

PAUL'S LETTER TO THE GALATIANS

Paul, an apostle—sent not from men nor by man, but by Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised him from the dead and all the brothers with me,

*To the churches in Galatia:
Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, who gave himself for our sins to rescue us from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen*

A Commentary by Noel Due

PAUL'S LETTER TO THE GALATIANS

by Noel Due

Published by



NEW CREATION PUBLICATIONS INC.
P.O. Box 403, Blackwood, South Australia, 5051
1993

First published in 1993 by
NEW CREATION PUBLICATIONS INC., AUSTRALIA
P.O. Box 403, Blackwood, South Australia, 5051

© Noel Due 1992

National Library of Australia cataloguing-in-publication data

Due, Noel
Paul's letter to the Galatians

Bibliography.
ISBN 0 86408 156 1

1. Bible. N.T. Galatians—Commentaries. I. Title.

227.407

This book is copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purposes of private study, research, criticism or review, as permitted under the Copyright Act, no part may be reproduced by any process without written permission. Inquiries should be addressed to the publisher.

Wholly set and printed at

New Creation Publications Inc.
Coromandel East, South Australia

Contents

Introduction	.....	1
Chapter One:	.....	3
Chapter Two:	.....	11
Chapter Three:	.....	21
Chapter Four:	.....	33
Chapter Five:	.....	43
Chapter Six:	.....	53
Appendix One:	.....	58
Appendix Two:	.....	61
Select Bibliography:	.....	64

TO GEOFFREY,
MY FATHER IN THE GOSPEL
AND A TRUE PREACHER OF RIGHTEOUSNESS:

They shall speak of the glory of Thy kingdom,
And talk of Thy power;
To make known to the sons of men Thy mighty acts,
And the glory of the majesty of Thy kingdom.

PAUL'S LETTER TO THE GALATIANS

Introduction

Some New Testament scholars refer to the Letter to the Galatians as one of the four 'capital' Epistles of Paul. By this they mean that there can be no doubt as to the genuineness of Paul's authorship of the Letter, or to its contents as truly being the mind of Paul. There may be some debate regarding the date of the Letter, but the date has little or no effect on our interpretation of its teaching. In Galatians, then, we have a Letter which gives us a rich understanding of some of Paul's fundamental theological structures. Though the presenting issues among the Galatian churches may not be present in the church today, the principles that lie behind them have an abiding presence. For this reason Galatians must be studied afresh in every generation. If one thing is ever contested in the hearts and minds of God's people it is this: Does righteousness come by faith or by some system of works. 'To be sure,' says Luther (LW, Vol. 26, p. 10), 'they invent new names and new works; but the content remains the same . . . although some do works that are more splendid, great and difficult than others, the content remains the same and only the quality is different. That is, the works vary only in appearance and in name. For they are still works.'

The recipients of the Letter are somewhat difficult for us to identify, at least in terms of geography. Rather than being addressed to one particular congregation, (as is the case with Romans or the Corinthian Letters) this Letter is addressed to the churches in 'Galatia'. Here we are confronted with a difficulty. 'Galatia' was a term used in two different ways in the first century. It could be used to refer to an ethno-geographic region in the North of Asia Minor—i.e. the region of the Galatian people—but it could also be used to refer to the whole Roman province—i.e. the administrative district of Galatia. Attempts to identify the particular recipients must therefore take account of Paul's missionary journeys in Acts.

The so-called 'North Galatian' and 'South Galatian' theories propounded by some New Testament scholars attempt to reconstruct Paul's journeys and integrate the Jerusalem visits mentioned in Gal. 1:18 and 2:1 with what is recorded in Acts. The problem is further compounded by the fact that in Acts 16:6 and 18:23 the text speaks of (lit.) 'the Galatic region', a term of some ambiguity. Added to this is the considerable doubt that in Galatians 1 and 2 Paul mentions *all* of the visits he had made to Jerusalem. In these chapters he is making a specific point about his apostolic authority. He is not giving a systematic and chronological summary of his travels.

Bearing all such difficulties in mind it is very hard to settle on one date or another as being definitive. The approach taken in this exposition is that the Galatian Letter was sent to churches in the Southern Galatian region which were founded by Paul during the travels recorded in Acts 13–14. These churches were visited by Paul again in Acts 16, after the Jerusalem council recorded in Acts 15. However, given the many unanswerable questions, one would be reluctant to hold to such a scheme dogmatically. In any event the interpretation of the Letter does not hinge on the matter of date in any sense that is crucial.

Despite the difficulties that cluster around the issue of the Letter's date, we can deduce from its contents something about the recipients themselves. The folk to whom Paul writes were his converts (1:8f.; 4:13f.) and many had been baptised (3:27). Before their conversion they were pagans—they worshipped idols (4:8) and had not been circumcised (cf. 5:2; 6:12). In 2:5 we are told how Paul spoke up for these Gentile converts that they may live free of diverse rules and regulations. Passages such as 3:6–22 and 4:21–31, however, indicate a more than passing familiarity with Judaism, and some scholars have therefore suggested that the church contained many proselytes. The personal appeal of 4:12ff., as well as the whole tone of the Letter, both indicate the great affection that existed between the apostle and these churches. It is out of this deep love that Paul writes with such urgency. The Letter is indeed written 'with a pen dipped in fire'.

Analysis

- I. Salutation: Galatians 1:1–5
- II. Paul's Apostolic Defence: Galatians 1:6—2:21
 - (i) The Authority of the Gospel (1:6–10)
 - (ii) Paul's Calling: No Human Intervention (1:11–24)
 - (iii) The Recognition of His Ministry (2:1–10)
 - (iv) His Confrontation with Peter and Barnabas (2:11–21)
- III. The Substance of Paul's Doctrine of Justification: Galatians 3:1—5:12
 - (i) Personal Testimony of the Galatians: Beginning by the Spirit (3:1–5)
 - (ii) Abraham Justified by Faith (3:6–9)
 - (iii) Christ Redeemed us from the Law's Curse (3:10–14)
 - (iv) What is the Relationship Between Law and Promise? (3:15–22)
 - (v) Heirs According to Promise, Not Law (3:23–29)
 - (vi) The Spirit of Adoption, Not the Law, Brings Freedom (4:1–7)
 - (vii) A Personal Appeal (4:8–20)
 - (viii) Hagar and Sarah: An Allegory (4:21–31)
 - (ix) Set Free for Freedom (5:1–12)
- IV. The Life In and Through the Spirit: Galatians 5:13—6:18
 - (i) A Warning (5:13–15)
 - (ii) Deeds of the Flesh and Fruit of the Spirit (5:16–26)
 - (iii) Pastoral Exhortations (6:1–10)
 - (iv) Pastoral Summary (6:11–16)
 - (v) Personal Appeal and Benediction (6:17–18)

Chapter One

I. Salutation: Galatians 1:1–5

1:1 Paul, an apostle—sent not from men nor by man, but by Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised him from the dead—*1:2* and all the brothers with me, To the churches in Galatia: *1:3* Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, *1:4* who gave himself for our sins to rescue us from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father, *1:5* to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen (NIV).

1:1 From the very outset of his letter Paul emphasises the veracity of his calling. He is an apostle, i.e. a ‘sent one’ (from the Gr. *apostello* ‘I send’); but the one who has sent him is none other than the Lord of the church, Jesus Christ, and God the Father. Paul’s apostolic ministry is mentioned in many places (e.g. Rom. 1:1; II Cor. 1:1; Gal. 1:1; Eph. 1:1; Col. 1:1; I Tim. 1:1, etc.), such references always emphasising the fact that God ordained his ministry.

In some places in the NT, such as in Phil. 2:25; II Cor. 8:23, the word ‘apostle’ retains the simple meaning of ‘messenger’ (i.e. one who is sent), but in most of the references in the NT the term refers to the Twelve, or to Paul. According to Eph. 4:11 the apostolic ministry was regarded as a key manifestation of Christ’s gifts to the church, while it is clear from Acts 2:42; Eph. 2:20 and Rev. 21:14 that the teaching of the apostles was the norm for the church. The ‘apostolic college’, as it is sometimes called, interpreted the OT in the light of Christ, and Christ’s life and ministry in terms of the OT. They were given the keys of the kingdom to open up the nations to the Gospel, which itself came directly from Christ. Thus their teaching was to be both normative and foundational, and they could claim an authority in the early church that was unrivalled even by the NT prophets.

The emphasis in Paul’s apostolic defence throughout Gal. 1 and 2 is on the Sender, rather than the one sent. This was certainly the case with Jesus, who was the great Apostle of the Father (Heb. 3:1). To receive Him is to receive the one who sent Him (Mark 9:37). Likewise the apostolic ministry of Paul relates to the receiving of the One who has commissioned and sent him. His zeal, therefore, is not for his apostleship *per se*, but for the hearing of the apostolic message, which is the message of the Lord of the Church. There is thus an indivisible connection between the defence of Paul’s apostleship and the defence of his gospel of salvation by grace alone. The false teachers, here and elsewhere in the NT, could see this connection and attacked the Gospel by calumniating Paul. While he may have been sent out on his first missionary journey by those at Antioch (Acts 13:1ff.), his authority did not derive from them.

The matter of God’s Fatherhood is something that will occupy Paul’s mind later in the Letter. For now it is enough to say that Paul’s gospel is, in the ultimate, only intelligible when seen in the light of the Fatherhood of God on the one hand, and the sonship of believers on the other. Indeed, in Galatians the difference between life under Law and life under grace is as great as the difference between slavery and sonship. The freedom into which believers have been liberated is the freedom of sonship, the fullness of inheritance, which could not come about under the Law.

Moreover, it is the Father who has raised Christ from the dead. The fact that Jesus was raised by God (the Father) is often repeated by the NT writers (e.g. Acts 2:24–32; 3:15; Rom. 4:24f.; 10:9; Eph. 1:19f.; Heb. 13:20; I Pet. 1:21). Here Paul's comment links with his apostolic ministry. His ministry has the authority of God, the one who raised Jesus Christ, and it is this same Jesus who had met him on the Damascus Road. There could be no greater authority than this, the call of God met and received in the confrontation with the risen Christ.

1:2 But Paul does not write simply on his own behalf, nor is his ministry conducted in isolation. On other occasions also we are given an insight into the communal nature of Paul's life and travels (e.g. Phil. 4:21; Rom. 16:21f.; Gal. 2:3; Col. 4:10–14; Philemon 23, 24). Here the 'brethren' are not specified, but their inclusion in the salutation is significant. Paul was not a 'lone star', but a member of the community of the saints. They and he together have a concern for the recipients. Perhaps that no names are mentioned indicates that they were well known to the Galatian congregations (Burton, p. 10).

The Letter is addressed to the 'churches of Galatia'. We have already alluded to the problems of precise identification. What is clear is that this was to be a circular letter. Though we have no way of knowing how many Galatian congregations there were, or how many had been infiltrated by the false teachers, no congregation, of itself, was immune from the problems addressed in the Letter. All needed to read and heed Paul's words.

1:3 The salutation continues with a blessing, seen elsewhere in Paul's Letters. In Rom. 1:7, I Cor. 1:3; II Cor. 1:2; Eph. 1:2; II Thess. 1:2 and Phil. 1:2 the blessing appears exactly as it does here, while in I Thess. 1:1 the order of the words is changed. This is no empty greeting, for grace and peace lie at the heart of Paul's gospel. According to him these things can only come from God, through Christ. Grace is God's unconditioned will to meet Man and do good to him in salvation; it is God's love in action to save sinners. Peace is thus first and foremost with God (cf. Rom. 5:1, 11; II Cor. 5:20; Eph. 2:14–20), which then leads to peace amongst the brethren, i.e. those who are united to God and to one another in Christ.

1:4 The double blessing from God the Father and Jesus Christ is an expression of a double action. Christ has been offered up as a sacrifice for sins, but this according to the will of God. That Jesus 'gave himself' (cf. Eph. 5:2; I Tim. 2:6; Titus 2:14) is not to be overlooked. Paul is not simply saying that He was crucified, but that His crucifixion was His willing self-offering to God. This accords with John 10:17, 18, where we are told:

'The reason my Father loves me is that I lay down my life—only to take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again. This command I received from my Father.'

In the crucifixion Jesus' life was not snatched from Him. Rather, He gave up His life (so Luke 23:46) 'through the eternal spirit', according to Heb. 9:14, and His death was in every respect an offering.

This offering was 'for our sins' that they might be forgiven and positively that He might provide deliverance from 'the present evil age'. The deliverance is inseparable from the offering. There can be no deliverance without the forgiveness of sins (cf. Col. 2:13ff.), and the purpose of the forgiveness is deliverance. Why does Paul call this an 'evil age'? He uses similar terms in Rom. 12:2; II Cor. 4:4; Eph. 2:2; 6:12, but other

NT writers also use parallel expressions (e.g. John 12:31; 14:30; 15:18; 17:14f.; Acts 2:40; Heb. 2:5; 6:5; James 4:4; I John 2:15–17; 5:4, 5, 19, 20; etc.). This, for Paul, is the age which stands in sharp contrast to the age to come. This is the age of sin, death, and the dominion of evil powers. It is the age in which the church and her ministers suffer at their hands, but also, paradoxically, the very age in which the church knows the victory of Christ (cf. Rom. 8:35ff.) Moreover, in terms of Paul's argument in Galatians, it is the age of false righteousness. Says Luther, 'Paul is correct in calling it the evil world; for when it is at its best, then it is at its worst. The world is at its best in men who are religious, wise and learned; yet in them it is actually evil twice over' (LW, Vol. 26, p. 40).

Paul's eschatology is framed in a sharp 'now' and 'not yet' duality, a framework that will emerge later in the Letter in various contexts. What is immediately important, however, is that the 'offering up' and therefore the 'deliverance' are by the will of God. The apostle thus anticipates the entire argument of the Letter. He 'insists on the dispensation of grace impugned by the false teachers' (Lightfoot, p. 74).

1:5 Ultimately, evil age or no, all glory will be given to the Father. Such will be the case at the end of time (Phil. 2:11 cf. I Cor. 15:24–28), so such should be the worship to the church now. 'Amen' says Paul, and 'Amen' may the congregation be expected to respond. For similar expressions of praise in Paul see Rom. 8:25; 9:5; 11:36; II Cor. 9:15; Eph. 3:20. Perhaps, ultimately, Paul's theology can only be understood through his doxologies. He has no abstract interest in theology, but in and through the gospel of grace he is absolutely dedicated to preserving the glory of God and presenting men and women fully equipped in it.

II. Paul's Apostolic Defence: Galatians 1:6—2:21

(i) The Authority of the Gospel (Gal. 1:6–10)

1:6 I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you by the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel—**1:7** which is really no gospel at all. Evidently some people are throwing you into confusion and are trying to pervert the gospel of Christ. **1:8** But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let him be eternally condemned! **1:9** As we have already said, so now I say again: If anybody is preaching to you a gospel other than what you accepted, let him be eternally condemned! **1:10** Am I now trying to win the approval of men, or of God? Or am I trying to please men? If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a servant of Christ (NIV).

1:6 Paul loses no time in getting to the heart of his concern for the Galatian churches. The Galatians were not simply 'drifting' from the Gospel, they were actually 'deserting' it, actively leaving it to take up something else. The present tense is important. The Letter is an urgent one. Even as Paul wrote, the Galatians were in the very act of turning from one to the other, and the outcome was not yet clear (cf. 4:20; 5:10). Whether the Galatians themselves would have perceived their state as 'desertion' is doubtful, especially in the light of Paul's comments in 3:1, but he uses the strong word to make his readers wake up to the true nature of situation. For his part Paul is 'astonished' (*thaumadzo* 'I marvel', or 'I am amazed') that such a thing is happening, and happening so quickly. We assume that the 'quickness' of the time refers to the elapsed time

since Paul's proclamation of the gospel to them, and, if the Letter is indeed written after the visit of Acts 16, his astonishment would have been all the greater, for presumably at that visit he would have set in order any deficiency, or warned against nascent trends.

It is important to note, however, that the desertion was not simply from some doctrinal framework or other. In leaving what they had learned from Paul they were actually deserting 'the one who called you by the grace of Christ'. In deserting the Gospel, the Galatians were deserting the God who called them through the grace of Christ. The phrase 'the grace of Christ' also appears in Rom. 5:15; II Cor. 8:9; Gal. 6:18; Phil. 4:23; I Thess. 5:28; Philemon 25 and, outside of Paul, in II Pet. 3:18. Elsewhere Paul and other NT writers speak of the 'grace of God' (Gal. 2:21; II Thess. 1:12; I Cor. 15:10; Titus 2:11; Heb. 2:9; 12:15; I Pet. 5:12; Jude 4). That the name of Christ can be interchanged with that of God as the source of grace speaks of the implicit Trinitarian nature of the writers' thought. God and Christ are one in the work of redemption.

But the apostle packs his sentences full of meaning. They were not simply deserting God, but the God who called them by grace. With great economy of words Paul draws his readers to see again the distinctive feature of the gospel. It is a gospel of *grace*. They were converted, they did not convert themselves. To turn from this to something else is incomprehensible. Says Burton,

The remarkable and surprising fact about their apostasy was that they were abandoning the position of grace, i.e. the relation towards God which made them the objects of the grace of Christ and participators in its benefits, to put themselves under law, which could only award them their sad deserts (Burton, p. 21).

The thing for which they were deserting the gospel was not outright paganism, but something that has the appearance of good religion. It was not idol worship, immorality or laxity of life that was the issue, but a 'different gospel'. The word Paul uses (*heteros*, hence 'heterodox' and its cognates) means 'a different kind of' gospel, something of a totally different order. The 'gospel' is the 'good news' of God, and it cannot be tampered with without destroying its meaning. Any 'hybrid' gospel is, in fact, something of a totally different order than the gospel itself. Though the false teachers did not dispute the historical facts of the gospel message, they sought to change the meaning of those facts by adding diverse regulations to Paul's proclamation. In so doing, grace is emptied of its meaning, the gospel ceases to be the gospel.

1:7 The point is further emphasised by Paul's language in this verse. The Galatians have gone after a *heteros* gospel, 'which is really no gospel at all'. Though this gives the sense, other translations preserve Paul's wording better. It is really 'not another' gospel. In 1:6 he used *heteros*, but here he uses *allos*. This word was used to compare things of the same sort (e.g. 'another comforter'). There is really no other gospel, nothing of the same sort, that one can run to. When the gospel is distorted, it does not remain 'mostly the same', but it in fact becomes 'entirely different'. The return to the truth is not, therefore, a matter of 'balance' or modification, but of repentance.

The fault does not lie entirely with the Galatians, but only to the extent that they have let themselves be persuaded by certain unnamed persons who are disturbing them. Again the present tense preserves the urgency of the situation. As Paul writes, the false teachers are actively at work. The *NIV*'s 'throwing you into confusion' gives good sense of a word that means 'to overturn, misrepresent or distort'. Whoever these folk were, they had come with fell purpose. Perhaps they themselves were sincere in their beliefs, but such sincerity was wickedly misplaced.

The gospel which was being distorted was ‘the gospel of Christ’. This phrase is peculiar to Paul and also appears in Rom. 15:19; I Cor. 9:12; II Cor. 2:12; 9:13; 10:4; Phil. 1:27; I Thess. 3:2; while in Rom. 2:16; 16:25 & II Tim. 2:8 he speaks of ‘my gospel’ and II Cor. 4:3; I Thess. 1:5 & II Thess. 2:14 he speaks of ‘our gospel’. The authority that Paul has, then, does not rest in his own intellect or self-appointment. He has brought to the Galatians the Word of Christ. To desert Paul’s gospel is to desert Christ, for it is He who has sent Paul and spoken through him.

1:8 The seriousness of the situation is almost beyond expression. So great is the authority of this Word of Christ, this gospel, that Paul is able to say, ‘But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let him be eternally condemned!’ There is no middle ground in Paul’s mind. And there must be no giving way to personality or the power of appearances. Even if the messenger were someone as inspiring as an angel, he must be received, not on the strength of personality or position, but on the basis of the message he brings. This message must be in accord with the gospel of the grace of Christ or it is not to be heeded. The word *anathema* (here translated ‘eternally condemned’) is a strong one, means to be devoted to destruction or to be cursed.

1:9 This warning was not, though, a new one. That which he has just told them simply repeats a warning he had given earlier, perhaps at the second visit. The fact that this should have been necessary indicates the persistence of opposition to the gospel. The truth of it must be guarded with vigilance (cf. Acts 20:28ff.).

1:10 In the light of the strength of the immediately preceding statements Paul asks, ‘Am I now trying to win the approval of men, or of God? Or am I trying to please men?’ The rhetorical questions probably give us some insight into the sort of accusations that have been brought against Paul by the false teachers. They had tried to vilify him by making him out to be a man-pleaser, which, in the end, is nothing other than being a self-server. If he were as they made him out to be, would he not now be seeking to curry their favour, rather than rail against them?

The last sentence of the verse may be very informative. Lightfoot regards the ‘still’ to be the equivalent of ‘at this stage’, or ‘at this late date’, but it is not impossible that the word carries its full sense of contrast. By using the word ‘still’ Paul may be indicating that he saw himself, at some point, to have been a man-pleaser. If so, this must be a reference to his former manner of life as a Pharisee and a persecutor of the church. His zeal, though outwardly for God, was in reality a selfish work carried out for the eyes of men, and thus to boost Paul’s ego. Though he may have once been a man-pleaser, there is no doubt that this is no longer the case. If it were, he would certainly not be a servant of Christ, a position of suffering and dishonour in the eyes of the world (cf. I Cor. 4:6–13; II Cor. 11:16–33).

