegorically speaking; for these women are two covenants, one proceeding from Mt. Sinai bearing children who are to be slaves; she is Hagar" (Galatians 4:22-24). Sarah, Abraham's wife, persuaded Abraham to go into her slave maid, Hagar. As a result of the union, Ishmael was born. Fourteen years later, as a result of a miraculous action by the Holy Spirit, Isaac was born to Sarah, aged 90 at that time. Ishmael, the son of the bondwoman, was therefore essentially a child of slavery. Isaac, the son of Sarah, was likewise a child of freedom, born of the free woman. "Now this Hagar is Mt. Sinai in Arabia, and corresponds to the present Jerusalem, for she is in slavery with her children" (Galatians 4:25).
- **This is an allegory** - The wisdom of God is far above the comprehension of men. The Holy Spirit designed the real life of Sarah and Hagar to foreshadow what would be a critical situation for the early church. Hagar, the slave woman, said the Holy Spirit, represents Mt. Sinai and the law given there. Her children - Israelites according to the flesh - were in slavery. By contrast Sarah foreshadowed the church, whose children are the free ones.
- **Children of promise** - The word *promise* is a code word for the Holy Spirit, and *children of promise* is a coded expression for Christians, those born of the Spirit. Isaac, as a foreshadow of children by faith, was born by a miraculous action of the Holy Spirit. Similarly, children of promise are those born by an even more spectacular, unseen miraculous power act of the Holy Spirit when they are immersed into the radiant glorified Christ.
- **Children of flesh vs. children of promise** - The sons of the "bondwoman" - the Jews - were "according to the flesh." The sons of the "free woman" - the Christians - were born according to the Spirit. "But the Jerusalem above is free; she is our mother" (Galatians 4:26).

"Tell me," said Paul, "you who want to be under law, do you not listen to the law?" The law produced slaves. Only those born of the Spirit are free, and only those who continue to walk by the Spirit are free! Don't miss the allegory.

Glory In Galatians

Break Forth And Shout!

The Jew, in spite of his braggadocio, was a slave. He was a political slave to the Romans, and he was a spiritual slave to sin. And the Christian who caved in to Jewish pressure was likewise a returnee to chains and bonds stealthily forged by the master of deceit, Satan himself. The apostle Paul, in trying to salvage his brethren in the Galatian congregations, attempted to prevent their mass abandonment from the foundational principles of Christianity because of their being persecuted by the Jews. To illustrate the folly of these spiritual lemmings rushing to destruction in the sea of law, the apostle used the law itself.

“Tell me,” he said, “you who want to be under law, do you not listen to the law?” (Galatians 4:21). Abraham had two sons - Ishmael, born of Hagar, the slave girl, and Isaac, born of his beloved wife Sarah, the free woman, after years and years of barrenness. Ishmael, child of flesh, child of slavery, allegorically represented the physical Israel, in slavery under law. Isaac, child by miraculous action of the very Spirit of God, child of freedom, foreshadowed the church, who is the mother of all individual spiritual offspring. “But Jerusalem above is free; she is our mother” (Galatians 4:26).

- **Break forth and shout** - Imagine Sarah and Abraham’s joy at the birth of Isaac. This barren woman, desirous of children, finally, in hope against hope, conceives and gives birth. In the same way the church lay barren and empty while the womb of Israel in the flesh brought forth multitudes upon multitudes. Isaiah, prophetically recognizing the allegory of Hagar and Sarah, Ishmael and Isaac, Israel and the church, wrote, “Rejoice, barren woman who does not bear; break forth and shout, you who are not in labor; for more are the children of the desolate than of the one who has a husband” (Galatians 4:27). As joyful as was the birth of Isaac, it shrinks to nothing in comparison to the spiritual birth of those raised by the power of God in immersion.
- **More are the children of the desolate** - The “barren woman,” the church, has more than were ever in physical Israel. The “desolate” has been able to bring forth in her tent those from the ranks of the Gentiles, so that millions upon millions from every tribe and tongue claim Jerusalem above as their mother.
- **Children of promise** - “And you, brethren, like Isaac, are children of promise” (Galatians 4:28). The true offspring of Abraham, as Isaac foreshadowed, were recipients of the promised indwelling Holy Spirit. “For *the promise*,” said Peter, “is for you and your children [Jews], and for all who are far off [Gentiles], as many as the Lord our God shall call to Himself” (Acts 2:39).

Break forth and shout, you captives released in the trumpet call of true jubilee. Break forth and shout, you slaves of sin, set free on the day of your salvation. Break forth and shout, you strangers and aliens, who are now brought near by the blood of Christ, offered for you at the acceptable time.

Glory In Galatians

Cast Out The Bondwoman

What special plan does God have for the modern Jew? Is he one of God's "chosen"? Aside from the fact that no modern Jew could establish his ancestry, does the Almighty have a special purpose for the present nation Israel? What does the Scripture say?

The scripture says that Abraham had two sons, one by his wife Sarah, and one by his wife's slave girl, Hagar. The scripture says that this whole set up between Ishmael, the son of the slave woman, and Isaac, the son of the free woman, was an allegory, foreshadowing the relationship between physical Israel, the first century Jews in the flesh, and spiritual Israel, the church. The physical came first, and then the spiritual. Thus Ishmael, the son by the flesh, was born first, and then Isaac, the son by the Spirit, was brought forth. And Isaac "grew and was weaned, and Abraham made a great feast on the day that Isaac was weaned. Now Sarah saw the son of Hagar the Egyptian, whom she had borne to Abraham, mocking. Therefore she said to Abraham, 'Drive out this maid and her son, for the son of this maid shall not be an heir with my son Isaac.'" (Genesis 21:8-10).

- **Christians are the children of promise** - The Israelites of Jerusalem were of the flesh; like Ishmael they were fleshly sons of slavery. "And you, brethren, like Isaac, are children of promise" (Galatians 4:28). The true children of God are those born of promise—born of the Spirit. Faithful brethren who were immersed into the glorified Christ, and who continue to be justified by faith in that heavenly vision, are assured by the word of God that they are God's chosen; they are the children of promise.
- **Those of the flesh persecute those of the Spirit** - Ishmael mocked Isaac at his weaning. This mocking from an obnoxious fourteen or fifteen year old toward a small child was severe enough for Sarah to demand the removal of Ishmael from her presence. This foreshadowed the suffering early Christians experienced from the hands of the Jews. "But as at that time he who was born according to the flesh persecuted him who was born according to the Spirit, so it is now also" (Galatians 4:29). "The mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God" (Romans 8:7). Whether they be Jews of the first century, or whether they be their fleshly-minded counterparts of the twentieth century, those whose minds are set on the flesh oppose the spirituality called for in the gospel of the glory of Christ, and they persecute as openly as possible those who are born of the Spirit, and who carry out the will and word of the Spirit.
- **Those of the flesh were cast out** - So what about first century Jews, or twentieth century "Jews", or anyone else who is still fleshly-minded? "But what does the Scripture say? 'Cast out the bondwoman and her son, for the son of the bondwoman shall not be an heir with the son of the free woman.'" (Galatians 4:30).

Those of fleshly Israel were cast out. Twentieth century Jews are cast out. Anyone who is not truly born of the Spirit, and walking by the Spirit, is cast out! But those who are being led by the Spirit of God, as defined in the word of God, are God's chosen ones. "So then, brethren, we are not children of a bondwoman, but of a free woman" (Galatians 4:31).

Glory In Galatians

Losing The Legacy

Americans are squandering the legacy of freedom. That which was bought at the price of spilt blood by millions of Americans is being frittered away by a selfish, want-it-easy, immoral conglomeration of freaks, fags, and fops who have no conception of what political liberty is all about. Because their moral fiber has been rotted from within, they are handy pawns for the manipulations of sundry “one worlders” who use these pawns’ irresponsibilities and excesses as excuses for the next move against the pillars of liberty on the chess board of world politics. The techniques of “pressure from above” and “pressure from below” have long been perfected in persuading the people to vote away, step by step, their hard-won freedom. Failing to read or heed the admonitions of President Washington in his *Farewell Address*, the public herd has been deceived into trampling his warning guideposts, and is being rushed headlong to the cliffs of the destruction of American liberty.

The same thing was happening to the churches in Galatia in a spiritual sense. The spiritual freedom which was bought at the price of Jesus’ spilt blood was being tossed away by a selfish, want-it-easy, fleshly-minded conglomeration of compromisers, complainers, and comfort-seekers who had no conception of what spiritual liberty was all about. Because their spiritual fiber had been rotted from within, they were handy pawns for the manipulations of Judaizers who used these pawns’ desire to “go along to get along” as a stepping stone for their next move against those pillars of spiritual liberty who stood firm in that collection of congregations. The techniques of “pressure from above” coupled with “pressure from below” were used in persuading the Galatian Christians to move, step by step, away from their hard-won freedom in Christ. Failing to read or heed the admonitions from Jesus and His apostles, these congregations had been deceived into trampling the apostles’ warning guideposts, and were being rushed headlong to spiritual and eternal destruction.

Before this thundering herd stood the solitary figure of the apostle Paul, waving the blanket of scripture, attempting to bring the herd to a dead stop, then turning them to the way they should go. How successful he was, we do not know. But we have for enduring and eternal benefit his letter, calling them back to their legacy of freedom.

- **Our heritage** - “So then, brethren,” the apostle indexes, “we are not children of a bondwoman, but of the free woman” (Galatians 4:31). Spiritual Jerusalem, the free Jerusalem above, she is our mother. We were conceived in liberty; shall we trash our inheritance? We were brought forth under the banner of freedom; shall we voluntarily don the shackles of slavery?
- **Our purpose** - “It was for freedom that Christ set us free” (Galatians 5:1). Our purpose is freedom; shall we fight the good fight of faith, or shall we fold?
- **Our stand** - “Therefore keep standing firm and do not be subject again to a yoke of slavery” (Galatians 5:1). The battle lines have been drawn; the child of God is exhorted to take his stand in the heat of the battle, or lose his faith.

As sad and destructive as it is for a country like the United States to lose its legacy of freedom, that is not as sad or destructive as it is for an individual or a congregation to be deceived into losing its spiritual freedom. Understand the pressures from above and the pressures from below. Then stand firm!