(ii) Paul’s Calling: No Human Intervention (Gal. 1:11–24)

1:11 I want you to know, brothers, that the gospel I preached is not something that man made up. **1:12** I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it; rather, I received it by revelation from Jesus Christ. **1:13** For you have heard of my previous way of life in Judaism, how intensely I persecuted the church of God and tried to destroy it. **1:14** I was advancing in Judaism beyond many Jews of my own age and was extremely zealous for the traditions of my fathers. **1:15** But when God, who set me apart from birth and called me by his grace, was pleased

1:16 to reveal his Son in me so that I might preach him among the Gentiles, I did not consult any man, **1:17** nor did I go up to Jerusalem to see those who were apostles before I was, but I went immediately into Arabia and later returned to Damascus. **1:18** Then after three years, I went up to Jerusalem to get acquainted with Peter and stayed with him fifteen days. **1:19** I saw none of the other apostles—only James, the Lord's brother. **1:20** I assure you before God that what I am writing you is no lie. **1:21** Later I went to Syria and Cilicia. **1:22** I was personally unknown to the churches of Judea that are in Christ. **1:23** They only heard the report: 'The man who formerly persecuted us is now preaching the faith he once tried to destroy.' **1:24** And they praised God because of me. (NIV)

1:11–12 Paul sets out the basic proposition of the argument that is to follow. He begins by speaking of the gospel, not his call specifically, for it is only in the context of the gospel itself that the call takes its place. Paul was not called to a place of authority in the church, or to a place of status, or to a 'posting'. He was called to be a preacher of the gospel. Any authority he had as an apostle was related to his gospel. Indeed, if he were to come back to the Galatians preaching another gospel, by his own command he was not to be heard. This gospel, then, is of no human derivation, or subject to human modification. It came not through the agency of man, but through a revelation of *the* man, Jesus Christ. We must allow the word 'revelation' to have its full force. The gospel was not *apprehended* by Paul's intellect, or *attained* by his moral power. Rather it was a *revelation*, a sovereign work of God in unveiling the truth to him.

1:13–14 The power of the revelation can be seen in the change that took place in Paul's manner of life. The opening phrase 'For you have heard' indicates something of the widespread account of Paul's conversion. Those who had been the recipients of his gospel had heard and seen how this gospel had taken effect in his own life. Paul's 'previous way of life in Judaism' was legendary (cf. Gal. 1:23), for all knew 'how intensely [he] persecuted the church of God and tried to destroy it.' The fact that Paul was an active persecutor of the church never left him (I Cor. 15:9; Phil. 3:6; I Tim. 1:13) and that God had mercy on him, not just to save him but to give him the gift of apostleship (I Cor. 7:25; II Cor. 4:1; I Tim. 1:13, 16), was the continual spring of action for his ministry. Whereas once he was a persecutor of the church, now Paul was to know persecution for the sake of the gospel (e.g. I Cor. 4:12; II Cor. 4:9; 12:10; Gal. 5:11; II Tim. 3:11), and this not to destruction but to the increase of his ministry and the greater spread of the Word.

Paul's active persecution of the church was related to his status in Judaism. He says that he 'was advancing in Judaism beyond many Jews of my own age and was extremely zealous for the traditions of my fathers.' In simple terms he was a man of great ambition, who had given himself over to the pursuit of advancement. Out of zeal for the traditions he persecuted the church, which he saw as an heretical sect of Judaism, threatening the sanctity of the traditions. That such traditions should have such power is not to be thought remarkable. Men have always gone to war over matters of principle, and Paul's offence against the church was at core a defence of his own position.

1:15–16a The situation was not a terminal one, however. The NIV's word order, beginning the sentence with 'But when God', preserves the central thought of Paul's argument. Paul did not turn himself around: given his upbringing and mind-set such would be impossible. He was turned around by God, 'who set me apart from birth and called me by his grace'. Only this could account for Paul's dramatic change of life. He

did not make an adjustment to his lifestyle; rather, his whole life was changed and attuned to the will of God. And this took place when God ‘was pleased’ for it to occur. The timing, as much as the event itself, was all a matter of God’s will. Indeed, he had been set apart for his apostolic ministry long before his conversion (cf. Isa. 42:1, 5; Jer. 1:5; Acts 9:15; 13:2; 22:14f.; Rom. 1:1), even before he was begotten (Calvin). All of his pre-Christian life was, in one sense, a training ground for his real calling. His academic rigour, his understanding of the Law, his deep knowledge of the Scriptures, and his devotion to religious observance were all preparatory for his later ministry. He could not have been the great influence he was in the life of the church without them.

What God was pleased to do, says Paul, was ‘to reveal his Son in me’. This is not simply saying that God revealed Christ to Paul, but that a revelation of Christ took place within him. There was, as one theologian has said, ‘an inward Christological explosion’ (Bingham) which turned Paul from a hater of the gospel to a lover of it. This revelation was, however, not simply for Paul’s own salvation. The clause that follows is purposive. The revelation took place ‘so that I might preach him among the Gentiles’, among whom, of course, are the Galatians themselves.

1:16b–17 When this great event took place Paul says, ‘I did not consult any man, nor did I go up to Jerusalem to see those who were apostles before I was, but I went immediately into Arabia and later returned to Damascus.’ There can be no misapprehension—Paul did not derive his gospel from any human source. He did not even seek out the other apostles after his conversion, but rather went into Arabia. There has been considerable speculation about the nature of the visit (‘A veil of thick darkness hangs over St. Paul’s visit to Arabia’, Lightfoot, p. 87), but it is not unlikely that he went into the region on a preaching tour of some sort. In Paul’s day the region known as Arabia (i.e. the dwelling place of Arabs) stretched from Damascus southward to the Sinai peninsula. To retreat to Arabia was not, therefore, a long journey from Damascus, the place of his conversion. While acknowledging the possibility that Paul went into the wilderness to commune with God (as many writers maintain) F. F. Bruce draws attention to II Cor. 11:32f. (Bruce, p. 96). Here the wrath of King Aretas—the king of the Nabateans, whose region covered ‘Arabia’—had been stirred against Paul for some reason, and, given Paul’s later history, this was likely to have been because of his ministry there. Luther says,

What else was he to do but to preach Christ? For, as he says, the Son of God was revealed to him for this purpose, that he might preach Him among the Gentiles. Therefore he travels from Damascus, a Gentile city, directly to Arabia, where there were Gentiles also; and there carries out his ministry with vigour (LW, Vol. 26, p. 74).

1:18 It was only after a period of ‘three years’ that Paul went up to Jerusalem. The object of the visit we are told was ‘to get acquainted with Peter’. Probably Paul had heard of Peter, and *vice versa*, but we have no details of the visit, and speculation is useless. In any event it was only a relatively brief trip, and the point still stands that Paul did not gain his gospel from Peter. He was well into his ministry before their first contact.

1:19 During the visit he saw no other apostles, except for James (cf. I Cor. 15:7; Acts 15:13; 21:18), who was the leader of the church at Jerusalem. Again there is no hint of derivation or dependence. Paul was an apostle before meeting any of the leaders in Jerusalem.

1:20 Paul affirms that his testimony is trustworthy by the most sacred way possible: an oath before God (cf. Rom. 9:1; II Cor. 1:23; 11:31).

1:21 The visit to Syria and Cilicia (at this time one Roman province, Bruce, p. 103) accords with the information of Acts 9:30 and 11:25f. During his time in Tarsus he continued his preaching to the Gentiles until later coming to Antioch with Barnabas.

1:22–24 Though he had already had extensive ministry Paul was indeed the apostle to the Gentiles. None of the churches of Judea (cf. the phrase in I Thess. 2:14) knew him personally, only by reputation. As a result of the reports received, the Judean (Jewish) churches praised God. His point is simple. He did not derive his gospel from any of the 'recognised' sources, but there was no conflict between him and the Judean churches, or between him and the Jerusalem leaders. At the end of the chapter Paul has established his apostolic calling with attestation from God, from Christ, from experience and from the brethren (Bingham, p. 8).

Chapter Two

II. Paul's Apostolic Defence: Galatians 1:6—2:21 (Cont'd)

(iii) The Recognition of His Ministry (Gal. 2:1–10)

2:1 Fourteen years later I went up again to Jerusalem, this time with Barnabas. I took Titus along also. **2:2** I went in response to a revelation and set before them the gospel that I preach among the Gentiles. But I did this privately to those who seemed to be leaders, for fear that I was running or had run my race in vain. **2:3** Yet not even Titus, who was with me, was compelled to be circumcised, even though he was a Greek. **2:4** [This matter arose] because some false brothers had infiltrated our ranks to spy on the freedom we have in Christ Jesus and to make us slaves. **2:5** We did not give in to them for a moment, so that the truth of the gospel might remain with you. **2:6** As for those who seemed to be important—whatever they were makes no difference to me; God does not judge by external appearance—those men added nothing to my message. **2:7** On the contrary, they saw that I had been entrusted with the task of preaching the gospel to the Gentiles, just as Peter had been to the Jews. **2:8** For God, who was at work in the ministry of Peter as an apostle to the Jews, was also at work in my ministry as an apostle to the Gentiles. **2:9** James, Peter and John, those reputed to be pillars, gave me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship when they recognized the grace given to me. They agreed that we should go to the Gentiles, and they to the Jews. **2:10** All they asked was that we should continue to remember the poor, the very thing I was eager to do (NIV).

2:1 Paul has already averred that his gospel did not come from man, and now he sets out his relationship with the leaders in Jerusalem. We can imagine that the Judaisers were aiming to drive a wedge between Paul and the other apostles—at least to imply such in the ears of their hearers—so that they could claim their supposed authority from Jerusalem as being superior to Paul's 'maverick' apostleship. It is probably best to reckon the 'fourteen years' as being subsequent to the 'three years' of 1:18, though other interpretations have been offered. Whether the years are to be reckoned from his conversion or from his first visit to Jerusalem, the point stands that a long time elapsed between them his first visit and the one mentioned here.

From Paul's information here, and from the nature and location of the council in Acts 15, it is clear that Jerusalem was the centre of the activities of the Twelve. Paul's point throughout the latter part of Gal. 1 has been that his gospel was given directly from Christ. By emphasising the number of years between his visits to Jerusalem, Paul simply underlines its 'given' nature. That he did not go up to Jerusalem for such a long period is equivalent to saying that he did not learn the gospel from men. His apostolic authority had its own basis. The majority of commentators equate the visit Paul talks about here with that recorded in Acts 15. Though the Acts 15 account does not record all the details that Paul has given here (e.g. the presence of Titus), there seems to be too many similarities for there to be two distinct visits in mind. Whatever may be the case with the visit(s) to Jerusalem and their synchronisation with the Acts accounts, the end result is that Paul's ministry was not only not opposed by the twelve, but fully approved by them. This is Paul's main point, and we should not lose it in speculations about chronology.

On the occasion of this visit he went with Barnabas and Titus, though the language suggests that Paul was the leader of the group. Barnabas and Titus were two leading figures among the Gentile churches. Barnabas was in fact a Jew—a Levite from Cyprus—whose Jewish name was Joseph (Acts 4:36). He lived up to his adopted name ('son of encouragement') with great effect. It was he, according to Acts 9:27, who took Paul to meet the apostles at Jerusalem on his first visit. (*Note:* What visit is in mind in Acts 9:26ff. and how does this fit with Paul's account?). When the apostles at Jerusalem heard of the spread of the Word to Antioch, they sent Barnabas to assess the situation. In turn he sought out Paul (then in Tarsus) in order to bring him back to the Antiochene church so that he might teach it first hand (Acts 11:22ff.). He and Paul were then entrusted with the gifts for the Judean churches (Act 11:29ff.), and in Acts 13:1ff. it was he and Paul who were set apart for the ministry of the Word that later became known as Paul's first missionary journey. He travelled with Paul, having significant ministry, and returned to Antioch full of the great things God had done amongst the Gentiles. When, in Acts 15:2, certain Judaisers came to Antioch and caused great strife, he and Paul were set aside to visit Jerusalem to consider the matter with the apostles there. Later, on the point of whether to take John-Mark on their second journey, he and Paul had a division, from which time Barnabas fades from the scene in Acts (understandable, as Acts follows first the ministry of Peter and then that of Paul).

Of Titus we know less. He was a Gentile (so Gal. 2:3) who had been converted through Paul (Titus 1:4). He was a faithful minister of the Word (so II Cor. 2:13; 8:23 and the Epistle which bears his name) so that Paul was able to entrust him with some difficult tasks among the Corinthian congregation, and with the setting in order to things in Crete. It is quite possible that Titus was taken to Jerusalem because of his unique situation. He obviously had significant ministry, yet he was still uncircumcised. He was possibly the one around whom the storm raged at Antioch, and to take him up to Jerusalem was a sort of 'test case' for the whole principle of Gentile liberty from Jewish law.

2:2 Even when Paul went up to Jerusalem it was not by the initiation of men. Rather, he went up by 'a revelation'. In the Greek the use of the noun without the article may indicate 'revelation' generally rather than a specific revelation, but though the former cannot be ruled out Paul is probably thinking of a specific revelation given by God to make the trip to Jerusalem. This may not be in contradiction to saying that he and Barnabas were sent up by a church decision. Lightfoot (p. 125) gives a number of examples where the same event is described from two viewpoints—the one being the external circumstances, the other being subjective revelation. Thus in Acts 9:29–30 (cf. 22:17ff.; Acts 13:2–4; 15:28) the subjective confirmation of the Holy Spirit accords with external events.

The *NASB* has 'submitted' where the *NIV* has 'set before them'. The meaning of the word in its particular form here carries with it the idea of consultation. He did not submit the gospel to them for approval or otherwise, but Paul set before them the gospel that he preaches (present tense). That which he has brought to the Galatians, and preaches throughout his ministry, is the same as that which was brought to the Jerusalem council.

The discussions were private ones, so that the church should not be troubled by unnecessary debate. His regard for the leaders is respectful: 'There is nothing in the present passage or the use of words to indicate that they are used with irony' (Burton, p. 71).

Why did Paul bring his gospel before them? He was afraid that he ‘was running or had run my race in vain.’ He has already made clear the fact that he did not have any doubt about the veracity of the gospel that had been given to him. He was not afraid of the Jerusalem church overthrowing the truth of the gospel, but rather that if any confusion were not cleared up it would, in terms of practical working, mean that much of his work would be undone and that his further ministry would be hindered by a severe Jewish Christian/Gentile Christian division. ‘His commission was not derived from Jerusalem, but it could not be executed effectively except in fellowship with Jerusalem’ (Bruce, p. 111). Paul gave great respect to the Jerusalem church, and went to great lengths to prevent any schism—hence the manner of his ministry as described in I Cor. 9:19ff.; 10:32—11:1; 16:1–3; II Cor. 8 & 9 in the matter of the collection (Rom. 9:1–5; 15:25–32; etc.).

2:3 Verses 3–5 are a digression, and vv. 4–5 a parenthesis within it (Bruce, p. 116), the construction of which is far from clear. The difficulty of the construction reflects the difficulty of the situation. Paul did not wish to give fuel to the false teachers by implying a schism between himself and the other leaders on the matter of Titus’s circumcision, yet he needed to emphasise the point that, when it came to a specific debate, Paul stood firm on the matter of Christian liberty.

Carrying over the thought of v. 2 the ‘yet not even’ stands in antithesis to the fear that division might have rendered his ministry fruitless. In fact there was no division, not even with Titus there. ‘The non-circumcision of Titus, (who was there on the ground at the time, and to whom the demand would first of all apply) was in reality a decision for the principle’ (Burton, p. 75). The mention of Titus’s situation here stands in contrast to Paul’s approach to the problem of Timothy’s non-circumcision in Acts 16:3. There are two different situations in view, and Paul’s manner of ministry—‘to the Jews I became as a Jew, to those without law as without law’ (I Cor. 9:20)—is not the same as compromising the matter of liberty or denying the gospel of grace. In reality it is the greatest expression of freedom that Paul could pursue his ministry in such a way, for he was not bound by one situation or another. Timothy was circumcised so that the gospel could be proclaimed with minimal hindrance in a strongly Jewish area. Titus had to remain uncircumcised so that it could go unhindered to the Gentiles. In reality neither circumcision nor uncircumcision matters (Gal. 5:6), but when—as in the Galatian case—circumcision becomes a test of obedience (and thus justification) it becomes a work of the flesh that stands in hostile opposition to the work of grace.

2:4–5 The problem here is how best to interpret the relationship of these verses to the preceding ones. We do not know who the false brethren were, or whether Paul is referring to an infiltration that had taken place before the meeting at Jerusalem, or which took place at that very meeting. From Acts 15:1–2 it is clear that certain false teachers had infiltrated the Antiochene church. Paul could mean, then, that it was because of this destructive influence that Titus became a test case in Jerusalem. Alternatively, as v. 5 seems to indicate, the infiltrators took their case to Jerusalem itself, and there, in the debate, Paul and the others did not yield to them ‘even for an hour’.

Whatever the case, there is a clear relationship between the false teaching addressed on that occasion, and that which is disturbing the Galatian churches now. The false teachers, says Paul, had come ‘to spy on the freedom we have in Christ Jesus and to make us slaves.’ This is strong language. The emphasis is on the underhanded nature of the action, and on the wicked aim behind it. Throughout the Letter Paul makes

a sharp contrast between slavery and sonship. To heed the words of the false teachers would be the same as turning from the Father, 'from Him who called you by the grace of Christ', and returning to the status of slaves.

The liberty that Paul and the brethren had was 'in Christ'. This is the second use of the phrase in this Epistle. Elsewhere it occurs in 1:22 and 3:28. A detailed analysis of Paul's use of the term is not possible here, but Appendix One shows other occasions in the Pauline corpus where the phrase is used, including those with a locative sense. The frequency of the phrase, and the theological and pastoral weight attached to its use, are of immense significance for an understanding of Paul's fundamental structures. Everything the believer has is 'in Christ', including the liberty of grace. To reject the gospel is thus to reject one's union with Christ. Little wonder, then, that in the matter of Titus's circumcision Paul and the others were unyielding. The reason, however, was not selfish stubbornness, but the protection and liberty of Paul's Gentile converts: 'so that the truth of the gospel might remain with you.' To allow the Judaisers to have their way would have destroyed not just the Gentile churches, but the Church itself, in that the followers of Jesus would have been reduced to a Judaistic sect.

Notice the deceit of the matter. The false teachers were not denying grace, but adding to it. Says Luther, 'The truth of the Gospel is this, that our righteousness comes by faith alone, without works of the Law. The falsification or corruption of the Gospel is this, that we are justified by faith, but not without works of the Law' (LW, Vol. 26, p. 88).

2:6 Paul now returns to his main argument. The leaders of the Jerusalem church were in no way responsible for his gospel. We should not understand Paul's words as being sarcastic. The past tense—'what they were'—is interesting. It probably indicates that those in Jerusalem were being put on a pedestal by the false teachers because of their personal relationship with Jesus. James was his brother, and Peter and John two of his three closest disciples. The inference is that the false brethren had incited a division of opinion in the rank and file of the church by insisting that the Jerusalem apostles were in some way superior to Paul. What they were makes no difference. It is what they are now, as leaders of the church, that is important. Indeed, says Paul, 'God does not judge by external appearance', i.e. their so-called privileged position is of no interest to God. Rather, 'those men added nothing to my message'. As the argument unfolds it becomes clear that they simply confirmed Paul's ministry before God. They added nothing to it.

2:7 'On the contrary', says Paul, 'they saw that I had been entrusted with the task of preaching the gospel to the Gentiles, just as Peter had been to the Jews.' Instead of restricting Paul's ministry, his apostleship was confirmed by the Jerusalem leaders, though it was not conferred by them. They saw that Paul had *already* been entrusted with the gospel to the Gentiles, and thus confirmed God's call. Peter's ministry to the Jews is clearly seen in Acts 2:14ff.; 3:12ff.; 9:32ff. He did evangelise the Gentiles in Acts 10:1–11:18, but this was not his normal arena of ministry. Paul's was to be the distinctive ministry to the Gentiles (Acts 22:21). On 'being entrusted' with the gospel see I Cor. 9:17; II Cor. 5:19; I Thess. 2:4; I Tim. 1:11; Titus 1:3.

2:8 Both the ministries of Peter and Paul had Divine authority and energisation. Says Calvin, 'the sum of it is that it was no idle bargain that the apostles had arranged among themselves, but a decision which God had sealed'. (Calvin, Vol. 11, p. 32). For God,

who was at work in the ministry of Peter as an apostle to the Jews, was also at work in my ministry as an apostle to the Gentiles.

2:9 In conclusion to the debate, ‘James, Peter and John, those reputed to be pillars, gave me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship when they recognized the grace given to me. They agreed that we should go to the Gentiles, and they to the Jews.’ Paul has, by reciting the historical events, taken the ground away from the false teachers. Their biased interpretation does not hold water. Rather, the facts confirm Paul’s apostleship. When Paul talks of the ‘grace given’ to him, he does not simply mean grace in its theological understanding, but his specific ministry to the Gentiles (so Rom. 1:5; 12:3; 15:15; I Cor. 3:10; Eph. 3:7f.; Phil. 1:7). The grace given him is not simply the grace of forgiveness, but the grace of ministry as an apostle. This thought is in keeping with that of Rom. 12:3, 6 and Eph. 4:7 where the various gifts within the body, and ministry gifts to the body, are seen to be the concrete manifestations of grace. All is of Him, all is of grace, all is of His enabling power.

2:10 The Jerusalem leaders and Paul did have a common concern for the poor, as the word ‘continue’ emphasises. The ‘poor’ are probably more specifically the poor of the Jerusalem congregation, for which collections were made from the Gentile churches (cf. Rom. 15:26; Gal. 2:10; Acts 11:27–30; 24:17; Rom. 15:25ff.; II Cor. 8–9). Paul tells the Corinthians to ‘Do what I told the Galatian churches to do’, but we have no other record of his instructions than that found in I Cor. 16:1.

(iv) His Confrontation with Peter and Barnabas (Gal. 2:11–21)

2:11 When Peter came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he was clearly in the wrong. **2:12** Before certain men came from James, he used to eat with the Gentiles. But when they arrived, he began to draw back and separate himself from the Gentiles because he was afraid of those who belonged to the circumcision group. **2:13** The other Jews joined him in his hypocrisy, so that by their hypocrisy even Barnabas was led astray. **2:14** When I saw that they were not acting in line with the truth of the gospel, I said to Peter in front of them all, ‘You are a Jew, yet you live like a Gentile and not like a Jew. How is it, then, that you force Gentiles to follow Jewish customs? **2:15** ‘We who are Jews by birth and not “Gentile sinners” **2:16** know that a man is not justified by observing the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ. So we, too, have put our faith in Christ Jesus that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by observing the law, because by observing the law no one will be justified. **2:17** ‘If, while we seek to be justified in Christ, it becomes evident that we ourselves are sinners, does that mean that Christ promotes sin? Absolutely not! **2:18** If I rebuild what I destroyed, I prove that I am a lawbreaker. **2:19** For through the law I died to the law so that I might live for God. **2:20** I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. **2:21** I do not set aside the grace of God, for if righteousness could be gained through the law, Christ died for nothing!’

2:11 Paul has set out the foundation for his apostolic defence in the preceding verses. Now he builds on that foundation by citing the case of his confrontation with Peter. Of Peter’s visit to Antioch we have no further details, but it would seem that this confrontation took place after the Jerusalem visit spoken of in the previous paragraph and while Paul and Barnabas were still engaged in ministry in Antioch (Acts 15:30–35). While this seems to be the most natural reading of the text, some have sought to place

the timing of the confrontation before the council spoken of in the preceding paragraph to lessen the great inconsistency of Peter's action. However, such a ploy is not needed, for the power of Paul's point lies in the subtlety of the deception involved. Peter may well have agreed to the matter of Gentile freedom in Jerusalem, but on the ground, faced with a tense situation, he erred on the matter. So powerful is the pull of the Flesh, the pull of justification by works, that even he could be led away from the true basis of righteousness.

When Paul uses the phrase 'I opposed him to his face' he means that the confrontation was a public one. The *NIV*'s 'because he was clearly in the wrong' gives the sense of the Greek, which runs literally 'he was one who was condemned', i.e. by the act itself (Lightfoot, p. 111).

2:12 What was the issue in which Peter was so much in error? Paul says 'Before certain men came from James, he used to eat with the Gentiles. But when they arrived, he began to draw back and separate himself from the Gentiles because he was afraid of those who belonged to the circumcision group.' The tenses used indicate that the process of withdrawing was a gradual one. The end point of the process, however, was total separation from the Gentiles, and more importantly, the concomitant denial of the Gospel.

The 'certain men' are not defined, but there is no doubt that they came from Jerusalem, i.e. 'from James'. What does this mean? We can gather from 2:7ff. (cf. Acts 15:12ff. and 21:17–26) that there was no fundamental conflict between James and Paul. Indeed there was a mutual recognition of the grace of God being expressed in different arenas of ministry. However, as is evident from Acts 21:20ff. (cf. Acts 15:5) there was a large body of Jewish believers among the Jerusalem congregation who were 'zealous for the Law', and about whom James warned Paul in Acts 21. It is quite possible, therefore, that James actually had sent 'certain men' from Jerusalem for some task or other, but though they came in James' name they did not act with his authority, at least in this matter. Alternatively it could mean that the men purported to be from James when in fact, though they had come from Jerusalem, they had not been sent from James *per se*. Certainly the body of the Jerusalem church was large enough to have people acting on its so-called authority who were not official representatives at all (see Acts 15:24 cf. 21:20).

The Jewish identity as God's chosen people ('a holy nation') was preserved through dietary laws, traditions and cultural values. Eating with the Gentiles was against orthodox Jewish practice. Peter had already been told that the old traditions were no longer in force and that all food was clean (Mark 7:14–19; cf. Acts 10: 9–16; 10:19–20; 10:27–29; 10:44–48; 11:15–18 thus to Gal. 2:9). He had already testified about the grace of God coming to the Gentiles without partiality (Act 11:15ff.) and had seen from the reaction of the church meeting in Acts 11 and the result of the council of Acts 15 that the Gentiles were included in the New Covenant. All of this makes his error quite remarkable. It also gives some insight into the amount of pressure that must have been exerted by the 'certain men' in order for Peter to be led astray, and bears witness to the power inherent in wishing to have some other basis of justification than grace. In his action, despite all that he had seen and heard on other occasions, Peter still sought to be justified in the eyes of men.

The importance of the error lay in what Peter was implicitly saying. In effect he had said 'righteousness really is a matter of rules and regulations'. The Gentiles knew that Jews should not eat with them (Acts 10:28), so that the fact that Peter had been eating with them was powerful testimony to the New Covenant. The withdrawing from

them, then, must have had equal negative force. This is made even clearer by the implication of 2:14b, where the Gentiles saw that Peter's action was a matter of them being forced to follow Jewish customs. The message being given was, 'If I eat I am condemned, if I abstain I am righteous.' In our own day one must ask the question as to how much our Church sub-culture falls into the same sort of category.

2:13 But the error was not restricted to Peter. Paul says that 'The other Jews joined him in his hypocrisy, so that by their hypocrisy even Barnabas was led astray.' The 'even' is emphatic. There was no support at all for the gospel of grace. Paul was left alone (cf. II Tim. 4:16f.) to speak powerfully and to preserve the liberty of the gospel. The word 'hypocrisy' comes from the language of the Greek theatre. The actors would typically wear large masks, many of which contained mechanical devices to aid in the projection of the voice. Thus the hypocrite is someone who seems to be something that he is not. He is an actor going through a part.

2:14 In the light of what was at stake the public confrontation had to follow. The matter could not be overlooked without jettisoning the gospel itself. Hence Paul's words to Peter were 'in front of them all'. They (Peter, Barnabas and the others) were not 'acting in line with the truth of the gospel' (*lit.* 'walking straightly', i.e. in conformity with the gospel of grace). Paul confronted them by going to the heart of the matter.

Paul's argument is as follows: 'You are a Jew, yet you live like a Gentile and not like a Jew. How is it, then, that you force Gentiles to follow Jewish customs?', i.e. if you as a Jew are free to live like a Gentile (as shown by the fact that you ate their food with them), why do you now, by withdrawing from them to eat with the Jews, insist that the Gentiles must observe the traditions of the elders? In effect you are saying that they must desist being Gentiles, and begin to be Jews. Does not such an action seem incongruous—especially in the light of your own experience of justification?'

2:15–16 Paul next turns his attention to Peter and the other Jews to cause them to evaluate their own experience of justification. He says, in effect, 'even we Jews know that we are justified by faith, not by works. If works could justify, then we would have no need for faith. If this is so for the Jews, how much more is this not the case for 'Gentile sinners'. In the parlance of the day 'Gentile' and 'sinner' were virtually synonyms. Paul means that the inheritance of being a Jew, immense though it was (cf. Rom. 9:1ff.; Phil. 3:4f.) could not justify a person before God. Even the Jews (i.e. the 'righteous' ones) found that they needed to be justified by faith. How much more, then, should not this be the case for the Gentiles also?

The verb 'to justify' (*dikaioō*) is crucial in Paul's theology. It is a forensic term meaning 'to be reckoned as righteous', or 'to be acquitted'. It thus means to have a righteous standing before God. The man who is 'justified' is no longer 'guilty' before God. He is no longer the offender, the sinner, the criminal condemned to death. He is reckoned righteous before the Judge and thus has no condemnation attaching to him. He is thus 'set free'.

This justification, however, is only known through faith. Note Paul's last statement well: 'because by observing the law no one (*lit.* no flesh) will be justified'. The translation 'no flesh' should be preserved, for it allows the possibility of the Pauline play on words. No flesh will be justified by the Flesh. Flesh and Spirit stand in opposition (5:16ff.). The Flesh will only put flesh to death, it can never justify it. The principle is an abiding one—no flesh can *ever* be justified by works of the law. The

Greek does not have the definite article. Paul does not say 'by works of the Law' (meaning the Jewish Law in particular), but works of law (i.e. any code of conduct or behaviour).

Peter's error is a specific example of a general principle. It is this principle of justification by faith not works that is the heart and soul of the Gospel. Peter and the others had failed to see this.

This is the first time in Galatians that Paul refers to 'works of the law'. Paul's use of the word 'law' is important. Indeed, his whole understanding of justification and sanctification really only take shape as one understands his use of this word. One of the complications of his usage, however, is that he had no word group at his disposal covered by the English words 'legalism', 'legalistic', etc. Thus Paul must use the same word (*nomos*, i.e. law) to do service for both a positive and negative meaning. When he here speaks of 'works of the law' he means all legalistic endeavours. 'These words . . . are to be taken in the in the broadest possible sense and are very emphatic' (Luther, LW, Vol. 26, p. 122). The same connotation is clearly seen in Gal. 2:21; 3:2; 3:5; 3:11; 3:12–13; 3:18; 5:4. Elsewhere Paul can talk of the law as that given on Mount Sinai (3:17, 19, 21, 23, 24, 25, 4:4, 5; 5:14) or as a shorthand way of speaking about the OT Scriptures in whole or in part (e.g. Rom. 3:21). He even uses the word to describe a general principle or norm, a self-evident truth (e.g. Rom. 3:27; 7:2f.; 8:1). In itself the law as given by God is good, holy and spiritual (Rom. 7:12, 14, 22; 8:7). Israel's possession of the codified law was a great privilege (Rom. 9:4; cf. Deut. 4:6–8) and, ultimately, the whole content of the law—here specifically understood as the Ten Commandments—is love (Rom. 13:8–10; Gal. 5:14; cf. Matt. 22:36–40). The law is not evil, it is just that it cannot contribute anything to justification.

Paul will yet have much to say about the relationship of law to grace, but here the purely negative 'law = works righteousness' equation is in view. That no one could be justified by such works is a common thread in the OT, and Paul alludes to Ps. 143:2 (cf. I Kings 8:46; Job. 4:17; 9:2; 25:4; Ps. 130:3; Eccl. 7:20; Rom. 3:9–20). Twice in this verse Paul emphasises that justification is a matter of faith. This stands in contrast to the false (indeed evil) justification of works. Faith is not a work. Justification comes through faith, not because of faith. Faith is a receiving instrument, not a work of a more 'spiritual' sort. In the end faith itself is a gift (Eph. 2:8; cf. Matt. 16:17; John 1:12–13; 6:37, 44, 65; Acts 14:27; 16:14; Rom. 10:17; Phil. 1:29; James 1:16–18).

2:17–18 These verses seem to take up a point of criticism levelled at Paul by the false teachers. Paul's teaching was often the subject of vicious attacks, his opponents often distorting what he had said rather than simply denying his teaching outright. There are a couple of possibilities in the case at hand. It may be that the Judaisers saw the Gentile Christians not conforming to the law (i.e. as set out in the OT, particularly regarding circumcision, but not exclusively so) and therefore pronounced them to be sinning, with the consequent conclusion that Christ was therefore a minister of sin. Alternatively (and probably better given the use of the 'we') they could have been saying that the Jews who had believed, in eating with the Gentiles, were thus becoming sinners in transgression of the Law. In either case Paul's response is 'may it never be', i.e. misunderstand both Christ's grace, and true nature of the law and its work.

Verse 18 is connected to the rest in the Greek with a logical 'for' (*gar*). The building up thus relates to the idea of justification by works. Paul says (hypothetically in the first person) that if he were to rebuild the law as a means of justification he would actually be a law-breaker, i.e. the real law-breakers are those who try to establish the law as a means of justification. His comment is directed at Peter and those who have fallen into the same error. In eating with the Gentiles they had actually broken down the walls separating the Jews and Gentiles, but by retreating from this position of liberty they were building them up again. They were transgressing the liberty of grace and thus

becoming sinners. Says Luther, ‘the establishment of the Law is the abrogation and overthrow of the Gospel’ (LW, Vol. 26, p. 115).

2:19 Verse 19 is connected with the preceding one with a logical ‘for’, i.e. what Paul says in this verse explains the preceding action. How is the person who rebuilds the old divisions a transgressor? ‘*For* through the law I died to the Law.’ Here we have a key insight into Paul’s understanding of the use of the law. The false teachers were saying, ‘If you want to live to God you must observe the law.’ Paul here says, ‘You cannot live to God unless die to the law,’ i.e. unless you die to the ‘law-way’ as a means of justification. If anyone had a right to put confidence in his observance of the law it was Paul (Phil. 3:3–7), but he died to this as the way to life, for in the revelation on the Damascus road he saw that it was Christ, not his works of the law, who justified him.

In II Cor. 3:9 the giving of the law is referred to as the ‘ministration of condemnation’ (cf. Rom. 8:1f.). In Gal. 3:10 Paul says, ‘For as many as are of works of the law are under a curse’ (cf. 3:13), while in II Cor. 3:7 the giving of the law is called the ‘ministration of death’. This does not mean that the law itself is evil (cf. Rom. 7:12, 14), but in being used by sinful flesh it leads to condemnation and death. In so doing the law deepens the knowledge of sin, invokes the fear of death and terrifies the conscience because of the wrath of God. ‘The proper use of the Law is to make guilty those who are smug and at peace so that they may see they are in danger of sin, wrath and death, and may be terrified and despairing, blanching and quaking at the rustling of a leaf’ (Luther, LW, Vol. 26, p. 148). Says Augustine, ‘The Law was given for this purpose: to make you being great, little: to show you that you do not have in yourself the strength to attain to righteousness and for you thus hopeless, unworthy and destitute to flee to grace.’

In pronouncing curse and condemnation, the law thus firmly ‘shuts all men up in disobedience’ (Rom. 11:32). The law was not given to bring life, but to bring death. One cannot receive grace unless one recognises that one stands in need of grace. Grace, by nature of the case, must come to sinners, not righteous people. The truth is that the only way to live to God is to die to the law as a principle of justification.

2:20 Calvin (Vol. 11, p. 42) suggests the following punctuation for verses 19–20: Not ‘I through the law died to the law that I might live to God . . .’, but ‘I through the law died to the law. That I might live to God I have been crucified with Christ.’ Whatever the merits or otherwise of the grammatical point, such a translation powerfully emphasises Paul’s co-crucifixion with Christ. This is the first reference in Galatians to the Pauline doctrine of co-crucifixion. It also figures in 5:24 and 6:14 (cf. Rom. 6:2; 6:6–9; Col. 2:20; 3:1–4; 3:9; II Cor. 5:14). The places in which Paul uses the concept, more than its frequency, are important. The doctrine of co-crucifixion links his doctrine of justification by grace through faith to his pastoral advice. Paul died with Christ on the cross—not in time, but in accounting (Bingham, p. 16). In a forensic act the ‘old man’, the first Adam, was put to death. Now, in like manner, he lives by the power of the second Adam, Jesus Christ, who dwells in him. It is a matter of faith, not works. Life in the flesh (in the present body under the conditions of this current evil age) is by faith in the all-sufficiency of Christ’s death and current reign. Our life is now ‘in Christ’, not ‘in Adam’, but this is known only by faith. If we were to judge ourselves according the flesh we would not consider ourselves to be new creations in Christ at all, but our estimation of ourselves is not what matters. God’s estimate of us in Christ is the only

relevant thing in the matter of justification (cf. Eph. 2:6; 2:19; Phil. 3:20; Col. 3:1–4; etc.).

The One who lives in Paul 'gave himself for me' (see also Rom. 4:25; 8:32; Eph. 5:25). Christ's action in giving Himself for Paul was totally unconditioned by Paul's righteousness. Indeed, the opposite is the case for Christ gave Himself for Paul and all sinners while we were 'ungodly' 'sinners' and 'enemies' (Rom. 5:1–10). The free giving of Christ for sinners is the motive for true obedience. Faith apprehends His self-giving as being 'for me'. It is not simply assent that He died on the cross, or even that He rose from the tomb. Assent to the facts of the gospel story becomes faith when we take to heart that it was all done 'for me'. This is our greatest comfort in all afflictions, accusations and temptations.

2:21 In contrast to the false teachers Paul says, 'I do not set aside the grace of God, for if righteousness could be gained through the law, Christ died for nothing!' By implication wherever men seek to be justified by works of the law the grace of God is nullified, and Christ's death is emptied of its meaning. Even the Galatians should have to recognise that the death of Christ could not have been a vain work of God. The very fact that Christ died, in itself, is testimony to the bankruptcy of justification by works of the law. The false teachers' so-called gospel makes the death of Christ an empty tragedy.

Chapter Three

III. The Substance of Paul's Doctrine of Justification: Galatians 3:1—5:12 (Cont'd)

(i) *Personal Testimony of the Galatians: Beginning by the Spirit (Gal. 3:1–5)*

3:1 You foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you? Before your very eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed as crucified. **3:2** I would like to learn just one thing from you: Did you receive the Spirit by observing the law, or by believing what you heard? **3:3** Are you so foolish? After beginning with the Spirit, are you now trying to attain your goal by human effort? **3:4** Have you suffered so much for nothing—if it really was for nothing? **3:5** Does God give you his Spirit and work miracles among you because you observe the law, or because you believe what you heard?

3:1 Having established the validity of his own ministry, and thus the truth of his gospel, Paul now proceeds to teach the Galatians all over again the doctrine of justification by grace alone, through faith. He begins by reminding them of their own experience of believing the gospel. In contrast to the purity of their first belief he now calls them 'foolish' and 'bewitched'. The foolishness is not a matter of intellect but of 'slowness of heart' (cf. Luke 24:25 where the same adjective is thus qualified), i.e. a lapse into error through thoughtlessness or lack of vigilance. The latter word relates to the curse that could be produced through 'the evil eye' (Lightfoot), but is here used metaphorically. Bruce (p. 148) suggests the translation 'who has hypnotised you?'

What was the nature of the bewitching? It was not a mystical or supernatural curse, but had to do with the innate attraction of 'law-way' rather than 'grace-way', the strength of which has already been noted in Peter's and Barnabas's defection. Nonetheless Paul is patient with his flock. While being irresponsible in the hearing, the greater blame lies with the false teaching of the interlopers. 'It is true of course that law has a dread fascination, and also appeals to the ego of man—he can do something! Nevertheless the arguments that they have heard *have been couched fascinatingly*' (Bingham, p. 18).

In contrast to the current situation the initial preaching of the gospel to the Galatians was so clear that it was as though they had seen Jesus Christ crucified before them. Such was the power of Paul's ministry that 'the actual sight of Christ's death could not have affected them more than his preaching' (Calvin, p. 47). The preaching was so powerful that Christ crucified was like a public notice placarded before them (Lightfoot). This 'public notice' told of the forgiveness of sins by grace, and an end to every manner of works righteousness. Here 'crucified' is in the perfect tense, emphasising an act completed in the past but the effects of which go on into the present.

3:2 In view of the preaching as it came to them Paul asks the Galatians to consider the way in which they received the Spirit. He emphasises the word 'only' (*monon*), meaning that if

they acknowledged this point Paul's argument would be carried, i.e. if they were to realistically analyse their own beginnings in the gospel, Paul's case would be immediately substantiated.

How did they receive the Holy Spirit? It was not by obedience to a set of rules and regulations. Indeed, the Galatians, as Gentiles, had not been 'under the law' in the sense that the false teachers were now demanding, yet they had received the Spirit. As they believed so they received. The summary and argument of Acts is, 'We are justified solely by faith in Christ, without works; and the Holy Spirit is granted solely by hearing the message of the Gospel with faith, not by the message of the Law or by works of the Law' (Luther, p. 208). In Acts this applies to Jews and Gentiles alike. For both groups the reception of the Spirit was totally a matter of faith. The Galatians had believed the message (cf. Rom. 10:14) which the Holy Spirit had preached to them (cf. I Pet. 2:12) and thus received the gift of the Spirit (cf. Acts 10:44). Often in the NT the possession of the Holy Spirit is set down as the mark of a believer (Rom. 8:9, 23; Eph. 1:13; II Cor. 1:22; 5:5; John. 14:17), for it is He who causes those in Christ to cry 'Jesus is Lord' (I Cor. 12:3) and 'Abba, Father' (Rom. 8:15; cf. Gal. 4:6).

3:3 Again Paul expresses his astonishment at the foolishness of the Galatians. They had 'begun by the Spirit'. Here (as in Gal. 5:17) the Spirit is set against the Flesh. Thus the term 'Spirit' is a shorthand way of speaking about the whole principle of grace. The term 'ending in the flesh' which allows for Paul's play on words is better than the *NIV*'s 'attain you goal by human effort', and may be patient of a middle translation: 'are you now finishing yourselves off by the flesh'. Note that the term 'flesh' does not refer to bodily passions such as lust, greed, gluttony or other such sensual things. Rather, the works of the flesh are those very things which mask themselves as righteous obedience.