Glory In Galatians

Descent With Modification

When the bell of freedom sounded political jubilee in America in 1783, men throughout the world rejoiced. John Wesley, founder of the Methodist Church, wrote to his American brethren from England in 1784: “By a very uncommon train of providences many of the provinces of North America are totally disjoined from their mother country, and erected into independent states...As our American brethren are now totally disentangled from the state, and from the English hierarchy, we dare not entangle them again, either with one or the other. They are now at full liberty, simply to follow the scriptures and the primitive church. And we judge it best that they should stand fast in that liberty, wherewith God has so strangely made them free.” This political liberty, which produced the freedom necessary for the development of the Restoration Movement, was hailed by men everywhere as an awesome powerful development of the Divine Providence of God, and worthy of preserving at great cost.

The spiritual freedom purchased by the blood of Christ who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God is immeasurably more valuable than American political liberty, although the two are not totally disjointed. But as political hackers have been at work in destroying America’s political freedom by modifying the intent of our freedom documents, so also the spiritual hackers were at work in Galatia, modifying the intent of the spiritual covenant of Christ, and thus those who were once spiritually free were descending into the darkened stairway of spiritual slavery.

- **The exhortation** - “It was for freedom that Christ set us free; therefore keep standing firm and do not be subject again to a yoke of slavery” (Galatians 5:1). Freedom in Christ was worthy of maintaining at great cost.
- **The modification** - “Behold I, Paul, say to you that if you receive circumcision, Christ will be of no benefit to you. And I testify again to every man who receives circumcision, that he is under obligation to keep the whole law” (Galatians 5:2,3). The Judaizers, who were compromising the gospel to escape persecution from the Jews, were pressuring the brethren to be circumcised, and thus to try to put the new wine of Christianity back into the exploded wineskin of Moses’ law.
- **The descent** - The person who compromised the new covenant, exemplified by his acceptance of circumcision, had thus placed himself under obligation to keep the whole law. Of course, no one but One has been able to keep this law perfectly across his life’s span. “You have been severed from Christ, you who are seeking to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace” (Galatians 5:4).

“Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved,” were the words of the Judaizers (Acts 15:1). Of the Gentile brethren they said, “It is necessary to circumcise them, and direct them to observe the law of Moses” (Acts 15:5). These words and these pressures caused the brethren to modify their beliefs, and descend once again into slavery. The message for us is clear today: let no one persuade us to modify the gospel of the glory of Christ, and thus cause us to descend with them into slavery through a modern twist on the old Judaizers’ system.

Glory In Galatians

Faith, Hope, and Love

Severed! Divorced! Broken! Sad, sad, sad words of destruction and disaster. “You have been severed from Christ, you who are seeking to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace” (Galatians 5:4). It is bad enough and sad enough for an individual to be separated from God in the first place through his own sin. And, praise to the Almighty who was willing to send His Son into the world to ransom all those trapped by Satan through the ignorance and foolishness of their own iniquities. But how much more sad and bad it is for someone to know the way of truth, and turn back from the holy commandment delivered to him. As Satan fell like lightning from heaven’s glories, so the one who turns from Christ in glory falls from grace.

The child of God is saved by grace through faith. When he loses his faith, he falls from grace. It is imperative for each individual to keep before him the Biblically revealed image of the glorified Christ. When he ceases to fix his eyes on the Christ upon the throne - the Author and Perfecter of *faith* - he ends up seeking to be justified by law, and falls from grace; he has lost his faith.

- **Faith and hope** - In contrast to the bulk of the Galatian Christians, Paul and those who followed his teaching were continuing to focus on Him who is the radiance of the Father’s glory. “For we,” he says, “through the Spirit, by faith, are waiting for the hope of righteousness” (Galatians 5:5). The old covenant, the covenant of circumcision and the law of Moses, did not offer the Spirit. “Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the Law, or by hearing with faith?” the apostle had earlier asked (Galatians 3:2). The true child of God, under the covenant of the Spirit, fixes his faith on the Christ of glory, and through that same Spirit is transformed into the image of the glory of the Lord. He is secure in the knowledge - and this he waits for in hope - that the body of his current humble state will be transformed into conformity with the body of Christ’s glory. And he recognizes that all of this is the righteousness which comes from God.
- **Faith and love** - What is performed on the flesh by human hands has no significance compared to what God does to the inner man. The believer is circumcised with a circumcision made without hands - made by God! - when he is immersed into the current risen Christ. “For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything, but faith working through love” (Galatians 5:6). True faith works! True faith sees the whole plan of God culminating in an ascended Christ returning in wrath for judgment, and works to save the souls of men.

“You were running well,” said Paul. “Who hindered you from obeying the truth?” (Galatians 5:7). Don’t fall from grace. Don’t be shaken from your faith by pressures from men. Continue to work and run well!

Glory In Galatians

A Little Leaven...

There were those in the churches of Galatia who were working assiduously to divide and destroy the efforts of the apostle Paul. Wanting to escape persecution from their Jewish relations and neighbors, they denied the power of the new creation in their lives, and went to work to destroy the reputation of the apostle and to draw away disciples caught in the middle. "They eagerly seek you," said Paul to those in that position, "not commendably" (Galatians 4:17). As the false teachers developed their false doctrines to justify their opposition to the apostle and his teaching, it pained Paul to see those whom he loved and for whom laid down his life fall away. "Where then," he asked, "is that sense of blessing you had?" (Galatians 4:15). "Have I therefore become your enemy by telling you the truth?" (Galatians 4:16).

To satisfy the pressures of the day, the Judaizers developed the doctrine that Christians needed to be circumcised and keep the law. The transforming power of the image of the glorified Christ working through the Holy Spirit in the new creature was set aside by these Judaizers and replaced by something external which would satisfy men. "For we through the Spirit, by faith," explained the apostle to the Gentiles, in contrast to the earthly view of those whose minds were set on the flesh, "are waiting for the hope of righteousness. For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything, but faith working through love" (Galatians 5:5,6). But the warning shouts were there for anyone who was missing the picture.

- **Hindrances** - "You were running well; who hindered you from obeying the truth?" (Galatians 5:7). The Galatian Christians were on the mark and doing well until someone came along and messed up the teaching of Paul and the Lord Jesus. Whole congregations were thrown off track by these false brethren, and the multitudes of the brethren were hindered in their continuing obedience to the truth.
- **False persuasion** - "This persuasion did not come from Him who calls you" (Galatians 5:8). These false brethren were persuasive; their arguments were couched in positive tones; their words were carefully driven bullets. But the persuasion did not come from Christ!
- **Leavening** - "A little leaven leavens the whole lump of dough" (Galatians 5:9). This is a grave warning dripping from the pen of the apostle! If the congregations of Galatia allowed this false teaching and these attempts by false brethren to continue, the whole set of congregations would be swept away by the continuing leavening action of these men.

Paul expressed confidence that the bulk of the brethren would right the ships of their various congregations, but warned of the consequences to come to the recalcitrant members who were causing the disturbances. "I have confidence in you in the Lord, that you will adopt no other view; but the one who is disturbing you shall bear his judgment, whoever he is" (Galatians 5:10). Watch out for the leaven!

Glory In Galatians

Trouble For Troublemakers

Those who advocate the law for the Christian are killers (and those who preach *lawlessness* are killers, too). While both law-pushers and promoters of lawlessness were active in the first century, the law-pushers were the problem in the Galatian congregations. These are known to us as Judaizers; they were men who buckled under the pressure from Jewish persecution, and accepted the concept that all Christians - those from Gentile background as well as Jewish - were to be circumcised and keep the law of Moses. The problem was that when they buckled, they lost their salvation, falling from grace. Furthermore, all they persuaded to cave in with them were severed from Christ also. "This persuasion," noted the apostle Paul, "did not come from Him who calls you" (Galatians 5:8). And concerned about the perniciousness of this spiritual infection, he warned, "A little leaven leavens the whole lump of dough" (Galatians 5:9).

- **Paul expressed confidence** - The apostle was hopeful that his letter would recall the Galatians to their earlier position in faith. "I have confidence in you in the Lord, that you will adopt no other view" (Galatians 5:10).
- **The apostle warned the troublemakers** - There is a God in heaven who will judge the deeds and motives of men. There is an upright Judge before whom all things are open and laid bare. "The one who is disturbing you shall bear his judgment, whoever he is" (Galatians 5:10).
- **Paul could have eased the pressure on himself by compromising** - "But I, brethren, if I still preach circumcision, why am I still persecuted? Then the stumbling block of the cross has been abolished" (Galatians 5:11). The cross abolished the ceremonial practice of the Law, and obliterated Jewish *status quo*. Jewish opposition to the preaching of the cross was therefore violent, and first century Christians had to take the heat or lose their souls. Paul was not going to compromise, and neither should the brethren!
- **Paul was tough on troublemakers** - Listen to the loving words dropping carefully from a love-softened pen like studded jewels into the thinking of his hearers, and the perspective toward Judaizers and their compromisers: "I wish that those who are troubling you would even mutilate themselves!" (Galatians 5:12). The apostle was saying that if they were going to continue to push circumcision, they should just go ahead and cut the whole organ off! Obviously, this is a serious issue.

Direct Judaism is not so much of a problem today. But there are many within the church, sadly enough, who still want to compromise with today's pressures from the world, who want to run and hide when the "scandal" of the cross is strongly preached, and who want to shut the mouths of those who would boldly speak of the glorified Lord. Unless these compromisers repent, they will face the same end as those who opposed Paul.

Glory In Galatians

Freedom To Serve

The trumpet call of spiritual jubilee had sounded, and one by one the captives broke free. But the world forces of darkness were at work, and the chains of spiritual slavery were forged and in place for any who could be enticed back into the darkness. "It was for freedom that Christ set us free," wrote Paul. "Therefore keep standing firm and do not be subject again to a yoke of slavery" (Galatians 5:1).

How do the forces of darkness work? What talons do these powers possess which have the potential to snag the unwary child of God, and drag him into the roaring lion's lair? The answer: the claws are powerless unless there is *flesh* to tear. "For you were called to freedom, brethren," exhorts the Spirit through Paul. "Only do not turn your freedom into an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another" (Galatians 5:13). Freedom and flesh - the two are contradictory.

- **Freedom** - "You were called to freedom, brethren." This is freedom to go forth and conquer with the gospel, through the help of the Spirit. This is freedom from the bitter root of selfishness. This is freedom through love to "serve one another."
- **Flesh** - Freedom can be turned into an opportunity to serve the flesh rather than to serve one another. Under the cover of creeping darkness once dead passions can again be inflamed. The hate, malice, and envy which characterize the merely human race can come roaring back. The freedom of the sons of God can be abused, grace turned into licentiousness, liberty into libertine.
- **Fulfilled** - Love and service to God are translated into love and service to man. "For the *whole* law," emphasized the apostle, "is fulfilled in one word, in the statement, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.'" (Galatians 5:14). The purpose of freedom and faith is to spread the faith. The great goal of love, as expressed in John 3:16, is to rescue the perishing.
- **Folly** - But the flesh turns one inward, and selfishness and sin run rampant. "But if you bite and devour one another, take care lest you be consumed by one another" (Galatians 5:15). When biting and devouring are going on, some are serving the flesh.
- **Follow** - As the child of God crucifies his flesh to carry the gospel to the dying, he serves in the Spirit. A faithful follower is he. "Follow Me," said our Lord, "and I will make you fishers of men" (Matthew 4:19). "But I say, walk by the Spirit and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh" (Galatians 5:16).