3:4 As to the sufferings mentioned here, we have no details. The general picture of the founding of the Galatian churches can be seen in Acts 13–14, and the impression is that there was no lack of turmoil during the first missionary journey! In other places the suffering of the new believers is also mentioned (e.g. I Thess. 2:14; II Thess. 1:4f.; Heb. 10:32ff.). Paul's question is whether such sufferings were 'in vain', i.e. for no purpose, or because of an empty belief. He is asking them, 'have you suffered needlessly?' The added 'if it really was for nothing' indicates that Paul still has hope in his estimate of the Galatians' situation.

3:5 Paul comes at his point from another angle. Note the present tenses here: God (the Father) *goes on* supplying the Spirit, (cf. Phil. 1:19; and the same word used in II Cor. 9:10; Col. 2:19; Eph. 4:16) and He *goes on* working miracles. Neither of these things came initially, or kept coming in the present, by works of the law. Both are related to hearing with faith (*lit.* 'the hearing of faith'; cf. Rom. 10:17). The signs and wonders which accompanied Paul's ministry, and which continued in the congregation (cf. I Cor. 12:27ff.) were gifts. The Galatians were were no more deserving of them than any other group of people. They did not earn such gracious manifestations, nor did they in fact seek them. Nor—and here we make a point of particular importance in our current day—did they come by certain formulæ. Both the Spirit and the works of power came 'faith-way', not 'works-way'.

This section of Paul's argument thus concludes. He has asked a series of questions to make the Galatians reflect on their own experience of the Gospel. The answer to all of the questions comes to the same end: justification has come by grace through faith, without any reference to works. He now moves on to other evidence.

(ii) Abraham Justified by Faith (Gal. 3:6–9)

3:6 Consider Abraham: ‘He believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness.’ **3:7** Understand, then, that those who believe are children of Abraham. **3:8** The Scripture foresaw that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, and announced the gospel in advance to Abraham: ‘All nations will be blessed through you.’ **3:9** So those who have faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith.

3:6 Paul now turns from the Galatians’ own experience to that of Abraham. Abraham forms a crucial part of Paul’s argument for two reasons. Abraham was the father of the Jewish nation—and what was so for him was so for his descendants. This, indeed, had been perceived by the false teachers. They were making good mileage out of Abraham’s obedience, to circumcision in particular. Thus if Paul could prove his case in the example of Abraham he would have both established his Gospel and refuted the false one. The use of Abraham’s example in Rom. 4 and James 2:23 indicates something of the centrality of Gen. 15:6 in the first century churches’ interpretation, not just of the meaning of faith, but of the relationship of the new Gentile churches to Judaism.

F. F. Bruce (p. 154f.) summarises the issue this way:

The agitators may well have answered that they [i.e. the Gentile believers] were justified by faith while they were uncircumcised, as Abraham was; that they proposed to accept circumcision after being justified by faith, as Abraham did; and that for them, as for Abraham, circumcision would be a seal of the justification by faith which they had received in their uncircumcised state. The Galatian Christians had apparently been told by the agitators how necessary it was for them to be true sons of Abraham, and therefore to be circumcised, as Abraham was.

While Paul does not go into as much detail here as in Rom. 4 (probably because, as Luther suggests, he would have spent a long time on the passage with the Galatians face to face) the argument is simple. Abraham was reckoned as righteous through his belief, not through his obedience. His righteous standing came about simply through his faith in God. The English words ‘believe’, ‘trust’, ‘have faith’ are all translations of the one word group in Greek, (vb. *pisteuo* n. *pistis*) Abraham only had the bare word of God to trust, not his own works. He was not chosen because he was more righteous than any other (cf. Josh. 24:1ff.), nor was he accounted righteous because of his law keeping (cf. Rom. 4:10f.). He was accounted righteous through his trust in God to fulfil His promises.

3:7 Paul moves from his initial point to its conclusion: if Abraham was justified by faith then all those who believe are children of Abraham. The principle is ‘like father, like son’. This accords with Jesus’ argument in John. 8:31–47, where He says that the children of Abraham should do the deeds of Abraham, i.e. believe in Him. In contrast to this, those who should have been sons of father Abraham were showing by their deeds that they were of a different father, the devil. The term ‘sons of Abraham’ was probably one the false teachers were using. Their argument may have run along these lines: ‘We do not doubt that the promise to Abraham was that the nations (i.e. the Gentiles) would be blessed in him. This is now the era of fulfilment in which the Gentiles are included in Abraham’s family. Now that they are sons of Abraham they must conform to the laws by which the sons of Abraham live, beginning with circumcision.’ Paul, however, puts the matter of inheritance on a different level. The Gentiles are sons of Abraham by having the same sort of faith that Abraham had. Faith is the means of their incorporation into the promises of God, not law-keeping.

3:8–9 When Paul says that Scriptures ‘foresaw’ the nations being blessed in Abraham, this is the same as saying that God had foreordained it. But the believing of the nations and the believing of Abraham were not discrete events. There is a continuity between the faith of

Abraham and the faith of those in Christ. 'What happened in Abraham's day was, in fact, a forecast of the future. The faith element in God's method of justification is therefore timeless' (Guthrie, p. 95). What was so for Abraham was not simply to be so for his descendants after the flesh. The principle of justification by faith was not to be applied to the Jews who believed, but to all peoples. The Gentiles would be blessed through the same sort of faith that Abraham had. Indeed, Abraham had had the gospel preached to him (cf. John. 8:56) and saw that the nations would be blessed through faith. Thus those who have faith are blessed with Abraham, not simply (or even) those who are of the flesh of Abraham. Faith, not works righteousness, is the family trait.

(iii) Christ Redeemed Us from the Law's Curse (Gal. 3:10–14)

3:10 All who rely on observing the law are under a curse, for it is written: 'Cursed is everyone who does not continue to do everything written in the Book of the Law.' **3:11** Clearly no one is justified before God by the law, because, 'The righteous will live by faith.' **3:12** The law is not based on faith; on the contrary, 'The man who does these things will live by them.' **3:13** Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: 'Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree.' **3:14** He redeemed us in order that the blessing given to Abraham might come to the Gentiles through Christ Jesus, so that by faith we might receive the promise of the Spirit.

3:10 Paul has addressed the matter of justification by faith from two angles. He has pointed to the example of the Galatians themselves, and undergirded his argument with the example of Abraham. Now he takes another tack, a 'negative' approach. If the Galatians and Abraham were all justified by faith, the obverse side of the coin is that neither he nor they could have been justified by works of the law even if they had wanted to be! The connective 'for' is omitted in the *NIV*, giving the impression that a completely new argument starts. While Paul is making a new point, this point is closely connected with what he has just been saying. His argument runs: 'Those who are of faith are blessed with Abraham, the believer, *for* the curse of the law makes any other alternative impossible.'

The curse referred to is found in Deut. 27:26. There, as here, it stands in antithesis to the idea of 'blessing'. To be 'under' the law is to be bound to keep it for righteousness' sake. If one is to seek justification by works of the law then one must continue to keep the whole law, without fail and without break. Paul has already alluded to Ps. 143 (Gal. 2:16) to show that no one was (or is) able to keep the law for justification (cf. Rom. 3:10ff.). By implication the curse must apply. While Deut. 27 speaks of twelve curses to be pronounced from Mount Ebal ('Cursed is he who...'), the constituent elements of the curse are terrifyingly expounded in Deut. 28:15ff. To be under the curse is to be under the judgement and wrath of God from which there is no escape. In effect, Paul says to the Galatians, this is where the false teachers are leading you. Through the Gospel of grace they had been delivered from judgement; the false gospel would lead them back into it.

3:11 While the Scriptures do speak of the curse of the law, they also speak of a justification by faith and not works—here quoting Hab. 2:4 (cf. Rom. 1:17). In its original

context Habakkuk calls on God to bring retribution for the injustice and oppression that he sees on every side. Judah was being judged for its apostasy, but by a nation (the Babylonians) even more harsh and violent than Judah had been. Habakkuk looks for some explanation, and the Lord speaks to him, saying, ‘For the revelation awaits an appointed time; it speaks of the end and will not prove false. Though it linger, wait for it; it will certainly come and will not delay. See, he is puffed up; his desires are not upright—but the righteous will live by his faith—’. Habakkuk must therefore trust, as Abraham did, in the bare word. In this context the word ‘live’ must be given due emphasis. ‘Righteousness by faith is for Paul so closely bound up with true life that the two terms—‘righteousness’ and ‘life’—can in practice be used interchangeably (cf. v. 21b)’ (Bruce, p. 162).

3:12 Paul gives a free translation of Lev. 18:5 (cf. Rom. 10:5) to make his next point. ‘Law-way’ and ‘faith-way’ are two mutually exclusive options. Faith is trust in God, the law gives no such alternative. It simply says ‘Do this or die!’ It is the minister of death and has no common ground with faith.

3:13 If ‘law-way’ leads only to bondage there can be no release from the curse of the law except by being released. The word ‘redeemed’ (*exagorazo*) is a powerful one. Christians have been bought (the word is a commercial one) by God and thus removed from the sphere of the curse. The verb is expressed in the aorist, i.e. an action completed at a point in time in the past. When? When Christ was crucified. How? By Him becoming a curse for us.

To make his point Paul quotes Deut. 21:23, which in full reads,

If a man guilty of a capital offence is put to death and his body is hung on a tree, you must not leave his body on the tree overnight. Be sure to bury him that same day, because anyone who is hung on a tree is under God’s curse. You must not desecrate the land the LORD your God is giving you as an inheritance.’

Being hung on a tree was evidence of having been cursed by God. Thus for Jesus to be hung on a tree (i.e. an executioner’s gibbet, as the word *xulon* also meant) He must have become the object of the curse of the law. Paul’s affirmation in II Cor. 5:21 that He who knew no sin ‘became sin’ on our behalf is reflected in other places (e.g. Rom. 3:25; 4:25; Isa. 53:4, 11; I Cor. 15:3; Heb. 9:28; I Pet. 2:22–24).

The consequences of covenant transgression were terrifying, and, as Christ became sin on the cross, the cry of forsakenness indicates the degree of suffering involved. He became as the covenant breaker, he became curse ‘for us’, i.e. all of those who have faith in Him, Jews and Gentiles alike. He bore in His body on the tree the full fury of judgement that should have been ours. Deut. 28:15–68, where the curse is terrifyingly expounded, leaves no area of life untouched. In every endeavour the covenant breakers were to know suffering, affliction and adversity. The things mentioned in the chapter touch on the deepest sufferings of all: famine, infanticide, insanity, plagues, dispossession, terrorisation and slavery. In essence Christ on the cross must have entered into the horrific suffering of all these things. He was indeed ‘a man of sorrows, acquainted with grief’.

3:14 The reason for the Cursed One hanging on the tree is given in two connected purpose clauses. The *NIV*’s ‘He redeemed us . . .’ is not in the Greek, but it carries over the thought from v. 13. The purpose clauses ‘are co-ordinate: both express the purpose of Christ’s redemptive death—the one in more general terms, the other in a more specific interpretation’ (Bruce, p. 167). The promise to Abraham is summed up by the

gift of the Holy Spirit, who is elsewhere designated as the believer's 'seal' or 'pledge' of the full inheritance (Eph. 1:13–14; 4:30; II Cor. 1:22; 5:5). Paul will talk more about promise in the paragraph to come. Indeed, 'promise' and 'grace' are virtually synonymous in the following part of Paul's argument. But here Paul has now come full circle to pick up the argument from verse 5, *viz.* that the Galatians received the Spirit by faith, not works. The result of his treatment is to reinforce the point that those of faith are the sons of Abraham: If the Galatians had received the Spirit they must be sons of Abraham. If they were sons of Abraham they were no longer under the curse of the law. Why, then, should they retreat from this position of grace to the position of slavery being inculcated by the teachers of works righteousness?

**(iv) What is the Relationship Between Law and Promise?
(Gal. 3:15–22)**

3:15 Brothers, let me take an example from everyday life. Just as no one can set aside or add to a human covenant that has been duly established, so it is in this case. **3:16** The promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. The Scripture does not say 'and to seeds,' meaning many people, but 'and to your seed,' meaning one person, who is Christ. **3:17** What I mean is this: The law, introduced 430 years later, does not set aside the covenant previously established by God and thus do away with the promise. **3:18** For if the inheritance depends on the law, then it no longer depends on a promise; but God in his grace gave it to Abraham through a promise. **3:19** What, then, was the purpose of the law? It was added because of transgressions until the Seed to whom the promise referred had come. The law was put into effect through angels by a mediator. **3:20** A mediator, however, does not represent just one party; but God is one. **3:21** Is the law, therefore, opposed to the promises of God? Absolutely not! For if a law had been given that could impart life, then righteousness would certainly have come by the law. **3:22** But the Scripture declares that the whole world is a prisoner of sin, so that what was promised, being given through faith in Jesus Christ, might be given to those who believe.

3:15 Paul has established the point that Abraham's justification came by faith in the promise of God. The 'blessing' of the covenant God made with Abraham was to come through grace, not through the law. Indeed, all those who are under the law are under its curse. This then leads to the question, 'Why was the law given?' Did it abrogate the promise? Did it qualify it in some way? Did it supersede it altogether?

The first point in this section of Paul's argument comes from current legal practice. He refers to the Galatians as 'brethren', i.e. sharers of a common inheritance from one Father. He speaks *lit.* 'according to man', i.e. from well-known and accepted practice (cf. the use of 'according to man' I Cor. 9:8; Rom. 3:5; 6:19). *a fortiori*, argues Paul, what is so with human legal relationships must with greater force apply to God.

In terms of human relationships, says Paul, 'no one can set aside or add to the terms of a human covenant once it has been established.' The word here translated 'covenant' is *diatheke*. There was another word for covenant in common use, *suntheke*. The difference between these words is quite significant. The former word was usually used of a last will and testament. It was simply given, its terms beyond debate, for the testator had set them down before his death. Now, after his death, there could be no bargaining about the contents. The latter word was used to describe agreements entered into by mutual consent (as the prefix *sun*, i.e. 'with', indicates). It was thus usual for the parties to haggle about the terms of an agreement until the agreement suited all

concerned, and then the covenant, or the contract (to better express the concept in English), was entered into.

Paul deliberately uses the word *diatheke* to emphasise the nature of the covenant. God's promise is not open to bargaining. It is simply given and received. It is not modified in any way by the haggling of those who are its objects. This use of the word is consistent throughout the Scriptures, and from it we get our Old and New 'Testaments'. Thus the covenant 'was not a bargain struck between God and man. Even Abraham, with all his immense stature as a man of God, depended wholly upon the divine initiative for the effectiveness of the covenant. It was a matter of grace, and therefore one sided' (Guthrie, p. 101).

Thus Paul's point is at once simple and powerful. In human relationships a last will and testament is beyond dispute once it has been ratified. If this is the case, how much more is this true for the *diatheke* of God. It is not the death of the Testator which is in view, but the wholly gracious nature of the covenant.

3:16 Now, says Paul, 'The promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed.' The *diatheke* of God is synonymous with the promises. They were simply given to Abraham without any preconditions. However, while they were given to Abraham they did not end with Abraham, for they were spoken to him and to his seed. But, Paul says, 'The Scripture does not say "and to seeds", meaning many people, but "and to your seed", meaning one person, who is Christ.' Paul's point is that the promise was focussed, it had a particular goal in view. Indeed, as Calvin points out, the promise had always been a matter of choice, not of natural inheritance. Abraham himself had more than one seed, but *the* seed—in the sense of the one to whom the promise came—was Isaac, not Ishmael. Likewise the seed continued in the divine choice of Jacob, not Esau. Thus 'Paul is not relying on the singular to prove that this was said of one man but only to show that the word "seed" denotes one who was not only born of Abraham according to the flesh but had also been ordained for this by the calling of God' (Calvin, p. 58).

The apostles understood that the focus of the OT was Christ (so I Pet. 1:10ff.; Heb. 1:1ff.; Acts 26:22f.; etc.) and Jesus Himself impressed this on the disciples (e.g. Luke. 24:25–27, 44–49; John. 5:39). Paul's grammatical point therefore only supports something that was already taken for granted in the early church, i.e. that Jesus was the focus of all the promises (so II Cor. 1:19ff.). He was the Seed, the chosen one. Paul is thus able to make the point that the law had its function until the Seed came, but with Him the age of fulfilment has arrived (cf. Rom. 10:4).

The discussion about the promise and the seed probably reflects something of the false teachers' line of reasoning. They were possibly arguing that the promise of the blessing was to Abraham and his descendants. If the Gentiles were to be blessed in Abraham they must have to become as his descendants, i.e. under the same rule of law and engaging in the same sign of Abraham's offspring *viz.* circumcision. Paul's argument is that the inheritance does not relate to Jews generally, but to the Seed in particular. It is another way of saying not all those who are born of Abraham are sons of Abraham. To say 'Those of faith are children of Abraham' is the same as saying 'Those in Christ (the Seed) inherit the promises.'

Finally we note that the word 'Seed' can be profitably understood (from a theological point of view) in its collective sense. Christ is the embodiment of Israel (cf. Matt. 2:15). 'In Him the race was summed up, as it were. In Him it fulfilled its purpose and became a blessing to the whole earth. Without Him its separate existence as a peculiar people had no meaning. Thus He was not only the representative, but the embodiment of the race' (Lightfoot, p. 143). One could extend this concept even further. While the blessings are focussed on and in Christ, Paul's characteristic understanding of His

work (reflected elsewhere in the phrase 'in Christ') is of the corporate nature of His humanity. Christ is the second Adam, the federal Head, the new Man. In Him the Church is the New Israel, created by a New Exodus and blessed to be a blessing. In particular it was to be a blessing through the word of the Gospel now under threat from the false teachers. Little wonder, then, that Paul was trenchant in his opposition to the Judaisers.

3:17–18 Paul now addresses the matter of the place of the law from another angle. 'What I mean is this: The law, introduced 430 years later [the figure is from Ex. 12:40], does not set aside the covenant previously established by God and thus do away with the promise. For if the inheritance depends on the law, then it no longer depends on a promise; but God in his grace gave it to Abraham through a promise.' The *diatheke* of God is in the promise of Abraham, not in the law. The latter does not set aside the former. As in the case of an earthly *diatheke* the matter of inheritance is sealed by the will of the testator, not the will of the inheritors. Paul has no doubt that the law came with a specific purpose and that it was holy and good, but its purpose was not to do with inheriting the promises of Abraham, at least not in a direct way. It came 430 years after God's promise, but it did not invalidate the promise, i.e. it did not come in order to give another means of obtaining the promise. God promised it to Abraham through grace alone, and it would therefore be unthinkable that the law should abrogate this promise. 'If the law coming later was a condition, then it was completely outside Abraham's orbit. The 'promise' was no promise if it concealed a condition from Abraham . . . This, then, put law outside of the question altogether' (Bingham p. 24).

In verse 18 both 'law' and 'promise' are without the article in Greek. The sentence would better read, 'For if the inheritance depends on law, then it no longer depends on promise; but God in his grace gave [lit. 'graced it'] it to Abraham through promise.' Law and promise are two opposing principles. The word for 'gave it' *kecharistai* is the perfect tense of *charitoo*, and is related to *charis* (grace). It means that the promise came by divine favour alone. If this is the case then law can in no way modify it.

It is significant also that Paul (unconsciously?) uses the word 'inheritance' in connection with the promises. There is an organic link in his thinking between justification, sonship, adoption, inheritance and promise. In Paul's mind the Abrahamic covenant was not *primarily* concerned with justification. The weight is first on the inheritance of the promises and then on the means of that inheritance. Thus Paul is not concerned to defend a theological point, but to preserve an inheritance. He does not want to see his Gentile converts disinherited of that which was given by grace to Abraham and by the same means to all who are blessed in his Seed. This link between the various elements mentioned above gives even more weight to the discussion of slavery and sonship that comes in the following paragraph (3:23–29).

3:19 The question naturally then arises, 'What, then, was the purpose of the law?' If God gave the law to Moses, for what purpose was it given? Paul's answer is firstly, 'It was added because of transgressions.' The phrasing and vocabulary used here are telling. The use of *parabasis* (transgression) instead of *hamartia* (sin) gives the meaning of the phrase as 'it was given for the sake of defining transgression'. That is, the Law came to delineate sin, to identify it not as sin simply, but as transgression in particular (cf. Rom. 3:20; 4:15; 7:7–12). This accords with the argument Paul presents in

Rom. 5:12ff. (cf. Rom. 7:13). There he points out that sin has been in the world since the disobedience of Adam, as seen in the fact that all die. Law comes to spell out the principle of sin that is already present. It gives definition and clarity to sin and shows what sin really is. It shows it up as disobedience to specific commands of the holy God. It thus shut all men up in disobedience (cf. Rom. 11:32). Thus E. F. Kevan, (*The Law of God in Christian Experience*, p. 33f.) says that the law in its published form, ‘was given to man as a being who had already fallen into sin. By its commands and prohibitions the moral fall of Adam multiplies historically into many breaches of a written law . . . The law was therefore not merely for *recognition* of sins as transgression, but more deeply to impart the *form* of transgression to sin (cf. Rom. 4:15b).’

Elsewhere Paul also says that not only does the law make plain the nature of sin by exposing it as disobedience, but it actually incites men to sin more. The law opposes men’s sinful desires, which only stirs them up to greater fury. Thus the law comes not so much as a power against sin, but rather it is a power used in the hands of sin (I Cor. 15:56) because of the opportunity sin takes in the commandment (Rom. 7:8, 11). The law thus provokes wrath and stirs up disobedience. Thus,

the Law cannot do anything except that with its light it illumines the conscience for sin, death, judgement, and the hate and wrath of God. Before Law comes, I am smug and do not worry about sin; when the Law comes it show me sin, death and hell. Surely this is not being justified; it is being sentenced, being made an enemy of God, being condemned to death and hell. Therefore the principal purpose of the Law in theology is to make men not better but worse; that is, it shows them their sin, so that by the recognition of sin they may be humbled, frightened, and worn down and so may long for grace and for the Blessed Offspring (Luther, L.W., Vol. 26, p. 327).