The Spirit has spoken clearly through what is written in the Holy Script. The clutching claws on the lion's paws have nothing to snag when, in freedom, the brother who walks by the Spirit glides by.

Glory In Galatians

Walk By The Spirit

War! Vicious, bloody, destructive war! Pictures of shell-torn buildings, of blown-apart bodies, and starving, ragged children flood our minds. Yet these are but mild external evidences of the awesome conflagration which rages on the inside of all of the race of men, a race which has been victimized by Satan ever since the fall of Adam. On the inside of man the war is between the flesh and the spirit. The flesh is lazy, rebellious, malicious, and destructive; the flesh is easily manipulated by the prince of the power of the air. The spirit of man, on the other hand, is that which was made in the image of God, and desires to do right. The apostle Paul described the condition of every honest man, using himself as an example, speaking of his life before he was set free in his immersion at the hand of Ananias: "For I joyfully concur with the law of God in the inner man, but I see a different law in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind, and making me a prisoner of the law of sin which is in my members" (Romans 7:22,23).

But thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! Those of us who were prisoners of this war have been set free from the body of this death. In our repentance and immersion, when we turned to the image of the risen Lord, we through the Spirit of God now walk in freedom. But when an individual loses his focus on Christ in glory, he once again sets his mind on the things of the flesh, comes back under the condemnation of the law, and the deeds of the flesh are evident. That's what happened in the churches of Galatia. And that is what can happen in the churches in the twentieth century.

When the flesh gets the opportunity, it turns "brethren" into vicious dogs, biting and devouring one another. And the result of the dog fight is a lot of dead dogs.

- **Walk by the Spirit** - Man, with his own spirit in the image of God, has not proven himself effective in winning the spiritual war with the flesh. Thus, there is only one solution to solving the problems arising from the flesh. "But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh" (Galatians 5:16).
- **The nature of the war** - Without the constraint, discipline, and focus from the Holy Spirit, as stated clearly in the Spirit-inspired word of God, the flesh does what it good and well pleases, with its attendant destruction. "For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please" (Galatians 5:17).
- **Be led by the Spirit** - The Spirit of God calls His new creations from the physical to the spiritual, from that which is seen to that which is unseen, from that which is temporal to that which is eternal. "But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under law" (Galatians 5:18).

The child of God who walks by the Spirit beholds the image of the glorified Christ in the mirror of the completed word of God. This is the walk which is by faith, so that he can say with his Lord: "The Son can do nothing of Himself unless it is something He sees the Father doing; for whatever the Father does, these things the Son also does in like manner" (John 5:19).

Glory In Galatians

Deeds Of The Flesh

All non-Christians are by definition men of flesh. By definition they are carnal rather than spiritual. The “best” Baptist, the “best” Methodist, and the “most holy” Catholic priest are fleshly, disobedient, and carnal. As the apostle Paul looks back on all Christian’s past lives, he reminds Titus: “For we were once foolish ourselves, disobedient, deceived, enslaved to various lusts and pleasures, spending our life in malice and envy, hateful, hating one another” (Titus 3:3). The “best” Jew and the “best” Gentile both had their mouths shut before the glory of God. Indeed the holy writ makes it very clear what sin really is: “For all have sinned and *fall short of the glory of God*” (Romans 3:23)

But the true child of God has had the veil of his misunderstanding removed when he is a participant in the gospel of the glory of Christ. He, regardless of his background or past performance, experiences a new birth in the waters of immersion, and is now born of the Spirit, a child of promise. How sad it is for such a one to be deceived again, to become enslaved again to malice and envy, to lusts and pleasures. But thus it was in Galatia; when the brethren compromised the gospel of faith in the glorified Lord, and went back under law, then the deeds of the flesh took over.

- **Deeds of the flesh are evident** - “Now,” says the Holy Spirit through Paul, “the deeds of the flesh are evident” (Galatians 5:19). *Evident* means there is *evidence* of them.
- **Deeds of improper sexuality** - Bad, evil, lustful, immoral thoughts are going to result in bad, evil, lustful, immoral action. The man or woman who acts immorally - who carries on an affair - has been playing the wrong kind of mind games for quite awhile. Here is part of Paul’s list: “immorality, impurity, sensuality” (Galatians 5:19).
- **Deeds of affection toward false gods or concepts** - Men have always tended to reject the fountain of living waters, and hew for themselves broken cisterns. Rejecting the truth of God, they accumulate for themselves teachers according to their own desires. They go into “idolatry,” or drug-induced contact with the evil spirit world, “sorcery.”
- **Deeds of division** - Satan is a destroyer, and divisiveness is his game. Those who fall prey to “enmities, strife, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, envying” (Galatians 5:20,21), are just as fleshly, and just as unspiritual as any adulterer or fornicator.
- **Deeds of drunks** - The drinking, carousing crowd is pretending to be happy on the way to hell. Paul speaks plainly of “drunkenness, carousing, and things like these” (Galatians 5:21).

The deeds of the flesh are evident. Pay attention to the evidence. And don’t call someone “spiritual” whose deeds are so evidently fleshly.

Glory In Galatians

Not Inheriting The Kingdom

“In the generations gone by,” said Paul and Barnabas, on the first missionary journey, “He permitted the nations to go their own ways” (Acts 14:16). And when men were permitted to go their own ways, which direction did they go? “For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God, or give thanks; but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened” (Romans 1:21). Such is the nature of the flesh; it is rebellious, and at war with God.

The men and women in the churches of Galatia began to compromise the gospel. By compromising with the Judaizers, “simply that they may not be persecuted for the cross of Christ” (Galatians 6:12), it was evident that their minds were set on the flesh, and that they would throw away heaven to keep earth.

“The mind set on the flesh,” warns Paul, “is hostile toward God” (Romans 8:7). The mind set of the flesh produces a life which practices the deeds of the flesh. “Now the deeds of the flesh are evident,” wrote the apostle, “which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these” (Galatians 5:19-21).

Those who practice these deeds of the flesh are fleshly, and they are hostile to God; and they are hostile toward those who preach and teach accurately God’s word. That is why they were undermining Paul’s teaching and Paul’s reputation in Galatia, and were “eagerly seeking” others to join with them in their rebellion.

- **Paul warned them** - After listing the deeds of the flesh, the apostle emphasized, “of which I forewarn you, just as I have forewarned you...” (Galatians 5:21). This warning is not just another idle thrust; this is a warning coming from the judgment bar of eternal justice!
- **Those who practice such things** - There is a difference between a moment of weakness or a moment of strength, and a habitual practice. The true character shows in the habitual practice; the habitual drunk may have moments of reform, and the habitual disputer may have moments of good behavior, but the scripture speaks here of those “who practice such things.”
- **Shall not inherit the kingdom** - Heaven or hell! This is what it comes down to. “Those who practice such things [the deeds of the flesh] shall not inherit the kingdom of God” (Galatians 5:21).

The apostle was fervent in his warning. Those who practiced the deeds of the flesh - the self-willed, the self-centered, selfish brethren - would not inherit the kingdom. His desire, of course, was that they turn, rather than burn.

Glory In Galatians

Fruit Of The Spirit

Only the child of God is indwelt by the Holy Spirit. The word of God is clear: the stricken sinner must repent and be immersed in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of his sins, and he will then receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. He must be born again of water and Spirit in order to enter the kingdom of God. No one who has not thus been born of the Spirit can bear fruit of the Spirit.

There are some very nice people in the world. There have always been those who would be very helpful to their neighbors, while trying to convert them to worship at the temple of Jupiter. There have always been those who smiled winsomely, and invited their friends to the temple of Athena. There have always been fatherly priests and kindly gurus and good old boys who, in deceiving and being deceived, dragged their associates to temples of doom. "For even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. Therefore it is not surprising if his servants also disguise themselves as servants of righteousness, whose end shall be according to their deeds" (II Corinthians 11:14,15).

Fruit of the Spirit can only be produced by those who are led by the Spirit. In the contrast between flesh and Spirit, the apostle makes it plain that if we "walk by the Spirit," we "will not carry out the desire of the flesh." The flesh and the Spirit are in opposition to one another, and the key is to be "led by the Spirit" (Galatians 5:18). "For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God" (Romans 8:14). So how does the Spirit lead?

- **Through the doctrines of the Bible** - The Holy Spirit inspired the Bible, both "testaments." The apostle Peter referred to Paul's writing, for example, as "scripture," and wrote this general truth: "Men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God" (II Peter 1:21). The Holy Spirit never leads or teaches anything contrary to what He has written in the scripture. No one can legitimately claim to be a Christian or produce fruit of the Spirit if he has never become a Christian in the manner the word of God so clearly delineates. "All scripture is inspired by God, and profitable for teaching [doctrine]" (II Timothy 3:16).
- **Through the examples of men in the Bible** - The word of God sets forth examples of great men and women under both old and new covenants, and especially the example of our Lord Jesus Himself. "Be imitators of me," wrote Paul, "just as I also am of Christ" (I Corinthians 11:1).

"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law" (Galatians 5:22,23). We shall see, Biblically speaking, how each of these is borne in the life of a true Christian.

Glory In Galatians

Love Is A Decision

“We know love by this,” wrote the aged apostle John, “that He laid down His life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren” (I John 3:16). Knowing what love is, is apparently not easy. Satan, disguising himself as an angel of light, and his ministers, also in disguise as ministers of righteousness, often masquerade in garments marked LOVE while spiritually murdering their victims. These knife-in-the-heart killers offer soft-sounding platitudes instead of timely and tough truths which set men free. It is not so easy to understand what love is, “We know love by this, that He laid down His life for us.”