But, having said all this, the law was not given in an open ended manner. Rather it was to be in force ‘until the Seed to whom the promise referred had come.’ It had a limited duration. The meaning of this statement will be further expounded in Gal. 3:23–29. Here, however, we note only the subservient nature of law to promise. Law’s function can only be understood when seen against the priority of the promised inheritance. This point is underlined by another argument.

Paul adds that ‘The law was put into effect through angels by a mediator.’ This was the commonly held belief by first century Jews (cf. Acts 7:38; Heb. 2:2; Deut. 33:2). The mediator was Moses, but with the coming of Jesus Christ (the Seed) there was no more need of mediation, at least in the sense that Paul uses the term here. With Him came the full revelation of the plan and purposes of God, and that revelation included the place of law. The importance of the comment lies in the fact that the promise was not given by angelic mediation. By nature of the case, then, it must be superior to the law. The law needs mediation, the promise does not. Thus the promise is superior to law and in no way dependent on it (cf. II Cor. 3:12ff.) All this accords with John’s statements, ‘the law came through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ . . . no man has seen God at any time, the only begotten God who is in the bosom of the Father he has revealed him.’

3:20 Following on the discussion about mediation Paul adds parenthetically, ‘A mediator, however, does not represent just one party; but God is one.’ This is an obscure verse for all commentators. Lightfoot suggests that there are some 250–300 different interpretations of it! Some have sought to explain it away as being an addition, but the textual evidence does not really support this. Whatever we make of the verse it must have been somewhat more intelligible to Paul’s readers, however, for he introduces the thought here as though the case carries itself.

The first part of the verse is perhaps better translated as, 'no mediator can be the mediator of one'. Mediation implies at least three parties, the two disputants and the mediator. By nature of the case that which is mediated is open to disputation. In contrast, 'God is one'. God, the giver of the promise, is one in purpose and intention. 'Unlike the law, the promise is absolute and unconditional. It depends on the sole decree of God. There are not two disputing parties . . . The giver is everything, the recipient nothing' (Lightfoot, p. 147). Burton suggests that the emphasis of the comment is on the direct nature of the promise, and thus its superiority:

From the duality of the persons between whom the mediator acts and the fact that God is but one person, the inference intended to be drawn is that the law, being given through a mediator, came from God indirectly. That the promise came directly is not affirmed, but assumed to be in mind (Burton, p. 190).

Whatever the case, the fundamental point that Paul is making confirms the primacy of promise over law. It is this that he continues to affirm in the verses which follow.

3:21–22 If the law is subsidiary to the promise, i.e. if by being given through a mediator it did not abrogate the promise, the question then arises, 'Is the law, therefore, opposed to the promises of God?', i.e. is there a fundamental discontinuity between the promise and the law? 'Absolutely not!' says Paul. How? 'For if a law had been given that could impart life, then righteousness would certainly have come by the law. But the Scripture declares that the whole world is a prisoner of sin, so that what was promised, being given through faith in Jesus Christ, might be given to those who believe.' The kernel of the argument is this: The promise was given by grace. The law did not come to abrogate the promise. Indeed, if some manner of law had been given that could have justified men before God, then there would be a law righteousness, which Paul has already shown to be impossible. Rather the law, as expressed in the Scriptures, declares all men guilty, for none is able to keep the law. This declaration of guilt, this shutting up unto sin (cf. Rom. 3:9–20), was necessary so that men would know that the promise would have to come through Christ, the redeemer, not through themselves or their own efforts. Law and promise are not opposed, but they have different functions. This is the import of the purpose clause of v. 22. The verb used (*sunkleio*) is a graphic one. It means to shut in on all sides. The law had 'no help to offer. It could only assure the miserable prisoner that his present plight was indisputably just' (Guthrie, p. 107). The term all things 'embraces not only men but everything they have or can put forward' (Calvin, p. 64)

(v) Heirs According to Promise, Not Law (Gal. 3:23–29)

<p>3:23 Before this faith came, we were held prisoners by the law, locked up until faith should be revealed. 3:24 So the law was put in charge to lead us to Christ that we might be justified by faith. 3:25 Now that faith has come, we are no longer under the supervision of the law. 3:26 You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, 3:27 for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. 3:28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. 3:29 If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.</p>

3:23 Paul has already established that the law has shut all men up in sin. He has shown also that the law does not nullify promise, for it has no way of providing or establishing righteousness. Rather, the law has come in to define sin more clearly as transgression,

and thus force men to look to the Seed for the fulfilment of the promise. He now takes this argument from another angle, linking it more closely with the matter of inheritance. Inheritance is what the promise was about, and law must take its place in establishing the inheritance, but not replacing it.

Thus, says Paul, ‘Before this faith came, we were held prisoners by the law, locked up until faith should be revealed.’ The object is not ‘faith’ generally, but *the* faith, i.e. the gospel heard and believed. This gospel is a revelation (cf. John. 1:14–18; Rom. 1:17; 16:25f.; Eph. 3:5; II Tim. 1:10; Titus 3:4). Before such revelation the world lay in dark bondage, held prisoner by the law, shut up to sin with no possible escape. The revelation of the gospel in Christ took place in history and, as such, it was (and is) the revelation of the mystery of God’s will hidden for past generations (so Eph. 3:1–13). However, there is a revelation that takes place in the heart of each believer (cf. our comments on 1:11, 12) as the Spirit applies the work of Christ to the hearts of men and women. Here God causes light to shine out of darkness (II Cor. 3:6; cf. II Pet. 1:19), bringing men to salvation by grace through faith.

3:24 The captivity of the law was not without end or without purpose. The law ‘was put in charge to lead us to Christ that we might be justified by faith.’ The law itself could not justify, it could only condemn. In condemning its captives to death its purpose under God was to drive them to faith as a means of justification. This faith is that which simply receives the promises of God. It, like Abraham, believes God and results in righteousness. It believes in the curse of the law having been borne in the body of Christ on the tree. It trusts in this act of grace for the forgiveness of sins. It is not a work, but a receiving instrument.

Though the noun is not translated in the *NIV*, Paul uses the word ‘pedagogue’ (*paidagogos*) to describe the law. It is significant that he uses this word rather than ‘teacher’ (*didaskalos*). The law performs more than simply a teaching function. The role of the pedagogue was greater than that of a teacher. A pedagogue was a slave whose full-time job was to serve as a child’s (son’s) guardian until puberty. This involved not only instruction but a continuing concern for the child’s welfare. Even though the pedagogue was himself a slave, he was given total charge over the child, with the result that the child experienced life under the authority of his own pedagogue as if he too were a slave. Though a son he did not reside in his father’s house as a free man. Hence, to be under the pedagogue is not to be understood as being ‘still at school’ receiving instruction, but as being un-free, finding oneself in the position of a slave (Ridderbos, p. 148).

3:25 So says, Paul simply, ‘Now that faith has come, we are no longer under the supervision of the law.’ Again Paul uses the word ‘pedagogue’. Now that faith has come a new position is in force. The days of slavery and captivity are over. By implication the days of true sonship have commenced. It is this analogy that Paul will develop in the next paragraph.

3:26 So, in view of what has taken place, ‘You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus’. The emphasis is on the *sons*. Through faith in Christ the Galatians have come into a new relationship with God. They are not slaves under the law, but sons of the Father. This new standing has nothing to do with law. It comes faith-way, not law-way. By implication, to go back to law-way is to retreat from the full liberty and blessing of sonship. To return to law-way is to become slaves again. How incongruous for a son to prefer being a slave!

3:27 In order to underline the nature of this new standing Paul says you (i.e. the Galatian believers) are sons through faith, '*for* all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.' To be baptized into Christ is to believe in him, to be thus made members of his body. It is the Spirit who baptises believers into the body of Christ (I Cor. 12:13) and this is signified by baptism in water (Rom. 6:1ff.). In the NT there was no distinction drawn between baptism and belief. Those who believed were baptised (immediately!). Those who were baptised had heard and believed. Thus they clothed themselves with Christ. This imagery is found in the OT in places such as Isa. 52:1; 61:10; Judges 6:34 (cf. Luke. 24:49), but is taken up powerfully by Paul in the NT to describe the believers' new standing and their new way of life in Christ (Rom. 13:12, 14; cf. II Cor. 5:21; Eph. 4:24; Col. 3:12f.). Those in Christ can no longer afford to think of themselves apart from Him.

3:28–29 As a result of this incorporation into Christ and His work 'There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus' (cf. Rom. 1:16; 3:22f.; 10:12; 15:8f.; I Cor. 1:24; Eph.. 2:13–22; 3:6; Col. 3:11). While it is obvious that distinctions of race, sexuality or social position remain in external form, there is no inherent inferiority or superiority in any one social, sexual or racial identification. In terms of outward appearance there may have been slaves and free men, etc., but in terms of the reality in Christ there were only brethren (so Philemon 12–16). With regard to righteousness through faith all are one—there is no 'special' category. The Gentiles do not have to become Jews in order to inherit the promise. Why? 'If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.' Inheritance is a matter of faith, not genetics. It is a matter of grace, not works of the law.

Chapter Four

III. The Substance of Paul's Doctrine of Justification: Galatians 3:1—5:12 (Cont'd)

(vi) The Spirit of Adoption, Not the Law, Brings Freedom (Gal. 4:1–7)

4:1 What I am saying is that as long as the heir is a child, he is no different from a slave, although he owns the whole estate. **4:2** He is subject to guardians and trustees until the time set by his father. **4:3** So also, when we were children, we were in slavery under the basic principles of the world. **4:4** But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law, **4:5** to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons. **4:6** Because you are sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, 'Abba, Father.' **4:7** So you are no longer a slave, but a son; and since you are a son, God has made you also an heir.

4:1–2 There should be no break between these and the preceding verse, for the paragraph they head is a direct continuation of Paul's argument. Paul has already said that law had a custodial function to perform, but that law could not bring a person into the inheritance. The law was given under the covenant of promise to serve the promise by showing the impossibility of inheritance coming through 'law-way'. Thus Christ's coming is the end point of the law's custody and the beginning of the freedom of sonship. It is this thought that Paul now expands.

The practice of a child coming into his majority varied slightly from time to time and place to place. Under Roman law of the century following Paul's time the usual procedure was that the child was under a pedagogue till the age of 14, and then under curator till the age of 25. As far as we can determine the time for the son's majority was fixed by civil law external to the immediate family. Here, however, Paul refers to an approach clearly held as common knowledge by him and his readers. Whatever the precise practice may have been, the thought still stands 'that as long as the heir is a child, he is no different from a slave, although he owns the whole estate.' Until his majority is attained the heir is bound by the rule of the pedagogue/curator. In reality he owns the whole estate, but only proleptically. His full possession of the estate awaits the will of his father. Thus 'he is subject to guardians and trustees until the time set by his father.' The 'guardians' and 'trustees' are not the same as the pedagogue of 3:24f., but the idea is essentially the same. Whatever the model Paul has in mind, the emphasis is on the sovereignty of the father to determine the time for the son to come into his own. It has to do with the father's will, not the child's works.

4:3 Moving from example to application Paul says, 'So also, when we were children, we were in slavery under the basic principles of the world.' What does he mean by 'the basic principles'? The *NASB* has 'the elemental things of the world', while the *RSV* has 'the elemental spirits of the universe', thus reflecting the difficulty of translation. The *stoichia* (the word used here) have been variously understood. Sometimes the word referred to things that were set out in regimental fashion, and the term could even be applied to the alphabet in the same way that we speak of someone knowing their

ABCs (Bruce, p. 193). Thus the word sometimes referred to the foundational principles of something, as in Heb. 5:12. When Paul uses the word elsewhere (4:9; Col. 2:8; 2:20) the connotation of captivity is uppermost in his thinking. After extensive discussion Burton settles on the meaning 'the rudimentary religious teaching expressed by the race' (Burton, p. 518). This may include bondage to evil powers, or systems of prohibitions, or both. Hence, while Paul has been talking about the law, we would not wish to limit the meaning of *stoichia* to the Jewish Law specifically. Whatever else may be said it must be assumed that these elemental things relate to the principle of life under law. The 'we' is inclusive of the Galatians, who were Gentiles, i.e. Paul as a Jew and the Galatians as Gentiles both knew the bondage of the *stoichia*. Both were, in their own way, operating 'law-way' and thus experiencing the captivity which is uppermost in Paul's thought.

4:4-5 In taking the analogy the next step Paul says, 'But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law, to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons.' The timing of the Son's appearance, who was to be the means of the inheritance being granted, was in the hands of the Father. By implication He was eternally with the Father (cf. I Cor. 8:6; Phil. 2:6ff.; Col. 1:15), but He was not sent until the time had 'fully come'. This means more than a chronological time. Paul would have agreed that His coming was not a moment too soon or a moment too late but the emphasis is on the connection between the fullness and the sending. His being sent is at once the expression of the Father's will in the fullness of time and that act which brings the Father's will to its fullness. His coming marks the end point of the time of law, and the commencement of the fullness of the promise.

When He came He was 'born of a woman', i.e. He came as flesh and blood, 'made like his brethren in all respects, yet without sin'. In Rom. 8:3 Paul says that He came 'in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin'. He did not come *as* sinful flesh, nor did He come in the *likeness* of flesh. He was true Man yet indistinguishable from other men of His time. He assumed the limitations of sinful flesh, without becoming sinful flesh.

In this sense He also came 'under the law', i.e. under the same conditions of existence as the rest of humanity. He did not come to be a redeemer by standing outside the law. Rather, he came under the law. He, being true man, was bound by the law. He not only was subject to the Commandments, but in a real sense He was the embodiment of them as He loved the LORD with all His heart, etc. and loved His neighbour as Himself. In His identification with sinners on the cross He experienced the curse of the broken law in His body and suffered the full tyranny of its condemnation. The judgement of God broke over Him there as He bore in His body on the tree the misdeeds of all men, the broken law of God. By so doing He was able to 'redeem' those under the law (see comments on 3:13, 14).

Paul uses a purpose clause to underline his point. He came as man, under the law in order to act as redeemer, '*that* we might receive the adoption as sons'. There is no possibility of receiving this adoption apart from His work of redemption. Or, to put the matter positively, the work of redemption was so that adoption may be possible. The word 'adoption' (*huiothesia*) emphasises the gracious nature of the Father's action. There is no blood relationship, no right to any inheritance. By grace one is born again into the family of God (Titus 3:4-7), made a member of His household (Eph. 2:19), and designated as a fellow heir with Christ (Rom. 8:17). Israel was adopted in this sense, that it was divinely chosen for God's purpose (Rom. 9:4). Believers are now given the status as sons (Rom. 8:14, 15; 8:23; Eph. 1:5) by the same principle of

God's free and gracious choice. As sons they share in the inheritance of the Son, i.e. 'all things'. Ultimately the inheritance is God the Father Himself.

4:6 Since the work of adoption has been completed through Christ Paul can say, 'Because you are sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, "Abba, Father."' Not only is there a new standing for believers, but a new relationship. Jesus Himself uniquely used the term 'Abba' with reference to God (Mark 14:36; cf. Matt. 6:9), an Aramaic word conveying all the intimacy of the family circle but with none of the sentiment of our modern 'daddy'. The Spirit of the Son is given to the sons so that they may share in His relationship with the heavenly Abba (cf. Rom. 8:15). The word 'crying' is particularly powerful. Luther comments,

Paul . . . purposely says 'crying' to indicate the trial of the Christian who is still weak and who believes weakly . . . It is a very great comfort when Paul says here that the Spirit of Christ, sent by God into our hearts, cries 'Abba, Father!' and when in Rom. 8:26 that He helps us in our weakness and intercedes with sighs too deep for words . . . for in his trial a man feels only the power of sin, the weakness of the flesh, and his doubt; he feels the fiery darts of the devil (Eph. 6:16), the terrors of death, and the wrath and judgement of God. All these things issue powerful and horrible cries against us, so that there appears to be nothing left for us except despair and eternal death. But in the midst of the terrors of the Law, thunderclaps of sin, tremors of death and roarings of the devil, Paul says the Holy Spirit begins to cry in our heart: 'Abba, Father!' And His cry vastly exceeds, and breaks through, the powerful and horrible cries of the Law, sin, death, and the devil. It penetrates the clouds and heaven, and it reaches all the way to the ears of God. (LW, Vol. 26, p. 380f..)

4:7 Returning to his original image Paul concludes, 'So you are no longer a slave, but a son; and since you are a son, God has made you also an heir.' The Greek construction emphasises that the inheritance comes through God. There is no possibility of inheritance coming through any other way. Believers are heirs according to promise, not heirs according to works. The Galatians must not exchange their inheritance for slavery!

(vii) A Personal Appeal (Gal. 4:8–20)

4:8 Formerly, when you did not know God, you were slaves to those who by nature are not gods. **4:9** But now that you know God—or rather are known by God—how is it that you are turning back to those weak and miserable principles? Do you wish to be enslaved by them all over again? **4:10** You are observing special days and months and seasons and years! **4:11** I fear for you, that somehow I have wasted my efforts on you. **4:12** I plead with you, brothers, become like me, for I became like you. You have done me no wrong. **4:13** As you know, it was because of an illness that I first preached the gospel to you. **4:14** Even though my illness was a trial to you, you did not treat me with contempt or scorn. Instead, you welcomed me as if I were an angel of God, as if I were Christ Jesus himself. **4:15** What has happened to all your joy? I can testify that, if you could have done so, you would have torn out your eyes and given them to me. **4:16** Have I now become your enemy by telling you the truth? **4:17** Those people are zealous to win you over, but for no good. What they want is to alienate you [from us], so that you may be zealous for them. **4:18** It is fine to be zealous, provided the purpose is good, and to be so always and not just when I am with you. **4:19** My dear children, for whom I am again in the pains of childbirth until Christ is formed in you, **4:20** how I wish I could be with you now and change my tone, because I am perplexed about you!

4:8 Paul has shown that the real riches of the gospel proclaimed by him lie in the matter of inheritance. Through grace, not works of the law, a person comes into the full

status of 'son'. As a son that person is an heir of all the promises of God, even of God Himself. Fatherhood, sonship and inheritance: these are the great revelations of the gospel. Through their hearing and attending to a false gospel (though it masked itself as the truth) the Galatians were being led away from the freedom of their sonship into the slavery of 'law-way'. Paul has already shown how incongruous such a move is, but now he seeks to reinforce his point by a strong personal appeal.

He summarises the position of the Galatians as follows: 'Formerly, when you did not know God, you were slaves to those who by nature are not gods.' The Galatians did not know God (cf. I Cor. 1:21; Eph. 2:12; I Thess. 4:5) just as Abraham while dwelling in Ur, did not know God (Josh. 24:2f.; Acts 7:2). They were in bondage to the various elements of false worship and false law, but their pagan worship was offered to those 'who by nature are no gods' (cf. II Chron. 13:9; Isa. 37:19; Jer. 2:11–13; I Cor. 8:4f.; 10:20; 12:2). They were deceived in their worship, but on hearing the gospel the veil of deception was pierced and they turned to God from idols (cf. I Thess. 1:9; Acts 14:15). As the I Corinthian references above make clear, for Paul there is only one God (the Father), but the idols (gods), by virtue of their link with demonic powers, seem to be lively. An idol has no essential power, but by virtue of being worshipped the worshippers are enslaved to it, and play into the hands of demonic forces.

4:9 This state of enslavement was the unhappy lot of the Galatians before they had heard the gospel. 'But now that you know God—or rather are known by God—how is it that you are turning back to those weak and miserable principles?' asks Paul. He emphasises the fact that God has come to know them lest there be any possible misinterpretation (or misrepresentation) of his words. Yes, the Galatians do now know God, but this knowledge comes entirely by grace, not by works or by any secret knowledge (cf. I Cor. 8:3 in its context). Their knowledge of God is dependent upon God's knowing them. 'For Paul there is no real distinction in being known by God and being chosen by Him (cf. Rom 8:29)' (Bruce, p. 202). In the terms of 4:7 they are heirs 'through God' (cf. John 1:12–13).

By contrast the *stoicheia* (see comments on 4:3) are described as 'weak and miserable' (cf. *NASB*'s 'weak and worthless', *RSV*'s 'weak and beggarly'), i.e. on the one hand weak in that they are unable to deliver the liberty they seem to promise, and on the other hand miserable because they lead simply to slavery, misery and death. It is from these powers that the Galatians have been rescued. And a real rescue is in view. Redemption is not a process of self-help. In their unconverted state the Galatians were pagans, idol worshippers bound by darkness, fear and superstition. Through the gospel they had been brought into liberty, but now they were being led back into captivity again by the false teachers. Though the manner of ritualistic observance promulgated by these Judaisers may have been different from that which they had previously practiced (e.g. circumcision), they were of the same essence. According to Paul the Judaistic system and the pagan system were both 'elemental principles'.

The Mosaic dispensation was a foreshadowing, a germ of the Gospel: and thus, when Christ came, its spiritual element was of necessity extinguished or rather absorbed by its successor. Deprived of this it was a mere mass of lifeless ordinances, differing only in degree, not in kind, from any other ritualistic system' (Lightfoot, p. 173).