The first fruit of the Spirit listed in Galatians 5:22,23 is *love*. Love - God’s kind of love - is borne in our hearts when we walk the same spiritual roads our Lord walked, when we take up our crosses and carry them down His blood-stained trail, and when we lay down our lives for the brethren. Love is not just lecturing to an audience on the emotional part of the spiritual heart; love is extending oneself to be in people’s homes with words of encouragement and exhortation from God’s word. “Now for this very reason also, *applying all diligence*, in your faith supply moral excellence, and in your moral excellence, knowledge; and in your knowledge, self-control, and in your self-control, perseverance, and in your perseverance, godliness; and in your godliness, brotherly kindness, and in your brotherly kindness, love” (II Peter 1:5-7). True love is the result of diligently adding personal qualities to the foundation of saving faith. “Whoever keeps His word, in him the love of God has truly been perfected” (I John 2:5).

The old commandment under the law was to love our neighbors as ourselves. But our Lord Jesus upgraded the concept with what He called a new commandment: “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, *even as I have loved you*, that you also love one another” (John 13:34). We are not only to love others as ourselves; we are to love others as Jesus loves us. Jesus came into the world to save our souls; we are therefore to go into the world to save other people’s souls. “By this the love of God is manifested in us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world so that we might live through Him. In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins” (I John 4:9,10).

The word of the Holy Spirit produces in us a deep hungering to see others saved. This love is long-suffering, patient when wronged, pointing hearts to the throbbing truth of the word of God. This fruit of the Spirit is a deep-down decision which says to another person, “I love your soul, and I want to see you saved, even if it costs me my life.” “Little children,” writes John, “let us not love with word or tongue, but in deed and truth” (I John 3:18).

Glory In Galatians

Joy From Reconciliation

Everybody wants it, but hardly anyone knows how to get it. “These things I have spoken to you,” said our Lord Jesus, “that My joy may be in you, and that your joy may be made full” (John 15:11). *Joy*, the second fruit of the Spirit mentioned in Galatians 5:22,23, is something our Lord wanted to produce in us, and this joy is produced in conjunction with the words of the Lord Jesus.

Joy is generally connected with attitudes involved in reconciliation. The apostle Paul wrote: “If therefore there is any encouragement in Christ, if there is any consolation of love, if there is any fellowship of the Spirit, make my *joy* complete by being of the same mind, maintaining the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose” (Philippians 2:1,2). Paul’s initial joy was accomplished in the Philippian brethren’s reconciliation to God; his joy would be made complete in their total reconciliation to each other. Consider these examples of joy from the parables of Jesus in Luke 15:

- **The lost sheep** - The shepherd leaves the ninety-nine safe sheep to find one which was lost. “And when he finds it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing. And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and his neighbors, saying to them, ‘Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost!’ I tell you,” Jesus said, “that in the same way, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents, than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance” (Luke 15:5-7). Joy in heaven was over the reconciliation of the lost sinner to God.
- **The lost coin** - The woman lost one of her ten silver coins, and searched the house until she found it. “Rejoice with me,” she said to her lady friends, “for I have found the coin which I had lost” (Luke 15:9). Jesus closed the parable with these words: “In the same way, I tell you, there is joy in the presence of God over one sinner who repents” (Luke 15:10).
- **The lost son** - One of two sons took his inheritance and spent it on wine, women, and song. Starving, he came to his senses, came home, and confessed his sins. As the father explained to the older brother, “We had to be merry and rejoice, for this brother of yours was dead and has begun to live, and was lost and has been found” (Luke 15:32).

If you want joy, first be reconciled to God yourself. Secondly, be involved in the process of reconciling others to God. Scriptural joy is not from new houses or cars or toys; joy from Jesus is the result of saving others’ souls.

Glory In Galatians

Peace Beyond Comprehension

“Peace I leave with you,” said Jesus the Christ over all. “My peace I give to you; not as the world gives, do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, nor let it be fearful” (John 14:27). The denizens of earth’s spiritual deserts are crying out for peace. Having no true peace within, many are destructive without. Rejecting the message of the peaceful Christ, others are backing into the arms of the false peace of Hinduism and New Age. Failing to recognize that lack of peacefulness is a spiritual problem, still others have turned to pills and physicians, or to philosophy and pop psychology rather than turning to the fountain of living waters. Jesus Himself said, “I am the bread of life; he who comes to Me shall not hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst” (John 6:35). Either He lied, or He told the truth!

So *peace* is the third fruit of the Spirit. And peace can only be multiplied to one whose conscience is cleansed by and before the Almighty God.

- **Peace in justification** - There are only two ways for the human to handle his wrong-doings before God. The way generally chosen by the race of men is for the individual to justify himself: he makes up excuses for his conduct, or he ends up in a religious group whose teachings justify his conduct. “For the time will come,” explained Paul to Timothy, “when they will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires” (II Timothy 4:3). And there is no peace in this form of self-justification; there is only chaos and lawlessness. The other way is to be justified by Biblical faith. “Therefore having been justified by faith, we have *peace* with God through our Lord Jesus Christ” (Romans 5:1).
- **Peace in prayer** - The non-Christian, be he Baptist, Pentecostal, Buddhist, or Shinto, prays aimlessly into the air. Those who have been immersed into Christ, and who are walking in His ways, can come boldly to the throne of grace, knowing that each word is heard and carefully considered. “Be anxious for nothing,” writes Paul to the Philippian children of faith, “but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the *peace of God*, which surpasses comprehension, shall guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:6,7).

When the Holy Spirit sends His greetings through His inspired word, His desire is for our peace. “Grace to you and peace from God our Father” (Colossians 1:2). He will grant that peace when we are justified by faith, and when we pray. Our action, His response.

Glory In Galatians

The Patience Of God

The well-known, half-humorous prayer is addressed thusly: “Lord, grant me patience, and give it to me right now!” Patience is the ability to work with a sense of urgency, but to leave the results to God. The natural fleshly reaction is to want desired results at the time of the individual’s choosing, without having necessarily worked with urgency, or a sense of God, or faith, or having worked at all.

- **Patience in humility** - God has His own sense of timing, and being God, His sense of timing is perfect. “At the right time,” the scripture says, “Christ died for the ungodly” (Romans 5:6). So while man plans (and is to plan), he must also be patient and recognize his dependence upon the blessed Father. The proverb is true: “The mind of man plans his way, but the Lord directs his steps” (Proverbs 16:9). So the apostle Peter exhorts, “Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you at the proper time, casting all your anxiety upon Him, because He cares for you” (I Peter 5:6,7). The proper time for individual exaltation may never be in his lifetime. The truly Spirit-filled Christian is patient, and can wait.
- **Patience in preaching and teaching** - Any time you work with people successfully in the word of God, you have to be patient. Individuals do not readily move from the physical to the spiritual in their understanding and affections. “And the Lord’s bond-servant must not be quarrelsome, but be kind to all, able to teach, *patient when wronged*” (II Timothy 2:24). People often become angry when confronted by the word of God, and that anger is generally directed at the patient bond-servant. Similarly, in preaching, “be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great *patience* and instruction” (II Timothy 4:2). Working with people works patience in the heart of the people-workers.
- **Patience in waiting for Jesus’ return** - Most times, most places, most Christians suffer for their faith. Injustice from the world is the norm, and it is an occasion of rejoicing when God’s children of faith are treated fairly in this world. “As an example of suffering and patience, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord” (James 5:10). “Be patient, therefore, brethren, until the coming of the Lord...be patient, strengthen your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand” (James 5:7,8).

When we are faithful to the Lord, we are thrown into situations which produce the fruit of patience. But not “right now!”

Glory In Galatians

Kindness And Goodness

Kindness and *goodness* are two words whose meanings everyone is expected to know, but which are hard to define. To get a clearer focus of their substance, sometimes their opposites, *rude*, and *evil*, have to be brought into the picture.

God expects the Christian to be kind. Love is kind (I Corinthians 13:4). God is kind (Romans 2:4). Christians are to “be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ has forgiven you” (Ephesians 4:32).

- **Kindness begins with the proper attitude** - Because God loves mankind, He is willing to be kind. “But love your enemies,” said God-in-the-flesh, “and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be the sons of the Most High; for He Himself is *kind* to ungrateful and evil men” (Luke 6:35). God has the attitude of wanting to be reconciled even to the most sinful and destructive of His children, and His kindness towards each one flows from His underlying love.
- **Kindness is being nice and doing nice things when you don’t have to** - “Expecting nothing in return,” Jesus had said. Kind words, kind smiles, kind deeds - all rendered for the purpose of building good will - are exhibitions of the Spirit of God at work in the inner man of the Christian. In becoming a partaker of the divine nature, the child of God exhibits kindness in an attempt to draw others to him, and thus to God. “The kindness of God leads you to repentance” (Romans 2:4).

Goodness is another fruit of the Spirit. Whereas *kindness* tends to be directed at a specific individual or individuals, *goodness* tends to be more general and directed at blocks of mankind or mankind as a whole. Goodness is dipped in the same paint as kindness, but spread with a broader brush.

- **Goodness also begins with a proper attitude** - While God patiently waited for the developments in Israel to transpire in preparation for the Messiah’s appearance, He also worked among the Gentiles. “Yet He did not leave Himself without witness,” explained Barnabas and Paul to the Lystrans, “in that He did *good* and gave you rains from heaven and fruitful seasons, satisfying your hearts with food and gladness” (Acts 14:17).
- **Goodness is more generally directed** - “Be kind *to one another*,” is the way the scripture directs *kindness*. “Let us do good *to all men*,” says Paul, “and especially to those who are of the household of faith” (Galatians 6:10).

There is no reason for the Christian to be rude, insensitive, selfish, and generally unkind. There is no reason for him to be bad, to engage in evil, destructive behavior. The sons of God are kind to each person; they are good; and they do good, expecting nothing in return.

Glory In Galatians

No Folly In Faithfulness

Faithfulness is the seventh fruit of the Spirit listed in Galatians 5:22,23. Faithfulness is so important that Solomon, for example, would have been better off had he asked the Almighty for the ability to be faithful rather than to be wise. While Solomon wisely ruled the kingdom, his foreign wives led him into unfaithfulness. He worshiped foreign gods, and ten of the twelve parts of the kingdom were stripped from his successor because Solomon was unfaithful.

Faithfulness has to do with being where you are supposed to be when you are supposed to be there, doing what you are supposed to be doing, with a right attitude! If you are faithful, you can be counted upon; you are dependable. The undependable person is unfaithful.

- **We begin in unfaithfulness** - “For we also once were foolish ourselves,” Paul the apostle reminds us, “disobedient, deceived, enslaved to various lusts and pleasures, spending our life in malice and envy, hateful, hating one another” (Titus 3:3). From Adam onward, with unbroken monotony, each person has stepped to the mark, and proven himself unfaithful. All those “born of woman,” when the commandment came to life for them, were broken, undependable reeds, and sinned and fell short of the glory of God.
- **God is faithful** - In spite of man’s unfaithfulness, God has remained faithful; He has stretched out His hand to a disobedient people. “And He saw that there was no man, and was astonished that there was no one to intercede. Then His own arm brought salvation to Him; and His righteousness upheld Him” (Isaiah 59:16). And Christ, the arm of God, is *faithful*; faithful in executing the Father’s will in going to the cross, and now faithful in interceding for us at the Father’s right hand. “Therefore, He had to be made like His brethren in all things, that He might become a merciful and *faithful* high priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people” (Hebrews 2:17).
- **He produces faithfulness in us** - “For He delivered us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son” (Colossians 1:13). Because this transfer has been effected, and we are now sons of God, the Father appeals to us to “walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called” (Ephesians 4:1). We are to be faithful in attendance at appointed assemblies; we are to be faithful in prayer, in scripture reading, in spreading the word, in maintaining a proper and dignified attitude. His principles, His word, and His Spirit produce the fruit of faithfulness in us.

“Moreover, it is required of stewards that one be *found* trustworthy [faithful]” (I Corinthians 4:2). “Who then is the *faithful* and sensible slave...? Blessed is that slave whom his master *finds* so doing when he comes” (Matthew 24:45,46). Being faithful means to be where you are supposed to be when you are supposed to be there, doing what you are supposed to be doing, with the right attitude. “Be faithful until death,” said our Lord Jesus, “and I will give you the crown of life” (Revelation 2:10). There is no folly in faithfulness!

Glory In Galatians

Strength In Gentleness

Meet the Gentle Giant! He is one of a family of giants, all very strong, and he like his brothers and sisters wears the name "Child of God." You see, in order to be gentle, one must be very strong!

Gentleness is the eighth fruit of the Spirit, and it is very easily misunderstood. Gentleness, or *meekness*, somehow gets connected in men's minds with weakness; so there is a tendency among the hairy-chested he-men to try to prove their strength with roughness and gruffness. In a simple illustration, a child has a difficult time moving a chair from one room to another, because the child in comparison to an adult is weak. The child tends to be rough with the chair, because it is hard to handle, and ends up banging the chair on the doors and walls on the way by. An adult, in the same situation, can handle the chair gently, because the adult has much greater strength.

Of course, people are more important than chairs, and people need to be handled with gentleness, because they are generally fragile. So bring on the race of Gentle Giants, to help people.

- **Extricating people from Satan's snare** - "And the Lord's bond-servant must not be quarrelsome, but be kind to all, able to teach, patient when wronged, with *gentleness* correcting those who are in opposition, if perhaps God may grant them repentance leading to the knowledge of the truth, that they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil, having been held captive by him to do his will" (II Timothy 2:24-26). When someone is caught in a physical trap, we recognize that gentleness is needed; the same is true for those caught in Satan's snare.
- **Producing seed whose fruit is righteousness** - People are often compared to sheep in the word of God, and need wise, understanding, solid leadership to point them in the right way. The fruit of *gentleness* is needed in leaders so that with unbending strength they may continually direct those under their charge in the ways of righteousness. "Who among you is wise and understanding? Let him show by his good behavior his deeds in the *gentleness* of wisdom. But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your heart, do not be arrogant and so lie against the truth. This wisdom is not that which comes down from above, but is earthly, natural, demonic. For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there is disorder and every evil thing. But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, *gentle*, reasonable, full of mercy and good fruits, unwavering, without hypocrisy. And the seed whose fruit is righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace" (James 3:13-18).

Gentleness results from continually increasing spiritual strength in working with people, both the lost and the saved. "Brethren," the apostle Paul later writes in his Galatian epistle, "even if a man is caught in any trespass, you who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of *gentleness*; each one looking to yourself, lest you too be tempted" (Galatians 6:1). Put yourself into the work, and the fruit of gentleness will be borne in your new exciting life!

Glory In Galatians

On The Right Track

Among the most helpless of feelings is to be in an automobile which is out of control. When it swishes from one side of the highway to the other, reverses its direction on the interstate, heads for the ditch, and begins to roll over, you can wish all you want that it be under control; but that car is long gone, and someone is going to get seriously hurt unless the Lord intervenes.

A life that is out of control is similar. When you see someone who swishes from one side of the highway of life to the other, when you see them suddenly reverse direction in some sort of tail-spin, when you see someone heading for the ditch, you are looking at a person who has lost self control; and his life is long gone, and someone is going to get seriously hurt unless the Lord intervenes. Such is the condition, and such is the ruination of most of the human race. "But realize this, that in the last days difficult times will come. For men will be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, arrogant, revilers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy, unloving, irreconcilable, malicious gossips, *without self-control*, brutal, haters of good, treacherous, reckless, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God..." (II Timothy 3:1-4). The intervention of the Lord comes when an individual decides to obey the gospel of Jesus Christ, and be a determined follower of the example of our Lord. Then the Holy Spirit works within to produce the ninth fruit of the Spirit, self-control.

But what is involved in producing self-control? How does the Almighty work in such matters, righting a life that is headed for the ditch? What is the individual's responsibility?

- **God works through the preached word** - It pleased the Lord through the foolishness of the message preached to save the souls of those who believe (I Corinthians 1:21). While Christians sometimes get tired of preaching, or they are occasionally offended at preaching, such "foolishness" is the means by which the soul is initially saved, and the means by which it continues to be saved. Preaching calls upon the individual to repent, to change the way he thinks. Preaching sets forth the love of God, the life of Christ, and the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. Preaching, like nothing else God has devised, touches the soul, and sets the fibers of the inner man resounding to the tunes of firm resolve.
- **God works through the taught word** - The apostles and other first century leaders taught, taught, and taught, so that their hearers might "learn Christ" (Ephesians 4:20). Personal, or in home, Bible studies are a powerful way of helping a person develop self-control.
- **God works through the studied and memorized word** - The apostle Paul was thankful that the Thessalonian Christians received from him and his fellow-workers the teaching of the scripture, and accepted it as the word of God, "which performs its work in you who believe" (I Thessalonians 2:13). God's word actually works inside a person, in conjunction with the Holy Spirit, to produce, among other things, this desperately needed self-control.

If you are really interested in controlling your attitude, your temper, your fleshly lusts, and all the other human failings, begin with a great attitude about the steps listed above. Failure to do so will result in shipwreck of faith for you, and disaster to many around you whose lives are closely attached to your automobile of faith.

Glory In Galatians

Getting The Picture

God has set forth in His word a scoreboard, so that we might know our personal progress, and that eventually our progress “may be evident to all” (I Timothy 4:15). First He lists the deeds of the flesh:

<i>Immorality</i>	<i>Enmities</i>	<i>Factions</i>
<i>Impurity</i>	<i>Strife</i>	<i>Envying</i>
<i>Sensuality</i>	<i>Outbursts of Anger</i>	<i>Drunkenness</i>
<i>Idolatry</i>	<i>Disputes</i>	<i>Carousing</i>
<i>Sorcery</i>	<i>Dissensions</i>	<i>Things like these</i>

And the Most High sets forth His warning in clear, unmistakable trumpet sounds: “Of which I forewarn you just as I have forewarned you that those who practice such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God!” (Galatians 5:19-21).

By contrast, He then produces His list of fruit of the Spirit:

<i>Love</i>	<i>Patience</i>	<i>Faithfulness</i>
<i>Joy</i>	<i>Kindness</i>	<i>Gentleness</i>
<i>Peace</i>	<i>Goodness</i>	<i>Self-control</i>

The production of these in the life of each Christian is the loving Father’s earnest desire. God does not want His children trapped in a life of anger, clamor, hate, malice, and envy. This is the condition of the households of the sons of disobedience. When deeds of the flesh overpower the Christian, when he loses self-control in any of these areas, spiritual breakdown has happened, and the self justification inherent in the process makes him a defender of self rather than a defender of the faith; he engages in anger, clamor, hate, malicious gossiping, and envy as the best offense in his self defense.

Fruits of the Spirit are the result of faith, rather than a failed attempt at justification by law. As the apostle Paul described it, “against such things there is no law” (Galatians 5:23). The deeds of the flesh are produced by the flesh, which the law was powerless to overcome. These are the things which “the law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh” (Romans 8:3). Those under Christ rather than under law have a handle they can grasp to help them overcome the flesh with its passions and desires: “Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires” (Galatians 5:24).

At the beginning level in the process of bearing fruit of the Spirit, God has a powerful dual picture He rams into the consciousness of each child of faith. In immersion (an actual physical representation of what is currently taking place, *not* a symbol for what has already taken place):

1. The old man of sin is crucified with Christ in immersion.
2. A new creation is raised to walk in newness of life.

When these mental, faith-images are drummed into the consciousness of the believer in the risen Christ, it begins to change the way he behaves because it changes his picture of who he is. He no longer engages in the deeds of the flesh because the person who did those things is buried with Christ in immersion (Romans 6:4). He walks in newness of life because he has in fact been raised with Christ, and is now seated with Christ in the heavenly places (Ephesians 2:6).

Get the picture?

Glory In Galatians

Walking by the Spirit

Those things which are “of faith” are unseen. Those things which are “of Law” are seen. The natural tendency of the flesh, living in the realm of that which is seen, is to focus on, and emphasize, that which is “of law.” So man-made religion, whether it be Islam, Roman Catholicism, or Presbyterianism, operates on some sort of law list in order to produce a semblance of holiness, so that each religion can continue to gain adherents, and divert people away from the truth of the God. The empty, vain philosophies of men produce decrees such as “Do not handle, do not taste, do not touch!” (Colossians 2:21). In the inspired words of the apostle Paul, “These are matters which have, to be sure, the appearance of wisdom in self-made religion and self-abasement and severe treatment of the body, but are of no value against fleshly indulgence” (Colossians 2:23). Even the law of Moses, which was the only God-given law, could not produce the holiness and life necessary to fellowship with God; much less those designed and propagated by mere men!

The general theme of the letter to the Galatians is law vs. faith, with the corresponding lack of holiness from law as contrasted with the fruit of faith. Because law is weak through the flesh, those who attempt to live by law, by that which is seen, will continue to produce deeds of the flesh. By contrast, those of “the faith,” born of the Spirit, walking by the Spirit, as seeing that which is unseen, can bear the fruit of the Spirit.