As Luther has pointed out, to fall away from the principle of grace is, by nature of the case, to revert to idolatry. Why? Because one must invent a form for God that does not exist. 'A God of this kind, who forgives sins and justifies in this manner [i.e. according

to works and ritual observance] cannot be found anywhere. Therefore it is all a vain imagination and a dream, the invention of an idol in the heart' (LW, Vol. 26, p. 397).

It is the seriousness of their situation that leads Paul to ask, 'Do you wish to be enslaved by them all over again?' (cf. 5:1ff.) The blunt question forces the Galatians consider the consequence of their actions and the concomitant rejection of Paul's gospel. Do they really want to go back to the drudgery and terror of life outside of grace?

4:10–11 Already the Galatians seem to be a good way down the path leading to such bondage. 'You are observing special days and months and seasons and years!' (cf. Col. 2:16) The observance of such things is a mark of the principle of grace being supplanted by the principle of law. When they were pagans the Galatians would have observed certain astral days or seasons, but these are not what Paul has in mind here. The perversion of the gospel was coming from a Judaistic source, and thus the observances relate to the Mosaic law (cf. similar phrases in Isa. 1:13; 66:23; Ezek. 45:17; Hosea 2:11; etc.). The 'days' refers to regular Sabbaths, the 'months' to the monthly new moon festivals, the 'seasons' to the larger divisions of the Jewish calendar such as Passover and Pentecost (Lev. 23), and the 'years' to the principle of sabbatical and jubilee years. None of these things, of themselves, were necessarily wrong. Paul was not in bondage to his freedom. He was free to observe Jewish festivals (I Cor. 16:8; Acts 20:16) but not bound to do so (cf. I Cor. 9:19ff. and our comments on 2:3). The Galatians were now being bound by the false gospel to such ritual observances. The attitude presented in Rom. 14:5 is more relaxed than that presented here, but the situations are different. In Romans, as in I Corinthians, the key element in the discussion is that of the 'weak conscience' members in the congregation needing to be given full consideration by their 'strong conscience' brethren. In Galatians, however, the matter was far more malicious. The false teachers were leading the flock of God into a legalistic observance of the Sabbath and other times and seasons. The freedom of sonship was being exchanged for the slavery of legalism (cf. the battles between Jesus and the Pharisees in Matt. 12:1ff.; Luke 6:1ff.; John 5:16; Mark 2:27f.) In short, says Paul, 'I fear for you, that somehow I have wasted my efforts on you' (cf. II Cor. 6:1; Phil. 2:16; I Thess. 3:5). However, as the following paragraph makes clear, Paul's concern is not one of 'cost effectiveness' but true pastoral and filial love.

4:12 Paul now turns from a primarily theological argument to a powerful personal appeal. He says, 'I plead with you, brothers, become like me, for I became like you.' What does he mean by this? He can see the Galatians heading down a path that will lead to ruin. In contrast to this he begs them to become as he is, i.e. living in the liberty of grace. They know that he is living in liberty because Paul became like them. He gave himself to them in their own situation (cf. the approach of I Cor. 9:19–23 and the appeal of II Cor. 6:11–13). More generally he gave up all that was of value in his Judaistic life so that he might preach the gospel amongst the Gentiles (Phil. 3:1–16). His ministry to them was not self-serving, and to assure the Galatians that he bears no grudge against them and that he does not have any impure motives in his strong speech he adds, 'You have done me no wrong.' In other words, 'do not let the false teachers persuade you that my strong language arises out of jealousy of them or out of any other form of selfishness. I gave myself to you, and you certainly did no wrong to me. If I speak strongly, then, it is out of my deep love for you, not out of my envy of the false teachers.'

4:13 Paul now takes the Galatians back to their first experience of the gospel through him (cf. 3:1ff.) to reinforce his point: 'As you know, it was because of an illness that I

first preached the gospel to you.' As to the timing and nature of the illness we know nothing, though interpretations as diverse as malaria and epilepsy have been offered. Likewise there is debate as to whether Paul's wording here implies two visits to the Galatians before the Letter. Neither of these are ultimately significant. What is important is that Paul came among the Galatians in weakness and suffering, and in this state they received him. There was no personal charisma that could have attracted them to him, only the simple truth of the gospel itself.

4:14 Despite the fact that the illness 'was a trial' to the Galatians they did not treat Paul as an outcast. Instead of treating him 'with contempt or scorn' they 'welcomed' him 'as if [he] were an angel of God, as if [he] were Christ Jesus himself.' In Paul they recognised the ministry of Christ (cf. Luke 10:16), and they knew that he spoke the truth. They responded with immense warmth and openness, giving to him beyond that which was merely required by current etiquette. As he came to them in his weakness the power of the gospel was manifest among them—indeed the voice of Christ was heard and His cross was clearly seen—so that a great miracle took place uniting their hearts in worship and the Father's love. Today, wherever the gospel is truly proclaimed and heard, this miracle is repeated.

4:15 To emphasise the poverty of their current position he asks, 'What has happened to all your joy?' (the *NASB* has 'the sense of blessing that you had', while the *RSV* has 'the satisfaction you felt'). Joy is a mark of grace and contrasts to the sombreness of those who seek to live 'law-way'. The joy was not simply a personal sense of well-being, but that which overflowed in immense liberality of love to serve Paul as he came amongst them. So great was this sense of blessing, this godly liberality of the Spirit, that he is able to say, 'I can testify that, if you could have done so, you would have torn out your eyes and given them to me.' Though some see this statement as identifying Paul's illness as an eye complaint, the real point is that it indicates the depth of affection that had come to the Galatians through the ministry. If it was an eye affliction that caused the trouble, the Galatians were so filled with love that they would have given their own eyes to alleviate Paul's suffering if they could. But it is more likely that the saying was a general one meaning that they would have given the most precious thing in the world to serve Paul, as he had given himself to serve them.

4:16 What has happened in the intervening days? 'Have I now become your enemy by telling you the truth?' asks Paul. The rejection of the gospel is not simply the rejection of a doctrinal position, but the rejection of a relationship. To reject the gospel is to reject Paul personally. How incongruous with that which had marked their earlier relationship. What a denial of the love of God that they knew liberally amongst them!

4:17 The false teachers were courting the Galatians (cf. II Cor. 11:2 where the same verb occurs) 'but for no good.' The *NIV*'s interpretation, 'What they want is to alienate you [from us], so that you may be zealous for them', misses the mark. The issue was not simply that the false teachers were trying to alienate the Galatians from Paul, but that their action was the specific example of a general principle, *viz.* that the more secretive or esoteric a matter the more it is attractive to those on the outside, while it builds up the ego of those on the inner circle. The *AV* has 'they would exclude you that ye might affect them', the *RSV* has 'they want to shut you out that you may make much of them' and the *NASB* has 'they wish to shut you out in order that you may seek them', which all better express the principle involved.

4:18 In contrast to the false zeal produced by the pseudo-gospel, Paul says, ‘It is fine to be zealous, provided the purpose is good, and to be so always and not just when I am with you.’ He means for them to be zealous in grace, from which true zeal they had departed now that he was not with them in the flesh.

4:19–20 The ‘My dear children’ reflects the intimacy of Paul’s relationship with the Galatians (cf. I Cor. 4:14; I Tim. 1:2; Titus 1:4; Philemon 10, 19; James 1:18; I John 2:1; 2:12; 5:21; and also I Thess. 2:13ff.) Indeed, so great is the anguish of Paul’s heart that he uses a remarkable metaphor, saying that he is ‘in the pains of childbirth until Christ is formed in you’. Paul does not want their experience of the gospel to be vain, but rather desires them to live in conformity with the liberation that had taken place at its first hearing (cf. Col. 3:10). He desires them to ‘catch the shape of Christ, not catch the shape of law’ (Bingham, p. 34). ‘Since the true image of Christ had been deformed through the superstitions introduced by the false apostles, Paul labours to restore it so that it might shine clearly and unhindered’ (Calvin, p. 82). What he writes would be better expressed in person, face to face in full openness of love; hence he says, ‘how I wish I could be with you now and change my tone, because I am perplexed about you!’ The verb means ‘to be at a loss’ or ‘to be at wits’ end’. He can only pray that they will hear and respond to what he has written.

(viii) Hagar and Sarah: An Allegory (Gal. 4:21–31)

4:21 Tell me, you who want to be under the law, are you not aware of what the law says? **4:22** For it is written that Abraham had two sons, one by the slave woman and the other by the free woman. **4:23** His son by the slave woman was born in the ordinary way; but his son by the free woman was born as the result of a promise. **4:24** These things may be taken figuratively, for the women represent two covenants. One covenant is from Mount Sinai and bears children who are to be slaves: This is Hagar. **4:25** Now Hagar stands for Mount Sinai in Arabia and corresponds to the present city of Jerusalem, because she is in slavery with her children. **4:26** But the Jerusalem that is above is free, and she is our mother. **4:27** For it is written: ‘Be glad, O barren woman, who bears no children; break forth and cry aloud, you who have no labour pains; because more are the children of the desolate woman than of her who has a husband.’ **4:28** Now you, brothers, like Isaac, are children of promise. **4:29** At that time the son born in the ordinary way persecuted the son born by the power of the Spirit. It is the same now. **4:30** But what does the Scripture say? ‘Get rid of the slave woman and her son, for the slave woman’s son will never share in the inheritance with the free woman’s son.’ **4:31** Therefore, brothers, we are not children of the slave woman, but of the free woman.

4:21 Paul now turns from making a strong personal appeal to bring another argument from the Scriptures. We have already commented on the shades of meaning attached to the word ‘law’ (2:16), and here the nuances are evident again. To be ‘under the law’ is to seek to live ‘law-way’, but by nature of the case it is also to heed the ‘law’, i.e. the Torah. Those who wish to live ‘law-way’ must hear what Torah says. The use of the Ishmael/ Isaac story is illustrative rather than foundational—‘An allegory *proves* nothing, but it makes certain *principles* clear’ (Bingham, p. 36)—but is nonetheless complex for all its illustrative function.

F. F. Bruce (p. 218f.) has cogently argued that Paul has taken up an OT story that the false teachers themselves were using. If this is the case the interpretation placed on the passage by them would have been a simple series of comparisons:

PAUL’S LETTER TO THE GALATIANS

Isaac was the ancestor of the chosen people; the Ishmaelites are Gentiles. The Jews are the children of the free woman; the Gentiles are children of the slave woman. The Jews have received the liberating knowledge of the law; the Gentiles are in bondage to ignorance and sin. The Jews are the people of the covenant; such blessings as the Gentiles enjoy (like the promise that Ishmael would become a great nation) are uncovenanted mercies. True . . . the Gentiles of Galatia could not be sons of Abraham by natural descent, as Isaac was; yet there was hope for them: they could be adopted into Abraham’s family by circumcision and so enjoy the covenant mercies promised to Abraham and his descendants. By accepting circumcision they would align themselves with the church of the circumcised in Jerusalem, the mother-church of the true followers of Christ.

Against this interpretation Paul sets forth another, emphasising the fact that Isaac’s birth and his inheritance were matters of promise. They were not ‘natural’ events and they did not come about through law-keeping. Law-way—which is equivalent to walking according to the flesh—is the not the way of faith. When Abraham and Sarah made their decisions by sight rather than by faith the result was Ishmael and his inheritance. Isaac and his inheritance were the results of promise, i.e. grace. Thus the important element of the narrative that Paul highlights is not simply an Ishmael/Isaac comparison, but a flesh/grace comparison of which Ishmael and Isaac were themselves examples.

The allegory has a number of elements, as seen in the table below (after Burton, p. 262), all of which are closely related. There is an overall contrast between those elements which represent slavery (Hagar, Ishmael, the law, earthly Jerusalem) and those which represent freedom (Sarah, Isaac, the new covenant, heavenly Jerusalem), but even within these elements there is some complexity. Jerusalem that now is, for example, is not simply physical Jerusalem, but stands for Judaism *in toto*, centred on and summed up in the city that is enslaved to an occupying force.

Hagar , the slave woman, who bears children who are slaves, <i>representing</i> :	Ishmael , born according to the flesh, born into servitude, <i>representing</i> :	Sarah , the free woman who bears free children, <i>representing</i> :	Isaac , born according to promise, <i>representing</i> :
(a) The covenant from Sinai	The children of Jerusalem now in bondage	(a) The New Covenant	The children of Jerusalem above, according to promise, free.
(b) The Jerusalem that now is		(b) Jerusalem that is above	

4:22–23 In these verses Paul summarises the facts of the Abrahamic story, as found in Gen. 16 and Gen. 21 respectively. The connective ‘for’ (*gar*) is important, however, because it anticipates the end point of the ensuing discussion. ‘If you are seeking to live law-way you must hear the Law *for* there were *two* sons whose provenance and inheritance were vastly different. Do not simply talk about being Abraham’s offspring by obeying the law, for the inheritance of his offspring according to the flesh and that of his offspring according to promise are not the same.’

The key word for Paul is ‘promise’. Ishmael was born ‘in the ordinary way’ (*NIV*)—literally ‘according to the flesh’ which better preserves the force and nuance of Paul’s words—while Isaac was the result of promise. According to Gen. 16 Sarai gave Hagar to sleep with Abram when she contemplated her own barrenness. Sarai’s action was in keeping with normal practice at the time. Indeed, she had reasoned that perhaps the Lord would give *her* children through Hagar (Gen. 16:2). She may have reasoned thus: ‘The promise of God was made to Abraham, rather than to me. If, due to my own inability to conceive, the promise to him is not going to be fulfilled through me directly, its fulfilment might lie through another accepted course of action. Any child

born to Abraham through my servant would still “Abraham’s offspring”, and by virtue of the hand-maid/mistress relationship, I will still be a sharer in the promise through my position in the household.’ Such reasoning was indeed ‘according to the flesh’, i.e. thinking that the promise was to be fulfilled through natural means, according to the eyes of sight. ‘In Ishmael there was nothing beyond nature; in Isaac was the election of God’ (Calvin, p. 85). The result of the action was Hagar’s pregnancy, but this desired result had undesired effects, ultimately leading to Hagar and Ishmael’s ejection from the household.

4:24 Now comes the interpretation. The fundamental point of the ‘figurative’ use of the story is that ‘the women represent two covenants’. The first, the covenant of law ‘is from Mount Sinai and bears children who are to be slaves: This is Hagar.’ Hagar, by virtue of being a slave, bore slaves. The Law, as Paul has already shown, is a slave (pedagogue) to the covenant of righteousness. Those who are under it experience life as slaves. There is no alternative to this. One is either ‘of the slave woman’, and thus enslaved, or ‘of the free woman’, and thus free.

4:25 Let there be no mistake, ‘Now Hagar stands for Mount Sinai in Arabia and corresponds to the present city of Jerusalem, because she is in slavery with her children.’ The ‘present city Jerusalem’ was literally in bondage to an occupying force. But the city also stands for all Judaism which, walking law-way, was in bondage to the law and its curse. Hence the ‘certain men from James’ not only came from the physical city of Jerusalem, but they had come from the principle of slavery inherent in ‘law-way’. Calvin comments that ‘the position of the mountain is expressed in contempt. It lies in Arabia, he says, beyond the borders of the Holy Land, which is the symbol of the eternal inheritance’ (p. 87).

4:26 In contrast to this slave city with its slave population ‘the Jerusalem that is above is free, and she is our mother.’ What does Paul mean by the ‘Jerusalem that is above’? Elsewhere the Church is identified as the New Jerusalem (Heb. 12:22; cf. 11:10, 16; Rev. 3:12; 21:2, 10) and the city which comes down from heaven as the creation of God. This corresponds to the Mount Zion of prophetic hope (e.g. Isa. 2:3; 24:23; 35:10; 52:1ff.; Joel 3:16f.; Micah 4:2; Hag. 2:6–9). This new city is entirely the result of God’s construction. It is not built on the earth, by earthly means, but is built in heaven by heavenly means. While the city is the Church, it is not simply limited to the visible community of believers. It is the Church complete, free from all the earthly barriers of space and time, the dwelling place of all the saints from all the ages. This new Jerusalem is the mother of all believers in that the gospel has been proclaimed by her. All who have heard and believed, being thus born again, have therefore the one mother, no matter when or where they heard the message of grace.

4:27 Paul now quotes from Isa. 54:1. The wider context of the passage is that of the rehabilitation of Jerusalem after the judgement of exile. The re-establishment of Jerusalem after the barrenness of judgement could only be compared to the joy of one who has a child contrary to all human expectation or possibility. Moreover the barren city in its restoration is promised even more fruitfulness than ever before. In the same way the fruits of Isaac’s birth greatly outstrip the fruits of Ishmael’s birth, even though the birth of Isaac was impossible to human eyes. Again the emphasis is on the child of promise.

4:28 ‘Now you, brothers, like Isaac, are children of promise.’ Those who are descendants of physical Jerusalem—and in particular those who are leading the congregation

astray—are not ‘of the promise’. The Galatians are children of promise because they were children born of impossibility. They were pagan idolaters, dead to God and cut off from the commonwealth of Israel, who by sheer grace had come to be known by God. They were born again and adopted into the household of God by promise. They were not born into this relationship according to the flesh. Their heavenly birth was as much a miracle as Isaac’s physical birth.

4:29 The similarity extends further, however. ‘At that time the son born in the ordinary way persecuted the son born by the power of the Spirit. It is the same now.’ The conflict between Flesh and Spirit (as in 5:17; Rom. 8:5ff.) was manifest in the persecution of Isaac by Ishmael. While we do not have any direct Biblical reference to the nature of the persecution, there is some indication of the hostility in Gen. 21:9. Paul may have had an enlarged account of Isaac’s sufferings in mind as found in a Rabbinical discussion of the story. Whatever the case the principle remains the same. Those who are of the Spirit (i.e. born of grace, living according to the promise) are persecuted by those who walk according to the Flesh. Paul’s own story of persecution by his Jewish brethren after his conversion is a powerful illustration of the principle.

4:30 In the light of the conflict between the two principles illustrated by the story of Isaac and Ishmael, how does the church handle the matter of the false, Flesh-based gospel and its proponents? ‘But what does the Scripture say? “Get rid of the slave woman and her son, for the slave woman’s son will never share in the inheritance with the free woman’s son.” ’ In the Genesis story Sarah could see the matter more clearly than Abraham (Gen. 21:9ff.; cf. 18:11ff.). Due to his affection for Ishmael Abraham stood in danger of placing Isaac’s inheritance in jeopardy. While Ishmael was promised an inheritance, he was never to receive the inheritance of Isaac. The implication for the Galatians is clear. Abraham had to eject the one of the flesh in order to maintain the purity of the inheritance belonging to the one born of the promise. Though Abraham was naturally reluctant to do so, he was nonetheless assured that God would take responsibility for Ishmael’s destiny. In the same way the Galatians must reject the false gospel, and eject the false teachers. They, like Abraham, may feel some reluctance to do so, doubtless because of the emotional blackmail that is endemic wherever law-way predominates, but they must not hesitate. They must act to preserve the purity of their own inheritance.

4:31 In summarising the whole discussion Paul says, ‘Therefore, brothers, we are not children of the slave woman, but of the free woman.’ In the paragraphs that follow he will expand the nature of this freedom and how it is preserved. For the moment, though, those who are urging a retreat from grace to the law must be resisted and ejected.

Chapter Five

III. The Substance of Paul's Doctrine of Justification: Galatians 3:1—5:12 (Continued)

(ix) *Set Free for Freedom (Gal. 5:1–12)*

5:1 It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery. **5:2** Mark my words! I, Paul, tell you that if you let yourselves be circumcised, Christ will be of no value to you at all. **5:3** Again I declare to every man who lets himself be circumcised that he is obligated to obey the whole law. **5:4** You who are trying to be justified by law have been alienated from Christ; you have fallen away from grace. **5:5** But by faith we eagerly await through the Spirit the righteousness for which we hope. **5:6** For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision has any value. The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love. **5:7** You were running a good race. Who cut in on you and kept you from obeying the truth? **5:8** That kind of persuasion does not come from the one who calls you. **5:9** 'A little yeast works through the whole batch of dough.' **5:10** I am confident in the Lord that you will take no other view. The one who is throwing you into confusion will pay the penalty, whoever he may be. **5:11** Brothers, if I am still preaching circumcision, why am I still being persecuted? In that case the offence of the cross has been abolished. **5:12** As for those agitators, I wish they would go the whole way and emasculate themselves!

5:1 This is a transitional sentence which links the theological arguments of the rest of the Letter with Paul's urgent and practical pastoral exhortation. The dictum 'it is for freedom that Christ has set us free' is at once the summary of Paul's whole discussion on inheritance and the logical conclusion of his discussion of the place of Isaac and Ishmael. But like a hinge it changes the direction of the discussion from 'Free from . . . ' to 'Free to . . . '

What does Paul mean by freedom? In the wider context of Galatians he means the freedom of sonship as opposed to the state of slavery. This state of slavery is great. Though the following list moves wider afield than the Galatian Letter, Paul's picture of the human situation is grim. Apart from the liberation of grace one is enslaved to the *stoicheia*, to death, to the curse, to the wrath of God, to guilt, to a defiled conscience, to the condemnation of the law, to the devil, to the principalities and powers, to disobedience, to darkness, to the flesh, to false worship and to the idols. In this state one is also bound to walk law-way as a means of seeking justification (and thus freedom), but law-way crushes its followers with the most intolerable burdens. Against this picture of slavery Paul asserts that 'Christ set us free'. The tense is an aorist, i.e. Paul has in view an action wholly completed at a point in time in the past. The purpose of this is also given: Christ set us free 'for freedom'. This is the same as saying that He redeemed us from the curse of the law, *so that* we might receive the adoption as sons. Such freedom is not the so-called freedom of licence (as in 5:13), but the freedom of love.