- **Born of the Spirit** - When a person is immersed into Christ, that immersion is visible. What is “of faith,” not seen, is the spiritual birth which is accomplished by the Spirit of God. In immersion, God buries the old man of sin, and produces an entirely new creature - not a mere human being - made in the image of God’s risen, glorified Son. No one can see this; it is indeed becoming a son of God by faith. “Now those who belong to Christ have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires” (Galatians 5:24).
- **Walk by the Spirit** - “If we live by the Spirit,” says Paul, “let us also walk by the Spirit” (Galatians 5:25). Those trying to live by any sort of law - Mosaic or man-made - are not living by the Spirit; they are dead and hostile to God. The apostle makes his appeal for those who were once born of the Spirit to continue to walk under the New Covenant teaching of the Spirit of God.
- **Not by law** - The law only arouses sinful passions. The back-biting, jealousy, and envy which struck the Galatian congregations were due to their turning back into law, rather than reaching forward through faith in the current Christ. The exhortation therefore comes, “Let us not become boastful, challenging one another” (Galatians 5:26). The law produces competition; faith produces cooperation.

An individual can test himself. If he has been immersed, as a repentant individual, into Christ, to receive forgiveness of sins and the gift of the indwelling Spirit, he has been born of the Spirit. If he walks by the Spirit, seeing Him who is unseen, being an imitator of Christ, he will bear the fruit of the Spirit. If he turns back to law, he is condemned, he feels condemned, and he goes to work to tear down those who walk by faith. Test yourself. See if you are indeed “of faith.”

Glory In Galatians

Restore or Ruin

God does not want *any* to perish - to go to hell. The heavenly Father's earnest desire is that each man repent and live. "Do I have any pleasure in the death of the wicked," declared the Almighty through Ezekiel, "rather than that he should turn from his ways and live?" (Ezekiel 18:23).

But law does not produce life; the apostle Paul clearly established that the law of Moses was a "ministry of death, in letters engraved on stones" (II Corinthians 3:7). If the law of God expressed through Moses cannot produce life, it is evident that no lesser, man-made law will result in life either. Life is only produced by the Spirit of life, given only when the repentant individual dies to sin in immersion, and is raised by the power of the Spirit of God to walk in newness of life. But, having a new beginning by the Spirit does not guarantee the perpetuation of this new life; the child of God must continue to walk by that same Spirit. "If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit" (Galatians 5:25). By contrast, those who were once new creatures in Christ often choose to repudiate their inheritance; and like their father Satan, not only do they plunge into darkness, but they also try to drag as many down with them as they can. Condemned by their own consciences, having suffered shipwreck of faith, they "become boastful, challenging one another, envying one another" (Galatians 5:26), as they try to substitute the braggadocio of their "law-keeping" for the faith.

The sons of God, however, try to build rather than burn, to salvage rather than spurn, to restore rather than ruin.

- **Restoring in a spirit of gentleness** - Christians are sometimes weak. Indeed, one of the special qualities of our High Priest, Jesus, is that He can sympathize with our weaknesses (Hebrews 4:15). So, the character of God exhibited in those who are truly sons of God does not desire the downfall and eternal death of anyone, either. "Brethren, even if a man is caught in any trespass, you who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness; each one looking to yourself, lest you too be tempted" (Galatians 6:1). The spiritual brethren - some obviously are not spiritual - are to try to salvage the fallen brother, recognizing the possibility of their own stumbling.
- **Bear one another's burdens** - Christ did for us what we could not do. "He himself bore our sins in His body on the cross" (I Peter 2:24). In the likeness of Christ "we who are strong ought to bear the weaknesses of those without strength and not just please ourselves. Let each of us please his neighbor for his good to his edification" (Romans 15:1,2). The goal is to edify, to build another's spiritual strength. "Bear one another's burdens, and thus fulfill the law of Christ" (Galatians 6:2).
- **Self-deception** - Anyone can say anything. Great, swelling words, half-baked ideas, and empty promises are not the exclusive province of politicians. Unspiritual men, who really do not or will not understand the great issues of faith and law, are empty talkers. "For if anyone thinks he is something when he is nothing, he deceives himself. But let each one examine his own work, and then he will have reason for boasting in regard to himself alone, and not in regard to another" (Galatians 6:3,4).

God does not want any to perish. Those who are spiritual - who walk by the Spirit - bear the burdens of their struggling brethren, attempting to restore their fellowship with God. The "law-keepers" destroy, while they continue to engage in their self deception.

Glory In Galatians

No Excuses

Individual responsibility! That's what Christianity is all about. From the time Adam blamed Eve, and Eve blamed the serpent, the human race has generally tried to duck the responsibility for its actions. The espousal of original sin, and the teaching that people commit crimes because of poor living conditions are equally false doctrines, perpetrated by false teachers who tickle itching ears. Telling the masses what they want to hear rather than what they need to hear. Both remove responsibility from the individual. Under original sin, the man says, "I sinned because I had no choice. I inherited it from Adam," rather than, "I sinned because I deliberately chose to." Modern man listens to the professional excuse makers from the ranks of psychology and sociology, and says, "I sinned because I had no choice. Society treated me wrongly, and I had to strike back," rather than, "I sinned because I deliberately chose to." But the scripture puts the responsibility right where it belongs: "But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust" (James 1:14).

When someone becomes a Christian, he is making a conscious decision to stand for truth; and he is warned by God that "all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted" (II Timothy 3:12). Faced with pressure, persecution, or loss of comfort, however, men often compromise. Thus it was in the churches of Galatia. They backed away from the faith of the scripture to become, ostensibly, keepers of the law. But the real reason was "simply that they may not be persecuted for the cross of Christ" (Galatians 6:12). They were deliberately ducking their responsibility to God, and putting pressure on others to do likewise.

But the scripture is not set aside by excuses, and God knows the motives of men. "If anyone thinks he is something when he is nothing, he deceives himself" (Galatians 6:3). Each person is to examine his own work.

- **Each one shall bear his own load** - In God's way of doing things, each person is accountable for his own work: "For the Son of Man is going to come in the glory of His Father with his angels," said the Lord Jesus Himself, "and will then recompense every man according to his deeds" (Matthew 16:27). There is no time for excuses: "For each on shall bear his own load" (Galatians 6:5).
- **Share with him who teaches** - It takes an investment of time and life to become an effective teacher of the word of God. God wants each Christian to share material things with those who have brought to them spiritual things. "And let the one who is taught the word share all good things with him who teaches" (Galatians 6:6). No excuses.
- **Reap what you sow** - The Father is emphatic on this point: "Do not be deceived. God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap" (Galatians 6:7). Christians apparently have a tendency to deceive themselves about sowing and reaping, particularly in regard to sowing to the flesh and expecting to reap of the Spirit. Each of us reaps what he sows. No excuses.

The one who is still fleshly minded avoids his spiritual responsibilities. If he does not grow past this mind-state, he will die. Carry your load. Share with those who teach the word. Sow to the Spirit. No excuses.

Glory In Galatians

Laws of the Harvest

God ordained the physical realm to among other things teach us about the spiritual realm. If someone has just inherited a huge sum of money and a valuable estate, the physical nature of it helps us to identify with the expression “the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints.” In the same way, God allows the physical harvest to go on year by year that we might learn some valuable spiritual lessons.

“Do not be deceived,” says the word of God. “God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap. For the one who sows to his own flesh shall from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit shall from the Spirit reap eternal life. And let us not lose heart in doing good, for in due time we shall reap if we do not grow weary. So then, while we have opportunity, let us do good to all men, and especially to those who are of the household of the faith” (Galatians 6:7-10). The concept of sowing and reaping illustrates some important and powerful spiritual laws:

- **You reap what you sow** - You sow corn seed, you reap corn. You sow wild oats, you reap wild oats. You sow to the flesh, you reap corruption. You sow to the Spirit, you reap eternal life. Make this law work for you rather than against you.
- **You are guaranteed a harvest** - The farmer gets hailed out, droughted out, flooded out, “insected” out, and occasionally harvests a crop. He is not guaranteed a harvest. But in the spiritual realm, the harvest is guaranteed. You are not going to sow wild oars, and experience a crop failure. But also, praise God, you are not going to sow to the Spirit, and have someone steal it from you. You are guaranteed - either way - the appropriate harvest.
- **There is a time delay** - Sowing generally occurs in the spring. Reaping occurs (in our part of the North American continent) in late summer or early fall. Everyone understands that, in the physical realm, there is a time delay between sowing and reaping. But sometimes in the spiritual realm, the concept is harder to understand. Those who sow to the flesh do not see the corruption and destruction immediately, and so tend to think they have gotten away” with their fleshly sowing. And sometimes those who sow to the Spirit don’t see results as rapidly as they expect, and “lose heart” because of the time delay. Don’t lose heart, says the word. “In due time we shall reap if we do not grow weary.
- **The harvest conies hack multiplied** - From one kernel of corn come many kernels. From one grain of wheat come 30-, 60-, 100-fold. Those who sow to their own flesh will reap their corruption, and it will come back *multiplied!* But for those who sow to the Spirit, it is exciting to realize the spiritual harvest also comes back *multiplied!*

The words of Jesus sum it up: “Truly I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children of farms, for My sake and for the gospel’s sake, but that he shalt receive a hundred times as much now in the present age, houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and farms, along with persecutions; and in the age to come, eternal life” (Mark 10:29,30).

Glory In Galatians

Doing Good

God expects his children to be like Him and be “do gooders.” The exact words of our Lord Jesus are: “But love your enemies, and *do* good, and lend, expecting nothing in return; and your reward in heaven will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High; for He Himself is kind to ungrateful and evil men” (Luke 6:35). Generally speaking, the human race consists of unkind, ungrateful, thoughtless, selfish people. Many are willing to stab you in the back, climb over your body, and stand on your fallen head to achieve their selfish desires. So what is the child of God to do with such a people? “Do good, expecting nothing in return.”

How can Christians be expected to carry out this injunction? How can those who carry the Spirit’s treasure in jars of clay, experiencing their own sufferings, trials, and struggles for survival have the motivation to do good to such a recalcitrant species?