To put the matter another way, 'freedom' does not mean 'independence'. The freedom of sonship presupposes a dependent relationship with the Father. To the fallen

human mind freedom means 'the ability to do my will as I like when I like.' In contrast, the freedom of sonship is 'the desire and ability to do the Father's will as He makes it known'. Jesus lived in freedom for the very reason that He did not seek His own will but the will of His Father. In Him we see humanity in all its glory, i.e. fully obedient to the Father, fulfilling His vocation in the fullness of joy, bearing fruit that remains. By the very nature of things Man, to be truly and fully Man, must live in obedience. This is his freedom and his dignity. The obedience, however, is not to an impersonal set of rules and regulations. The obedience is rendered to God who is love, and the obedience is itself love. To live in obedience to God is to live in love, for God is love. To live in love is to live in freedom. This is all creationally sensible. Love is the 'native habitat' of human beings by virtue of Man being made in the image of God. Man has been created to know and receive the love of God, and thus to love. To live in the love (*agape*) of God is to live functionally. To reject the love of God is to live dysfunctionally. True love becomes distorted to self-love, true righteousness to self-righteousness, true worship to self-worship, and so on.

The exhortation 'Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery' is the same as saying 'expel the bondwoman and her son'. Do not come under their yoke. The yoke of 'law-way' is intolerable, and leads to utter slavery (cf. Acts 15:10) whereas Christ's yoke, that of sonship, is 'light' (Matt. 11:29ff.; cf. I John 5:3). The freedom must be preserved through diligence, however. Negatively, one must take a stand against any encroachment of law-way (the message of 5:2–12), and positively one must live in love (the message of 5:13–15).

5:2 The physical act of circumcision was the point on which all now hinged. 'To him (Paul) circumcision is a "something-nothing". It is *nothing* if it is only a matter of culture and not of doctrine. If it represents—in practice—law-way, then it is a *something*, and at that a dangerous something' (Bingham, p. 39) The Galatians had already gone down the path of legalism to some degree. Not only had they given the false teachers a good hearing, but they were already engaged in observance of ritual days, etc. To submit to the act of circumcision would be for them the point of no return. For them, with the knowledge they had of the Gospel and the way in which that knowledge had been reinforced through Paul's Letter, the acceptance of the one act would be the acceptance of the whole package of law. 'Mark my words! I, Paul, tell you that if you let yourselves be circumcised, Christ will be of no value to you at all.' They will have traded the benefits of Christ for the commitment to walk law-way. Note the emphasis 'I Paul', i.e. 'I who preached to you in weakness, whom you embraced, through whom you believed. I Paul, the ex-Pharisee who was according to righteousness of the law found blameless. I Paul, who was once so zealously walking law-way that I persecuted the Church of God. I Paul, the one who is now an outcast from my own brethren according to the flesh for the sake of the message of grace.'

5:3 The point cannot be stressed strongly enough. 'Again I declare to every man who lets himself be circumcised that he is obligated to obey the whole law.' To submit to the act of physical circumcision is the same as cutting oneself off from grace and dooming oneself to live law-way forever. Circumcision was the test point for them. The permanent change in physical appearance that would result would be matched by a permanent shift in inward goal and motivation. If the Galatians were to accept the argument from the false teachers about circumcision, then, in principle, they would be obligated to observe every element of the law. All dietary laws and other ceremonies must be fulfilled without respite and without fail.

5:4 Turning from a statement of general principle in v. 3 to a direct address to his readers, Paul says, ‘You who are trying to be justified by law have been alienated from Christ; you have fallen away from grace.’ The reading ‘severed from Christ’ instead of ‘alienated’ preserves the pun in Paul’s language. Grace-way and law-way are totally incompatible. One cannot embrace the one without rejecting the other. Lightfoot gives the force of the sentence as, ‘you are driven forth and are banished along with Hagar your mother’ (p. 204). To walk law-way is to fall from grace, for the principles are utterly irreconcilable.

5:5 In contrast to the so-called righteousness found by walking law-way, Paul says, ‘But by faith we eagerly await through the Spirit the righteousness for which we hope.’ This is the equivalent of his statement in II Cor. 5:7, ‘we walk by faith and not by sight’, which also has an eschatological connection. The point here is to contrast the two sorts of righteousness. The righteousness according to the Flesh is sealed in the flesh by circumcision. The righteousness according to grace is totally of faith, and will only be seen with the eye on the last day. The so-called righteousness of the Flesh in fact is without hope. It can neither provide justification now or hereafter. The righteousness that comes by faith is full of hope. The verdict of ‘Not guilty’, accepted through faith now, will be confirmed then. The emphasis in the Greek construction is on ‘by the Spirit’, i.e. ‘By the Spirit though faith . . .’ as opposed to ‘By the flesh through works . . .’

5:6 In contrast to the emphasis of the false teachers, Paul asserts, ‘For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision has any value. The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love.’ We have already seen Paul’s ambivalent attitude to the matter of circumcision in other situations (see comments on 2:3 and 5:2). The only thing that matters is faith working through love. Faith precedes love (so Rom. 5:1–5), and love cannot be truly exercised except through faith. Justifying faith does not lead to lawlessness, but to love, and love is the fulfilment of the law. Law-way does not work by love, but by pressure of guilt and legalism. It leads to envy, jealousy, and ‘counting up the wrongs suffered.’ The liveliness of faith—expressing itself in love and abiding in hope—is replaced by ‘duty’ and ‘doing the right thing’. Moule quotes C. K. Barrett as saying ‘ultimately . . . justification by faith, which means living under grace . . . becomes the one hope of a truly moral life.’

5:7 ‘You were running a good race. Who cut in on you and kept you from obeying the truth?’ The word used to describe the action of the false teachers was originally a military one, indicating the destruction of roads and highways by the breaking up of bridges, etc. Later it became more linked with athletic performance, as the *NIV*’s translation reflects. Whatever the most appropriate connotation, the emphasis is on the deliberate and destructive nature of the action. To be sure, the Galatians should have been more discerning and more diligent to preserve their liberty, but the fault here lies with the false teachers whose action has been deliberate and calculating. Notice that the truth is to be obeyed, not believed or assented to like so many historical facts (cf. Acts 6:7; Rom. 1:5; 15:18; 16:26).

5:8 It is self evident that ‘That kind of persuasion does not come from the one who calls you.’ If you have been hindered in following and obeying the truth then the One who called you in and to the truth would not be the one leading you to something else. By implication the troublers in the congregation have not been sent from God.

5:9 As in I Cor. 5:6, Paul quotes a long-standing saying used by Jesus (Matt. 16:6, 12) to describe the teaching of the Pharisees. The image of yeast as a defiling thing no doubt goes back to the Exodus (Ex. 12:14–17; Deut. 16:3–8). The point that he is making is the same as that in 4:30. There can be no half measures with regard to the matter of law and liberty.

5:10 In contrast to the gloomy picture that may have been painted in other verses, Paul is still able to say 'I am confident in the Lord that you will take no other view.' He still believes that the Galatians will see the truth, and heed it. In the construction used, the 'I' is emphatic, i.e. *I* have this confidence in you, though others may not have it. The situation is not beyond hope, and Paul is personally and directly concerned for the outcome. While the singular is used here to do service for the whole, there can be no doubt that a group of folk has been troubling the Galatians. The important thing is that the group will not escape the discipline of Christ.

5:11 'Brothers, if I am still preaching circumcision, why am I still being persecuted? In that case the offence of the cross has been abolished.' The fact that this statement appears 'out of the blue', with no logical connection with the verses immediately surrounding it, almost certainly indicates that this was an argument put forward by the false teachers. They were saying that Paul was still preaching the necessity of law observance (in particular the matter of circumcision) for salvation. Perhaps they pointed to the circumcision of Timothy, or others like him. The fact that Paul was continually being persecuted undermines the argument, especially in view of his comments in 6:12, 13.

Paul never expected the Cross to be anything other than an offence. The Greek word is *skandalon* or 'stumbling block'. The stumbling stone passage from Ps. 118:22f. was a key for understanding the ministry of Christ in the early church. (see its use in Matt. 21:41–44 and parallels; Acts 4:8–12; Rom. 9:32f.; I Pet. 2:6ff.). Christ crucified was a stumbling block to the Jews because they could not conceive of a suffering Messiah/King, while the Greeks could not see any logic or sophistication in a saviour who suffered such a humiliating death. While the Cross is an offence to the Jews and the Greeks for their own specific reasons (as expounded in I Cor. 1:18–31) there is also a general offence of the Cross. The stumbling block of the Cross is that one has to accept salvation from a crucified man. There is no room at all for human pride, ego or performance.

5:12 'As for those agitators, I wish they would go the whole way and emasculate themselves!' The thought of Deut. 23:1 may well have been in Paul's mind, as there the physical act of mutilation led to ejection from the assembly. Whatever the case, the sentence bears powerful testimony to the depth of Paul's feeling.

IV. The Life In and Through the Spirit: Galatians 5:13–6:18

(i) A Warning (Gal. 5:13–15)

5:13 You, my brothers, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature; rather, serve one another in love. **5:14** The entire law is summed up in a single command: 'Love your neighbour as yourself.' **5:15** If you keep on biting and devouring each other, watch out or you will be destroyed by each other.

5:13–14 Paul was often accused of being an antinomian (so Rom. 3:31; 6:1ff.; Phil. 3:17ff.; Col. 3:1ff.), but in reality his gospel ‘established the law’. To walk according to the flesh is incompatible with grace. For all its emphasis on ‘obedience’, law-way actually undermines true obedience because it does not (and cannot) result in love. As we have seen above, to ‘serve one another in love’ is the matrix and meaning of freedom. To indulge in the lusts of the flesh, being counter to love, must be slavery.

Indeed, ‘the entire law is summed up in a single command: “Love your neighbour as yourself”’ (cf. Luke 10:27). The moral law (i.e. the Ten Commandments) is simply the exposition of what it means to love God and to love one’s neighbour. While walking ‘grace-way’ one may appear not to have a fixed law, in reality one is never free of the law of Christ (I Cor. 9:20f.; 7:22; Gal. 6:2; Rom. 8:2; cf. James 1:25; 2:12; II Pet. 3:2).

To ‘love yourself’ does not relate so much to the modern cult of self-esteem so much as to priorities.

5:15 Paul finishes this section with a strong warning. He is about to contrast in a very careful and deliberate way the works of the flesh and the fruit of the Spirit. Here the contrast is summed up in one sentence: ‘if you keep on biting and devouring each other, watch out or you will be destroyed by each other.’ Love always edifies. The works of the flesh always divide.

(ii) Deeds of the Flesh and Fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:16–26)

5:16 So I say, live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature. **5:17** For the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature. They are in conflict with each other, so that you do not do what you want. **5:18** But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under law. **5:19** The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; **5:20** idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions **5:21** and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God. **5:22** But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, **5:23** gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. **5:24** Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires. **5:25** Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit. **5:26** Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying each other.

5:16 Paul has been insistent on the matter of Christian liberty, but liberty is not the same as licence. Christian liberty, which is found in and through love, can also be spoken of as ‘walking by the Spirit’. In the context of Galatians this means walking grace-way rather than law-way. Walking in obedience to the Spirit, who in Heb. 10:29 is called ‘the Spirit of grace’, is to walk in love. Believers are not justified by walking in the Spirit; rather, this is the result of them having been justified by grace through faith. Nor are believers able to love in their own strength. Love remains the fruit of the Spirit produced in those whom the Spirit indwells.

Notice the order. The construction is an emphatic negative: ‘Walk by the Spirit and you will by no means carry out the desires of the flesh’. To live by the Spirit is the positive action. If one is engaged in this then the result follows: ‘you will not carry out the desires of the Flesh.’ One does not walk by the Spirit simply by *not* doing certain things. Paul, speaking of his life as a Pharisee, was able to say, ‘according to the righteousness which is in the law I was found blameless’ (Phil. 3:6). Yet, even though

he abstained from all manner of external sins he was most certainly not walking according to the Spirit. The order is not 'Do not fulfil the desires of the Flesh *so that* you may walk by the Spirit', but 'Walk by the Spirit *and you will not* fulfil the desires of the Flesh'. Walking grace-way is the positive action, with love as its abiding fruit.

The word 'Flesh' is best left, rather than 'sinful nature', which presents it primarily as a psychological category. In Paul the word 'flesh' expresses a complete anthropology that cannot be translated by one English word or phrase. For him the word is the meeting point of Man as flesh and blood—with all its weakness and natural frailty—and Man in sin. 'Flesh', as Paul uses the word here, stands for Man against God. In this distinctive use it means 'man in his sin and depravity' (Ridderbos, *Paul, An Outline of His Theology*, p. 94). As such it is 'incorrigible . . . ego seeking and self-extending' (Bingham, p. 44), and by nature of the case must be opposed to the Spirit. As an organising principle of opposition the Spirit it can be written with a capital.

Note, too, that walking by the Spirit meets the Flesh on its most fundamental level, that of 'desire'. There are desires that attach to the flesh (i.e. to the condition of being a human), that the Flesh may express as rebellion. The deeds of the Flesh are the desires of the flesh in wrong action and expression. Walking by the Spirit prevents desire being translated into action. Law-way walking has no power to prevent this. 'No external force or sanction can compel the loving of one's neighbour as oneself; such love must be generated from within—by the Spirit' (Bruce, p. 243).

5:17 The connective 'for' is important. Why is it that walking according to the Spirit means that a person will not carry out the desires of the Flesh?: 'For the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature.' Flesh and Spirit are two complete entities in intractable opposition. These two 'are in conflict with each other, so that you do not do what you want.' To walk according to one is, by nature of the case, not to walk according to the other. The conflict is seen in more detail in Rom. 8: 5–9, 12f. The Flesh-life is opposed by the Spirit, and the Spirit-life is opposed by the Flesh. A person must walk by one or the other, and so long as we are in this earthly body we will be caught up in the conflict (cf. Rom. 7:7–25; II Cor. 4:16—5:5).

5:18 The corollary follows, 'But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under law.' 'Under the law' here means under the pressure to live law-way, under the curse of the broken law and under the condemnation of self-righteousness. The sentence provides a terse summary of the two ways of walking. To walk by the Spirit, i.e. to live grace-way, is to be 'led by the Spirit'. To walk according to the Flesh is to be 'under the law'. 'Law and Flesh are bed-fellows. Where the law is, Flesh flourishes' (Bingham, p. 45). One therefore cannot counteract the Flesh by walking law-way, as indicated by Paul's words in Col. 2:20–23. This accords with his discussion in Rom. 8:3ff. where Paul makes it plain that the only hope for true law fulfilment is to walk according to the Spirit. As one is led by the Spirit the 'just requirement of the law is fulfilled', but this is liberty (cf. II Cor. 3:17 in context). Walking according to the Spirit fulfils the law, for He instructs and empowers believers to walk in love which is the fulfilment of the law. Walking according to the Spirit does not place a person under the law for condemnation, but places them within the law—and the law within them.

5:19 Throughout the next few verses Paul sets out the contrasting results of walking Flesh-way and Spirit-way. Here the list of the 'deeds of the flesh' begins. The list is not exhaustive, but illustrative. There are other similar lists in Rom. 13:13; I Cor. 5:9–13;

6:9–11; II Cor. 12:20f.; Eph. 4:17–19; Col. 3:5–8; I Thess. 4:3–6; etc. There is no need to give a detailed description of each component of the list, we are familiar enough with them all!

Note, however, that Paul is predicating these things of those who walk according to the Flesh. In the context of Galatians, as we have seen, Flesh-walking and law-way are inseparable. The implication is that to follow the course advised by the false teachers will result in the sort of actions and attitudes mentioned in the list that follows. Indeed, the present tense of verse ('the deeds . . . are obvious') may well indicate that the fruit of the false gospel is already being seen amongst the Galatians. This suggestion is reinforced by the fact that in this particular list by far the greatest number of references is to attitudes of division and enmity which would have been the first things stirred up by a teaching designed to 'exclude that it may include'.

The first three items on the list belong together, being all sins of a sexual nature 'sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery'. These are all perversions of true sexuality, for they are built on lust not love.

5:20–21 The next two items 'idolatry and witchcraft' belong together, both being aspects of false worship. Idolatry is the manifestation of human sin (Rom. 1:18–32), in that worship due to God is rendered to another. This object of worship need not be in the form of a carved image, but may be anything to which undue worth is attached. When Paul in Rom. 1:25 says that 'they worship and serve the creature rather than the Creator', he means that fallen Man worships and serves himself. Such self-service is one manifestation of idolatry. 'Witchcraft' is *pharmakeia*, from which we get the word 'pharmacy', etc. Drugs of various sorts were often used in black magic rites to induce trances, provide visions (hallucinations), or even as means of sacrifice through poisoning.

The next eight items 'hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy' belong together, being all manifestations of relationship breakdown. Law-way must result in these things, for by the very nature of its operation it divides men and women according to some external measure of righteousness. Wherever such division takes place, all of these attitudes abound.

The final two items 'drunkenness, orgies, and the like' are matters of self-control. Binge behaviour and legalistic observance are not too far removed, as is now being seen in much research into contemporary dietary problems such as bulimia nervosa.

Such things as those listed are clearly not in keeping with the kingdom of God. The warning 'that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God' (cf. I Cor. 6:9 ; Eph. 5:5) has evidently been given by Paul to the Galatians on an earlier occasion. The persistence in such things is a sign of the governing principle of one's life. If the governing principle is the Flesh, then one cannot inherit the kingdom, which is of the Spirit. If deeds such as those listed are the common lot of a person's life, that person must still be 'in the Flesh', i.e. unredeemed (cf. Rom. 5:6–10). If they have not been born by the Spirit into a new life then they cannot inherit the Kingdom. The theme of inheritance ties up with the earlier argument in Gal. 3 and 4.

5:22–23 In contrast to the deeds (works) of the flesh, Paul now summarises the fruit of the Spirit. There is a difference between 'deeds' and 'fruit'. While the latter does not come without effort (Col. 3:12ff.; Eph. 4:20ff.; Rom. 13:14; cf. II Pet. 1:5–10), none of this effort is made in one's own strength or by one's own resources. The key is 'walking' (5:16, 18). The fruit is the fruit of the *Spirit*, so one cannot walk by the Spirit and not have the fruit produced. It is not the fruit of the person's own self-effort or

willpower. The 'deeds' of self-effort are obvious, but the fruit of the Spirit comes in abundance as one abandons the self-seeking, egoistic, law-way of the Flesh and submits to the leading of the Spirit of grace. As has been said, 'It is not a matter of my willpower, but of the power which follows my willing.' The 'fruit' is that produced by the Spirit from the seed He has sown and watered. The seed is the gospel, the fruit is the love, etc. which flows from a heart renewed by it. Where one walks in step with the Spirit the fruit abounds; where one quenches or grieves the Spirit the harvest is diminished.

Is there any significance in collective singular use of 'fruit' rather than the simple plural of the word 'deeds'? Some have suggested that the list simply expands in detail what is held within the one word 'love', i.e. there is only one fruit with many different facets. Without doubt all the elements are closely related, but there is another way of seeing the matter:

The word 'fruit' can also mean 'harvest'. This means the fruit are not one (singular) but many (plural, collective), and each one mentioned is itself a result of what the Spirit has done. At the same time, being a harvest it means that these fruit have grown together . . . Each fruit is different, and the variety speaks more of a harvest of many kinds, than a multiplicity of the same kind (G. C. Bingham, *The Spirit's Harvest*, NCPI, 1987, p. 6).

'**Love**' is the *agape* love of God. This love of God has been shed abroad in the hearts of believers (Rom. 5:5). God is *agape*, and those who are known by Him live in *agape* (I Thess. 4:9; cf. I John 4:19). For this reason it is the mark of the Gospel's having been received (Acts 2:43–47; 4:32–35; cf. Eph. 1:15; Col. 1:4; I Thess. 3:12; etc.). Only that which is done in love abides (so I Cor. 13).

'**Joy**' is also a mark of having received the gospel, and is thus linked with the joy of salvation (Acts 8:8, 39; 13:48, 52; cf. Luke 19:6; I Thess. 1:6f.; II Cor. 6:10; etc.). Law-way cannot either produce joy or live in it. It cannot be free to enjoy the creation, for it must subject the creation to its own self-justifying or self-satisfying ends (so Col. 2:16–23; I Tim. 4:1–5), and it cannot abide the joy of others without seeking to bring it under subjection (cf. Gal. 2:4).

'**Peace**' is from and with God. God is the God of peace (Rom. 15:33; 16:20; II Cor. 13:11; Phil. 4:9; I Thess. 5:23; etc.), and he brings those reconciled by the grace of His Son's Cross to know 'peace with God' (Rom. 5:1). As a result there was to be peace within the community of God's people (Eph. 2:11–18; Rom. 14:19; I Cor. 14:33; Eph. 4:3) Reconciliation (both with God and with others) is based on the peace God has secured through the Cross. Doubtless, too, there is an internal, personal peace that comes when one hears the verdict of 'not guilty'. This peace cannot be known law-way, for one can never be sure of justification. When Jesus says, 'My peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you,' this must be the peace of Sonship, for it is not peace 'as the world gives', it is *His* peace—the peace He knows and has—personally given and imparted. Now the Spirit of the Son, crying 'Abba, Father', ushers the believer into this peace.