- **“We shall reap”** - It always comes back to the question of whether the “born again” have their minds fixed on heaven or on earth. Those who are fleshly-minded have to have their rewards on earth, so they are not motivated by the prospect of heavenly reaping. Those who are truly “of the Spirit” can accept a reaping of nothing of earthly return, knowing that their heavenly reward makes it more than worthwhile. “We shall reap.” encouraged Paul, “if we do not grow weary” (Galatians 6:9).
- **“Let us not lose heart”** -The brother or sister in Christ can sometimes become discouraged when going through the trials and mental training necessary to move his thinking from earth to heaven. The Spirit of God encourages him: “Let us not lose heart in doing good.” “Take courage,” was one of our Lord Jesus’ favorite expressions. The faithful brother in Christ is to set aside his discouragement and to look for his “great reward” in heaven. He is to understand that men are ungrateful and evil, and not to be disappointed when they act in the expected manner.
- **While we have opportunity**” - Time is slipping away. Any opportunity to do any good for anyone on earth will soon be past. The exhortation comes: “So then, while we have opportunity, let us do good to all men” (Galatians 6:10). God expects his children of faith to do good now to all races and cultures of men, not just to fellow believers, and not just to those with whom he feels comfortable.
- **“Especially the household of faith”** - “Let us do good to all men,” calls the apostle, “and especially to those who are of the household of faith” (Galatians 6:10). Sometimes Christians have a tendency to be nice to strangers, and nasty to those with whom they are emotionally involved. God wants his family to be close enough to be emotionally involved in each other’s lives, but to be able to grow past some of the things about the brothers and sisters which upset us, and make special efforts to do good to them. Some of the brothers will still be ungrateful, but “do good” anyway.

God expects His children to be like Him, and to be “do-gooders.” Do good to all men, especially brothers in the Lord. Expect nothing in return, and you will occasionally be pleasantly surprised, besides having your reward in heaven.

Glory In Galatians

Good Showing in the Flesh

There seems to be a universal desire for acceptance among men. Whether it is due to a basic insecurity or a need to be loved, most of mankind will sacrifice truth for a real or imagined acceptance by some desired peer group. Many of the rulers, even, of the synagogues of Jerusalem believed in Jesus because of His teachings, and the signs and wonders He performed in order to establish His divinity. But the rulers themselves wanted to be accepted by the big-wigs who had come to positions of leadership among the Pharisees. So even though they believed in Jesus, “they were not confessing Him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue; for they loved the approval of men rather than the approval of God” (John 12:42,43).

Thus it was in Jerusalem. Thus it was in Antioch. And thus it was among the churches of Galatia. The congregations of this Roman province were being carried into a pseudo-Judaism by leaders among them who desired the approval of their Jewish business cohorts and family members rather than the approval of God. Paul, loving truth because only the truth saves, and loving God who will not break scripture, wrote this letter personally rather than dictating it to a scribe. Possibly referring to his poor eyesight, he wrote, “See with what large letters I am writing to you with my own hand” (Galatians 6:11).

- **Good show** - Those whose mind is set on the flesh are satisfied with some outward pretense of holiness. Jews who rejected the message of Christ had their minds set on the flesh, so an outward show would satisfy them. The Christians who lost their convictions and bent to pressure from the Jews were fleshly-minded, so an outward show would satisfy them. “Those who desire to make a good showing in the flesh try to compel you to be circumcised, simply that they may not be persecuted for the cross of Christ” (Galatians 6:12). They did not want heavenly priorities affecting business as usual. So they bent the truth, and tried to compel faithful brethren to yield likewise to the pressure.
- **“Do as I say, not as I do”** - Those who like the good showing in the flesh are not consistent; what they publicly proclaim, they do not they do not privately practice. “For those, who are circumcised do not even keep the law themselves, but they desire to have you circumcised that they may boast in your flesh” (Galatians 6:13). These Judaizers, these false brethren who had sneaked into the church, had come with a hidden agenda to break down the truth of the gospel of the glory of Christ, and then boast of their accomplishments in order to carry favor with Jewish and Judaizer leaders which they looked up to. Scum!

There is nothing new under the sun. The efforts to scuttle the true message of the scripture continue, and will continue. In 1973, through a program called Key 73, the “evangelicals” with “Evangelism Explosion” and other “faith only” church growth techniques invaded the Christian churches with their hidden agenda, and paralyzed or drew off a sizable percentage of the movement. Men with hidden agendas try to stop the progress of the local congregations with “a good showing according to the flesh.” Anathema to them!

Glory In Galatians

Scriptural Boasting

There are those who think Christians cannot boast at all. Thus the glories of the Christ's accomplishments through us are kept under wraps, and the mouths of those which should be open are shut.

The apostle Paul was called upon on numerous occasions to recount his accomplishments. He was reluctant to do so, lest any should think he was exalting himself; but the doctrines of Christ which he proclaimed were under attack by false apostles, and it was necessary to list the trials which the Spirit of God had brought him through in order to expose the dross of the false teachers. Thus the true, tested apostle explained to the Corinthians, "I therefore am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong, I have become foolish; you yourselves compelled me. Actually I should have been commended by you, for in no respect was I inferior to the most eminent apostles, even though I am a nobody" (II Corinthians 12:10,11).

The Galatian Judaizers, in contrast, wanted to boast to the Jews and Judaizer leaders how they pressured Gentile Christians into being circumcised. "They desire to have you circumcised," stated the apostle, "that they may boast in your flesh" (Galatians 6:13). Paul, however, was content to focus on spiritual, internal things, the things which Christ has done for him and through him.

Boasting in the cross - The cross was doubly significant in reference to the boasting Judaizers. The Jews had no concept of a suffering Messiah, dying for their sins. They preferred a fleshly Christ of their own imagination, with earthly armies triumphant over the Romans and other enemies. "Christ crucified," to the Jews, then, was "a stumbling block" (I Corinthians 1:23). Paul was willing to stick the cross in their face anyway. Secondly, the cross was the means by which the law - which to the Jews and Judaizers was outwardly precious - was set aside. The "Lord canceled out the certificate of debt which was against us and was hostile to us and He has taken it away, having nailed it to the cross" (Colossians 2:14). Paul was then willing to say, "But may it never be that I should boast, except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Galatians 6:14).

Crucified to the world - The cross was not of Paul's doing. He therefore would boast of the work Christ did on the cross, and would thrust subtly at the Galatian Christians, who, by coming under the influence of the Judaizers, had gone back into the world. Through the cross, "the world was crucified to me, said the apostle, "and I to the world" (Galatians 6:14).

An individual really has only two choices - he will boast in himself, boasting in the flesh in some form; or he will boast in Christ. "But by His doing you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption, that, just as it is written, "Let him who boasts, boast in the Lord." (I Corinthians 1:30,31).

Glory In Galatians

The New Creation

Man is fleshly, and because he is fleshly, he often does not even see spiritual things. Speaking of his old life before immersion, Paul wrote, "I am of flesh, sold into bondage to sin" (Romans 7:14). "But a natural man, he wrote in another place, "does not accept the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness to him and he cannot understand them because they are spiritually appraised" (I Corinthians 2:14). The natural, or fleshly, man is not a very good spiritual appraiser; he does not know how to put the proper spiritual values on spiritual things.

The Galatian brethren who had fallen under the bewitching spell of Jewish pressure had turned fleshly. Losing their focus on the risen Christ, they had twisted aside to value rituals of the flesh, performed on the flesh by human hands. The apostle Paul had written this letter to try to salvage them from the grave error into which they had fallen. As he came to a close, he summarized his entire point with one of the great rules of the Bible, "For neither is circumcision anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation" (Galatians 6:15).

- **Circumcision and uncircumcision are nothing** - The whole issue of circumcision vs. uncircumcision, of law vs. faith, is a question of spiritual sight. The Jew, blind spiritually, gloried in his circumcision just as many moderns glory in their church membership. In his letter to the Romans, Paul had brought the issue to the fore in this fashion: "For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly; neither is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh. But he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that which is of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter; and his praise is not from men, but from God" (Romans 2:28,29).
- **A new creation** - Paul attempted to focus their attention on what was important spiritually, to be given high value by those who can assign the proper spiritual appraisal. And what was important was the new creation! There is a tendency among many to think of the new creation as simply the old creature forgiven. But we cannot reiterate too often or too loudly: the new creation is the result of an entirely new creative act by the Almighty. The new creation is not a human being any more than a cat is a human being, in one manner of speaking. The new creation looks like a human on the outside, and carries the gospel message in this humble form. But inwardly he throbs with a shining, dynamic energy as a new being created in the image of God's glorified Son.

These new creations constitute God's resurrected army, the band of overwhelming conquerors before whom no spiritual barrier - and therefore no material or political barrier can stand. This is why, in the Galatian churches, Satan attempted to pressure the brethren through persecution from the Jews - and but for Paul he would have succeeded! But, praise God! this army of brilliant new creatures still marches, with weapons not of flesh, "but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses...and taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ" (II Corinthians 10:4,5). March on, brothers, march on!

Glory In Galatians

Walk By This Rule

The puffed-up Pharisee types wanted other people to walk by their rules. They of course covered their rules with the cloak of Moses, using language similar to those at Jerusalem's council: "It is necessary to circumcise them, and to direct them to observe the Law of Moses" (Acts 15:5). The apostle Paul, in this letter to the Galatian brethren, was emphatic that such "piety" was only a showing in the flesh, and that those who would try to press this performance on others did not "even keep the Law themselves" (Galatians 6:13). They did not walk by their own rules, but of course they wanted others to. "And they tie up heavy loads, and lay them on men's shoulders, but they themselves are unwilling to move them with so much as a finger" (Matthew 23:4).

In contrast to all the malarky about circumcision and uncircumcision, the real issue was the new creation (Galatians 6:15). And the issue here was a critical one. God has so designed His word that it separates the wheat from the chaff, the sheep from the goats. The word of God tests the motives of men, and probes their hearts. And the motives of men then, as now, were exposed in this one issue, the new creation.

- **Walking by this rule** - "For neither is circumcision anything, nor uncircumcision" stroked the inspired stylus, "but a new creation. And those who will walk by this rule, peace and mercy be upon them, and upon the Israel of God" (Galatians 6:15,16). "By this rule," he said. Interesting! The new creation is rule, a spiritual law. But it is totally different from the law of Moses, or the law of conscience, neither of which justified a single earthly wayfarer. The new creation is the creative act of God wherein an individual is "born of the Spirit," ("begun by the Spirit," if you please), by his sincere obedience to the gospel of truth in his immersion. This individual desires to be transformed into the likeness of his admired Hero; he yearns to follow in the foot-steps of his elder Brother; he wants to be just like his Dad in heaven. And "this rule" - the principle of the new creation - makes it all possible. And this rule is God's dividing line between justified and unjustified, spiritual and fleshly, and the means by which the hearts of men are exposed.
- **Mercy and peace** - The word of God is emphatic: peace and mercy come only to those "who will walk by this rule." There are no substitutes. A showy display of keeping the law of Moses is no substitute. An attempted offering of kind words and good deeds to make up for past mistakes is no substitute. Even a belief in the principles of the new creation is no substitute. The peace and mercy of God only come to those who will walk by this rule.

The natural tendency of man is to "sort of" forget God and attempt to bull his way into heaven. Whether he speaks the heavy diction of the bar room brawler, or in the elevated tones of robed and mitred "divines," his rebellion is raw and naked. Only those who are truly walking by the new creation rule are submissive to God, and granted his peace and mercy.

Glory In Galatians

The Israel Of God

Who, really, is Israel? Some maintain Israel is the nation comprised of the present people who currently occupy Jerusalem, and their relatives wherever they live, in New York, Russia, or other socialist “republics.” But what says the word of God about the subject of who are those who truly constitute His nation?

The apostle Paul laid the foundation for, and really answered the question in his letter to the Roman brethren. Who is a Jew? “For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly; neither is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh. But he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that which is of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter...” (Romans 2:28,29). The Israel of God is obviously the collection of such spiritually marked individuals, a nation being by definition the aggregate of its citizens. So it is written, then, “For they are not all Israel who are descended from Israel” (Romans 9:6). God is trying to communicate that a fleshly birth is of no significance; the Israel of God consists of those born by the promised Holy Spirit: “That is, it is not the children of the flesh who are children of God, but the children of the promise are regarded as descendants” (Romans 9:8).

So what about those Galatian Christians who had been sucked in by Jewish pressure and propaganda glorifying the outward Jews? The apostle Paul is closing his letter to the congregations of Galatia with a withering hail of spiritual bullets, aimed and fired by the Spirit of God Himself.

- **Walking as new creations** - Circumcision meant nothing! Jewish pedigrees and family histories did not make the individual spiritual, and thus count with God. Only those who were created in Christ Jesus by the Spirit of God in accordance with the written word as entirely new beings are regarded as sons. And only those who continue to walk by this rule - walking by faith, seeing the unseen glory of God - live in peace and mercy.
- **Peace and mercy upon the Israel of God** - There is no mercy and peace to anyone outside of Christ, be he Jew or Gentile, but only wrath, indignation, tribulation, and distress. So the peace and mercy of upon the Israel of God cannot be directed at those enemies of the cross of Christ, those recalcitrant, hard-hearted, stiff-necked, rebellious sons of Satan who steadfastly refused or refuse the gospel of Christ. When Paul says “Peace and mercy be upon them, and upon the Israel of God” (Galatians 6:16), it is his way of stressing the spiritual nature of the true nation Israel.

The Galatian Christians had, in many cases, been sold a “bill of goods.” Bewitched is the word the Holy Spirit used. The physical nation Israel, and its rites and sacrifices had come to be glorified, and the overweening success of the physical had shut off the glories of the spiritual. With a strong parting shot, and in keeping with the spiritual brotherhood strength and satire running throughout the New Testament writings, the apostle gives his greeting of peace to “the Israel of God.” The other Israel, the physical one, being glorified by the Judaizers, quite clearly was not “of God.”

The parallels today are manifold. Many fleshly programs arise to shut off the glories of the spiritual. But peace and mercy are only upon “the Israel of God.”

Glory In Galatians

Brand-marks of Jesus

There are talkers, and there are doers. There are those who crumple under pressure, and there are those who stand the test. And everyone will be tested. "Beloved," writes Peter, "do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal among you, which comes upon you for your testing" (I Peter 4:12). Those who have never yet tasted the blood of battle cannot speak with the same authority of the grizzled survivor - especially in spiritual warfare. One of the great lines from the Old Testament is appropriate here: "Let not him who girds on his armor boast like him who takes it off" (I Kings 20:11).

The grizzly of the grizzled veterans was the apostle Paul. Taking on the false apostles who were worming their way into Corinthians hearts, this great lion of God detailed some of his exploits in the cause of Christ - not for self-glorification, but so that the truth of his message and the purity of his doctrine might shine through. "Are they Hebrews?" he asked. "Are they Israelites?" The question of pedigree continues, "Are they descendants of Abraham?" (II Corinthians 11:22). Then he shifted his emphasis. "Are they servants of Christ?" After commenting that he has to be crazy to have allowed the discussion to sink this low, but unfortunately necessary, level, he then lists some of what he had gone through (II Corinthians 11:23-27):

- **Far more** - "In far more labors, in far more imprisonments, beaten times without number, often in danger of death."
- **Physically pounded** - "Five times I received from the Jews thirty-nine lashes. Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned."
- **Thrown to the winds** - "Three times I was shipwrecked, a night and a day I have spent in the deep."
- **In danger** - He was on frequent journeys, in danger from rivers, robbers, Jews, Gentiles, in the wilderness and in the cities, in dangers from the sea and among false brethren.
- **Personally drained** - "I have been in labor and hardship, through many sleepless nights, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure."

When we recall that his second preserved exhortation to the Corinthian brethren was written well before his ministry in the flesh came to an end, we can only marvel at what could have been detailed as he was preparing to be offered as a drink offering. He was indeed "such a person" (Philemon 9), Paul the aged, fitted to make his appeal in person or in prison, by letter or by messenger.

The false brethren in the Galatian churches troubled Paul. They attacked his teaching and sullied his reputation. They used every pressure technique in the book to twist sincere brethren away from the truth of the gospel, destroying and being destroyed by Satan's wiles in the process. This Galatian letter is the apostle's last yank on the harness of truth, his last jerk on the chain of reality. Those who would listen, and walk, by the rule of the new creation would live; those who would not listen would perish by the Law. His final appeal, sounded above the drum-roll of all the persecution and hardship he had endured for the gospel, stridently calls for their troublesome teaching and teachers to die down: "From now on let no one cause trouble for me; for I bear on my body the brand-marks of Jesus" (Galatians 6:17). The grizzly of the grizzled can make such an appeal.

Glory In Galatians

Brand-marks On Our Bodies

Comparatively speaking, Christians in America have not suffered much for the sake of their beliefs. These United States of America burst into nationhood on the basis of a reluctant revolution, brought about by increasingly tyrannical measures and conspiracy of the Crown. Many of the colonists had fled the Old World in order to pursue their religious convictions unfettered by layered bureaucracy and safe from the sword of the state. Hence the first citizens of the world's foremost modern republic secured for themselves and their posterity - at the price of lives and fortunes, but with sacred honor generally intact - the blessings of liberty. And primary among these liberties - in what was always termed "a Christian nation," in the words of George Washington, in his farewell address, "With slight shades of difference, you have the same religion, manners, habits, and political principles" - was the free exercise of religion, against the backdrop that no denominational church could be established as the national religion. Hence this freedom resulted in discussion and debate which allowed many buried but essential points of the Holy Writ to be brought to light, without fear of dungeon, gallows, or stake.

But modern softies have come "into" the church, and will compromise nearly any sacred sound doctrine for the sake of avoiding bad press, much less Biblical-type persecution. But an examination of scripture on the subject of suffering and persecution reveals it is the norm of the existence of the church, and each of us needs to steel his mind in preparation for what is soon to come.

- **Jesus to the apostles** - "Remember the word I said to you, 'A slave is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you; if they kept My word, they will keep yours also" (John 15:20).
- **Attitude of the apostles** - After being flogged before the Sanhedrin, and ordered to speak no more through the authority of Jesus, "they went on their way from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they had been considered worthy to suffer shame for His name" (Acts 5:41).
- **Suffering and glory** - We are God's children, "and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him in order that we may also be glorified with Him" (Romans 8:17).
- **Godliness and persecution** - "And indeed, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution" (II Timothy 3:12).
- **Loss of property** - "For you showed sympathy to the prisoners, and accepted joyfully the seizure of your property, knowing that you have for yourselves a better possession and an abiding one" (Hebrews 10:34).
- **Suffering drives out sin** - "Therefore, since Christ has suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same purpose, because he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin, so as to live the rest of the time in the flesh no longer for the lusts of men, but for the will of God" (I Peter 4:1,2).

The apostle Paul spoke with authority because, among other reasons, he bore on his body "the brand-marks of Jesus" (Galatians 6:17). Who is next? And when?

Glory In Galatians

The Grace Of Our Lord Be With Your Spirit

There is no grace in law. The pronouncement of law is simple; if the party is guilty, then justice is executed. No clemency. Simple justice, executed swiftly and surely.

Those who live under law, as the Galatian brethren were being persuaded to do, have a pronounced sense of justice, particularly as it applies to the next guy. "He who speaks against a brother or judges his brother," wrote James, "speaks against the law, and judges the law; but if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law, but a judge of it" (James 4:11). Those who do not understand what faith is, as defined by the Bible, are by necessity driven to law or into lawlessness. And the man who is driven to law is not a doer of the law, but sits as a judge.

Thus it was in the congregations in Galatia. Those who pushed the law of Moses did not even keep the law themselves. And with every man a self-appointed judge, no wonder they were biting and devouring one another, and on the edge of consuming one another.

But those who walk by faith, new creations by the Spirit, have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires, and have "a different spirit about them." Among other qualities, they exhibit a spirit of grace.

- **They personally are conscious of God's grace toward them** - When a Christian in the right spirit participates in the Lord's Supper every first day of the week, he is reminded of the precious blood spilt for him. He is once again brought to a recognition of the price that was too great for him to pay, and of the cost to the Son of God. With gratitude he remembers his purification from his former sins, and does not fall into blindness or short-sightedness. And one thing he therefore sees clearly is that all men, including himself, are equally in need of great grace from the environs from on high. He is therefore not prone to pronounce railing judgments against man or even a fallen angel.
- **They earnestly desire the salvation of others** - The "lawkeeper," because of his inwardly guilty conscience, is interested in finding fault in others by putting them down in a sort of reversed attempt to feel better about himself. The faithful son of God, however, conscious of the grace extended to him through the gospel of the glory of Christ, is aware and excited about the good news which is freely offered to anyone who fears God and is willing to do what is right. And with heart-felt concern for the eternity of others, he creatively and graciously spreads the message of the Christ, desiring earnestly the salvation and edification of others. He makes "the most of the opportunity," letting his "speech always be with grace, seasoned, as it were, with salt," knowing how to "respond to each person" (Colossians 4:5,6).

The individual who walks under law becomes cantankerous and judgmental. The true son of God looks by faith into the face of the risen Christ, and is conscious of God's grace toward him. The Galatian epistle begins: "I am amazed that you are so quickly deserting Him who called you by the grace of Christ for a different gospel" (Galatians 1:6). The epistle ends in this appeal: "The grace of our Lord Jesus be with your spirit, brethren. Amen" (Galatians 6:18). And that's the spirit.