'**Patience**' reflects the patience of God (e.g. Ex. 34:6; Num. 14:18; Neh. 9:17; Ps. 86:15; 103:8; etc.; cf. I Cor. 13:4; II Cor. 6:6; I Thess. 5:14; etc.). It is not, as we commonly use the word, simply waiting for time to pass until an expected event, but rather speaks of immense restraint under provocation. Thus patience is the same as saying 'love is not provoked'. As one knows the patience of God in exercising restraint and forgiving one's own sin (II Pet. 3:9, 15), so believers are patient with one another and with those who are their enemies.

'**Kindness**' likewise reflects God's kindness which is abundant (Gen. 24:27; Ruth. 1:8; I Sam. 20:14; II Sam. 22:51; II Chron. 1:8; Ezra 9:9; Jer. 9:24; Hosea 11:4;

Acts 14:17; cf. Matt. 5:45; Rom. 2:4; etc.). While the kindness of God is seen in a general sense—providing rain, sun, seasons and such like—in many of the references listed His kindness is specifically linked with His redeeming mercy. The ultimate kindness, therefore, is the sending of His Son (Eph. 2:7; Titus 3:4). Again, as one knows that one has been dealt with kindly by God, one is able to exercise kindness towards others (I Cor. 4:13; II Cor. 6:6; Col. 3:12; II Pet. 1:7; etc.).

‘Goodness’ is linked to kindness. Again it is one of the characteristics of God, who alone is good (Mark 10:18; Luke 18:19). The Creation account is replete with references to the goodness of God’s creation (Gen. 1:4, 10, 12, 21, 25, 31, 2:9; etc.; cf. I Tim. 4:4), and God is revealed as the one who does good, giving good gifts to His people (e.g. Deut. 1:25; 4:21; 8:7, 10; 9:6). Thus He works all things together for the good of those He has called (Gen. 45:11; 47:12; 50:20; cf. Rom. 8:28). He does good by sending His servants out with the good news (Is. 52:7), and prepares good works for His people to walk in (Eph. 2:10; cf. Col. 1:10; I Tim. 2:10; II Tim. 3:17; Titus 3:8; I Pet. 2:12; 3 John 11).

‘Faithfulness’ means dependability, reliability. God is faithful to His creation, to Israel, and to the Church, to the Covenant (so Deut. 7:9; 32:4; etc.). Christ is ‘faithful’ (Rev. 1:5; 19:11; Heb. 2:17; 3:2, 5) and God is faithful (I Cor. 1:9; 10:13; II Cor. 1:18; I Thess. 5:24; II Thess. 3:3), i.e. faithful to preserve, protect and keep His people and bring about the sure accomplishment of His plan. In the light of His faithfulness, brethren can be faithful toward one another.

‘Gentleness’ is sometimes translated as ‘meekness’, or ‘humility’. It is thus the opposite of pride and is linked to coming under the will of God. It is thus the mark of the spiritual man (Gal. 6:1; James 1:21; 3:13; I Pet. 3:15). Again notice that it is produced by submission of oneself to the will of God, not by the exercise of one’s own will for self-gain.

‘Self-control’ is the last of the fruit in this list. Again the key is ‘walking’ and ‘being led’. As one is under the control of the Spirit, i.e. as the self is being controlled, so self-control develops (cf. Titus 2:11f.; Acts 24:25; II Pet. 1:6; I Cor. 7:9; 9:25). ‘The word group is more often used with a sexual connotation than otherwise; hence “chastity” can usually be a suitable rendering’ (Bruce, p. 255).

The closing sentence is important: ‘Against such things there is no law.’ These things, being the manifestation of love, are the fulfilment of the law. One can go on in them for ever and ever without limit, as God Himself does. This is a believer’s true liberty.

5:24 ‘Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires.’ This is another way of saying ‘by their fruit you will know them’. Where the Flesh has not been crucified the deeds of the Flesh will abound. By contrast, in believers the Flesh has indeed been crucified. Notice the tense here and see how it reflects Paul’s doctrine of co-crucifixion (see comments in 2:20). Believers see by faith that the life of the Flesh has been crucified in the Cross, and willingly consent to it, as in Rom. 6:11 and Col. 3:5.

5:25–26 In summary Paul says, ‘Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.’ We live by the Spirit because we have been born again by Him into a new and living hope. The whole of the Christian life is sustained by Him through the Word. In view of this fact (i.e. since we live by Him . . .) the injunction is to walk in accordance with Him by keeping in step, or keeping in line with Him (cf. Rom. 8:14). Conversely, ‘Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying each other.’ Such things

PAUL'S LETTER TO THE GALATIANS

belong to the Flesh, not the Spirit. One cannot keep in step with Him and also live in pride and unforgiveness.

Chapter Six

IV. Life in and Through the Spirit: Galatians 5:13—6:18 (Cont'd)

(iii) Pastoral Exhortations (Gal. 6:1–10)

6:1 Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted. **6:2** Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfil the law of Christ. **6:3** If anyone thinks he is something when he is nothing, he deceives himself. **6:4** Each one should test his own actions. Then he can take pride in himself, without comparing himself to somebody else, **6:5** for each one should carry his own load. **6:6** Anyone who receives instruction in the word must share all good things with his instructor. **6:7** Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. **6:8** The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction; the one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life. **6:9** Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. **6:10** Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.

6:1 Paul has shown that the way of life in the Spirit is dependent upon heeding the word of grace. He now applies the general teaching about the fruit of the Spirit and relationships within the congregation to the specific examples.

Law-way deals harshly with those who stumble or fall. It keeps itself back from personal relationships, and—from a position of artificial superiority—heaps condemnation upon failure. Law-way makes a very hard taskmaster. In contrast to this the way of grace—Spirit-way—is marked by gentleness and understanding. Paul says, 'Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted.' The word translated 'caught' means 'to be overtaken' or 'to be surprised by' something. To be sure, there are sins that are so public in their execution and high-handed in their motivation that they can bring the whole congregation into disrepute and rob it of its holy power. Such things must be dealt with by the discipline of the Church (so I Cor. 5; Rom. 16:17; etc.). More often, however, Paul reserves his most rigorous language for the various false teachers who perverted the truth and led the brethren astray (so Gal. 1:7f.; 4:29ff.; 5:10–12; cf. Acts 20:30; II Cor. 11:13ff.; Phil. 1:15; 2:21; I Tim. 1:5ff.; Titus 1:10f.; etc.). Here, however, Paul has in mind the 'stumbling' which attaches to all the saints so long as they are in the flesh (John 8:7; Rom. 7:15ff.; I John. 1:8f.; Heb. 12:1; I Pet. 4:8; cf. Prov. 10:12; I Cor. 13:4ff.; James 5:20). The 'spiritual' are those who know that they too are capable of stumbling. They are not the perfectionists or the legalists who walk law-way. They know that the error of one could be the error of all, themselves included (cf. I Cor. 10:12). They are those who know and understand the word of grace, and thus in whom the Spirit's harvest is seen in abundance.

6:2 As a summary of the attitude of heart Paul says, 'Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfil the law of Christ.' Christ did not come to please himself, but to bear our burdens for us. His servants, therefore, must help to bear the burdens of

others (e.g. Rom. 15:1; I Cor. 8:13; II Cor. 11:28f.; cf. I Thess. 2:9; I Cor. 9:14ff.; II Cor. 11:9; 12:13, 16; etc.). To do so is the practical expression of love, which is the fulfilment of the law. The phrase 'the law of Christ' (cf. Rom. 8:2; I Cor. 9:21; James 1:25; 2:12) is a summary of the law quoted in 5:14 (cf. Matt. 22:36–40). To fulfil the law of Christ is the manifestation and maintenance of true freedom. Luther comments, 'Therefore a Christian must have broad shoulders and husky bones to carry the flesh, that is, the weakness, of other believers.'

6:3 Law-way leads to boasting and to spiritual pride (as in 5:26; 5:15; etc.). Those who refuse to bear one another's burdens, who refuse to forgive, or have no compassion for the saints who stumble, are those who think they are something. In reality they are deceived (cf. Acts 5:36; I Cor. 3:18; II Cor. 12:11). They are like the church in Laodicea which did not know that it was 'wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked'.

6:4–5 Law-way is always comparing its performance to that of others, and the performance of others to its own. It thus becomes very judgemental, and makes its judgements by its own estimation of what its eyes see, as with the Pharisees (John 7:24; 8:15; Luke 18:9–14; etc.; cf. II Cor. 10:12). Instead of such destructive comparisons, Paul says, 'Each one should test his own actions. Then he can take pride in himself, without comparing himself to somebody else, for each one should carry his own load.' Each one must do what is right before the Lord, and from the Lord he will receive his reward (cf. I Cor. 4:5; 3:8, 14; II Cor. 5:10; 10:17f.; Rom. 14:4, 12; Phil. 2:16; etc.). Thus, those who are of weak conscience should not judge those who are strong in the faith and *vice versa*. In the wider context of Galatians, the false teachers must bear their load for bringing a debased gospel into the congregation and Paul must bear his load as a messenger of the true gospel. Grace-way looks to its own actions and motivations first, rather than trying to judge the actions and motivations of others.

6:6 Paul now takes up a different issue. On the surface it may seem to have little to do with grace-way versus law-way, but by nature of the case law-way must manifest itself in a mean and niggardly spirit (cf. Luke 16:15f; 20:46f.). It cannot afford to be open handed; there are too many vested ego-interests involved. Where there is no experience of grace there will be no liberality of spirit. Positively, where grace abounds so does generosity of heart (II Cor. 8:1ff.) In contrast to a meanness of spirit Paul says, 'Anyone who receives instruction in the word must share all good things with his instructor.' This accords with his advice in places such as I Cor. 9:3–18; I Tim. 5:17f.; II Tim. 2:6. While Paul himself did not always avail himself of the rightful claim to support (I Thess. 2:9; I Cor. 9:15–18; Acts 20:33–35; etc.), he was insistent that the right should not be withheld from others.

6:7–8 Paul sums up his pastoral advice in the image of the harvest. 'Sowing and reaping'—seed time and harvest—is a common theme in the Scriptures (e.g. Hosea 8:7; Job 4:8; Prov. 22:8; cf. Matt. 7:16–20; I Cor. 9:11; II Cor. 9:6). Indeed, it can be argued that the whole of life is a matter of reaping and sowing, in one way or another, for 'there is nothing that is not sown, i.e. either good or bad. There is nothing that is not sown that will not have a harvest—of some kind! To sow is to do, to act, to think' (Bingham, p. 62). To walk law-way, being judgemental of those who stumble, living by comparisons with one another to maintain a place of superiority, and living in a niggardly way is to sow to one's own flesh. To sow to one's own selfishness is to operate

as though the word of grace had never come. Those who live in such a way will reap what they sow. But the converse is the case too. Believers are not indebted to the Flesh to live according to the Flesh, but to the Spirit to live according to the Spirit (Rom. 8:12f.). Those who sow to the Spirit (i.e. in love, grace, forgiveness and mercy) will reap an eternal harvest from the Spirit. This harvest (summed up by the phrase ‘eternal life’) stands in direct contradiction to the harvest of corruption brought about from sowing to the flesh. The fruit of the Spirit ‘against which there is no law’ abides forever, and qualitatively make up eternal life.

The Greek construction places the emphasis on *God*, rather than on the ‘is not mocked’. By nature of the case, Paul is saying, *He* cannot be mocked. By the very fact that He is God, He will not be mocked. Nothing is hidden from His sight, and nothing will remain unaccounted for in the last analysis.

6:9–10 In summary, says Paul, ‘Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.’ There are two intimately related thoughts: while there is the *opportunity* we must do good (cf. John 9:4; 12:35; Eph. 5:16; Phil. 4:10; Col. 4:5; Titus 2:1ff.), because there *will be* a harvest. The ‘proper time’ in view may be the last day, but it is also true that we reap a harvest in this life as well (negatively in Matt. 6:2, 5, 16 and positively in Luke 18:29f.). In II Cor. 9:6ff. Paul uses same image and very similar wording to that of these verses to refer to the Jerusalem relief fund. While it is possible that the same thought is in his mind—the collection for the saints being the good work especially directed to the household of God—we cannot insist on this with certainty. If this is the case, though, it would be a specific example of the general principle of sowing and reaping. Whatever, there is a need for diligence rather than weariness, such diligence being motivated by the sure and certain hope of a rich harvest.

(iv) Pastoral Summary (Gal. 6:11–16)

6:11 See what large letters I use as I write to you with my own hand! **6:12** Those who want to make a good impression outwardly are trying to compel you to be circumcised. The only reason they do this is to avoid being persecuted for the cross of Christ. **6:13** Not even those who are circumcised obey the law, yet they want you to be circumcised that they may boast about your flesh. **6:14** May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. **6:15** Neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything; what counts is a new creation. **6:16** Peace and mercy to all who follow this rule, even to the Israel of God.

6:11 Paul now comes to the close of his letter. He would have normally written with an amanuensis, but closed off the letter ‘with his own hand’ (Rom. 16:22; cf. I Cor. 16:21; Col. 4:18; II Thess. 3:17f.). What is the reason for the large letters? Despite various suggestions (such as a recurrence of the eye problem which may have been alluded to in 4:12ff.; or that his were the rough hands of a workman and therefore he found it difficult to write neatly; or that he was permanently disfigured because of torture/ crucifixion at Philippi), it is most probable that Paul wished to emphasise his personal care and concern for them. The larger writing would have been equivalent to bold caps or italics today. The manner of the script underscored the fact that it was Paul, their father in the faith, the one who had loved them and had brought the gospel to them, who was closing out the Letter.

6:12 In contrast to the genuine love and care shown to them by Paul (cf. 4:19; I Cor. 4:15; I Thess. 2:7f.; etc.), ‘Those who want to make a good impression outwardly are trying to compel you to be circumcised. The only reason they do this is to avoid being persecuted for the cross of Christ.’ Paul has already alluded to the sufferings that came upon him for the preaching of the cross (5:11; cf. I Cor. 4:12; II Cor. 4:9; 12:10; I Thess. 3:4f.; II Tim. 3:11), and will do so again below (6:17). The preaching of the Cross, i.e. the word of grace, brought opposition from Jews and Greeks, but for different reasons. The Greeks saw the message as foolishness and ridiculed the message and the messengers because of it (e.g. Acts 17:32). Where the gospel threatened economic or social stability as they saw it (e.g. Acts 16:16ff.; 19:23–41), they stirred up trouble. However, the most lasting, systematic and malicious opposition came from Paul’s own kinsmen after the flesh, the Jews (e.g. Acts 6:9; 9:22f.; 9:29f.; 13:44–52; 14:1–6; 14:19; 17:5ff.; 20:33; II Cor. 11:24; I Thess. 2:14f.; etc.). In particular focus in this verse are the Judaisers—a section of the Jewish branch of the Jerusalem church—who wished to avoid persecution from their countrymen by adopting a compromised gospel in which Gentiles should be circumcised and other Jewish rules observed. Rather than risking ejection they jettisoned the truth.

6:13 Harking back to his earlier comments (in 3:10f.) Paul says that ‘Not even those who are circumcised obey the law, yet they want you to be circumcised that they may boast about your flesh.’ The real point of the false teaching is thus exposed. For all its posturing as spiritual achievement theirs is really an egoistic work of the Flesh. The false teachers are in the ‘numbers game’, to bolster their own stocks by trading in human flesh. They do not really obey the law—such obedience being impossible anyway—but rather are using their seeming obedience as a pretext for their own advancement.

6:14 Again in sharp contrast to their attitude, Paul says, ‘May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.’ The message of the Cross was the heart and soul of Paul’s entire ministry (I Cor. 1:18ff.; 2:1ff.; Rom. 1:16; 5:11; Phil. 3:3, 9; etc.). Here he gives the existential result of his doctrine of ‘co-crucifixion’ (see comments on 2:20). The ‘world’ is the realm of rebellious humanity as arranged against God (cf. I Cor. 2:12; 3:19; etc.), and can be identified with the ‘old man’, i.e. Adamic humanity which lives in ‘the Flesh’. This world has already been judged, having been crucified on the cross. In that act of crucifixion, Paul has also been crucified to the world. He, as a new man in Christ, is no longer in the world. He has passed out of death into life, out of judgement into grace. He is no longer in sin, as the world is, but he is ‘in Christ’. He therefore is not indebted to the world to live according to the world, nor need he live in fear of the world and its opposition to his Gospel. His death has already taken place, so all the world’s threats could not take from him the life that was already his in Christ.

According to the world’s way of seeing things there were many things of which Paul could have boasted (cf. II Cor. 11:21ff.; Phil. 3:4ff.), but such things are merely the manifestation of a rebellious heart unsubmitted to the grace of God. These things are the boasting of self-righteousness, which is an abomination before the Lord (cf. Luke 16:14f.). While Paul was intent to boast in nothing but the Cross, this thought would have been the most objectionable one imaginable. ‘The object of Paul’s boasting was, by all ordinary standards of the day, the most ignoble of all objects—a matter of unrelieved shame not of boasting. It is difficult, after sixteen centuries and more during which the cross has been a sacred symbol, to realise the unspeakable horror and

loathing which the very mention or thought of the cross provoked in Paul's day' (Bruce, p. 271). To boast in the Cross was to offend every worldly notion of power, righteousness, nobility, wisdom or strength, yet this very Cross was (and is) the power of God to salvation.

6:15 The sum of it all, on a pastoral level, is this 'Neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything; what counts is a new creation.' We have already seen that circumcision is a 'something/nothing' matter (2:3; 5:2, 6), and here Paul restates the principle in a slightly different way. For all of those who are new creations in Christ (cf. II Cor. 5:17; Rom. 6:4; John 3:3) the matter of circumcision is neither here nor there. The fact that they are new men in Christ is the important and eternal thing.

6:16 To all who recognise that this is the case, 'Peace and mercy to all who follow this rule, even to the Israel of God.' The word rule (*kanón*) means a 'measuring rule' or 'straight edge'. The word of the Cross, which is the word of grace and the word of the new creation, is the measuring rule which Paul has been applying all the way through the letter. The 'Israel of God' is the Church, the body of those saved by grace (3:6–9, 29; 4:28; cf. Rom. 4:16; 9:6–11). Where the rule of grace is observed, peace and mercy must follow.

(v) *Personal Appeal and Benediction (Gal. 6:17–18)*

6:17 Finally, let no one cause me trouble, for I bear on my body the marks of Jesus. **6:18** The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit, brothers. Amen.

6:17 The Letter has been a deeply moving one for Paul to write. His penultimate sentence reflects something of the intensity of his concern and the enervating nature of the ministry he has had to the Galatians. The marks probably refer to the various scars and bruises that Paul had received because of the gospel (cf. I Cor. 4:11–13; II Cor. 4:4f.; 11:23ff.), but these in themselves connote the wider image of a slave branded with the marks of his owner.

6:18 His concluding words (cf. Philemon 25; Phil. 4:23; II Tim. 4:22) eloquently sum up the theme of the entire letter, 'The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit, brothers. Amen.' So be it!

Appendix One

**Significant Pauline Usage of the Phrase 'in Christ',
Including Those with a Locative Sense**

- Rom. 6:23 For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life *in Christ* Jesus our Lord;
- Rom. 8:1 Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are *in Christ* Jesus;
- Rom. 8:39 neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is *in Christ* Jesus our Lord;
- Rom. 12:5 so *in Christ* we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others;
- Rom. 16:3 Greet Priscilla and Aquila, my fellow workers *in Christ* Jesus;
- Rom. 16:7 Greet Andronicus and Junias, my relatives who have been in prison with me. They are outstanding among the apostles, and they were *in Christ* before I was;
- Rom. 16:9 Greet Urbanus, our fellow worker *in Christ*, and my dear friend Stachys;
- Rom. 16:10 Greet Apelles, tested and approved *in Christ*;
- I Cor. 1:2 To the church of God in Corinth, to those sanctified *in Christ* Jesus and called to be holy, together with all those everywhere who call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ—their Lord and ours:
- I Cor. 1:4 I always thank God for you because of his grace given you *in Christ* Jesus;
- I Cor. 1:30 It is because of him that you are *in Christ* Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God—that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption;
- I Cor. 4:15 Even though you have ten thousand guardians *in Christ*, you do not have many fathers, for *in Christ* Jesus I became your father through the gospel;
- I Cor. 4:17 For this reason I am sending to you Timothy, my son whom I love, who is faithful in the Lord. He will remind you of my way of life *in Christ* Jesus, which agrees with what I teach everywhere in every church;
- I Cor. 15:19 If only for this life we have hope *in Christ*, we are to be pitied more than all men;
- I Cor. 15:22 For as in Adam all die, so *in Christ* all will be made alive;
- I Cor. 16:24 My love to all of you *in Christ* Jesus. Amen;
- II Cor. 1:20 For no matter how many promises God has made, they are 'Yes' *in Christ*. And so through him the 'Amen' is spoken by us to the glory of God;
- II Cor. 1:21 Now it is God who makes both us and you stand firm *in Christ*. He anointed us;
- II Cor. 2:14 But thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumphal procession *in Christ* and through us spreads everywhere the fragrance of the knowledge of him;
- II Cor. 3:14 But their minds were made dull, for to this day the same veil remains when the old covenant is read. It has not been removed, because only *in Christ* is it taken away;
- II Cor. 5:17 Therefore, if anyone is *in Christ*, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!
- II Cor. 12:2 I know a man *in Christ* who fourteen years ago was caught up to the third heaven. Whether it was in the body or out of the body I do not know—God knows;

CHAPTER SIX

- II Cor. 12:19 Have you been thinking all along that we have been defending ourselves to you? We have been speaking in the sight of God as those *in Christ*; and everything we do, dear friends, is for your strengthening;
- Eph. 1:1 Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, To the saints in Ephesus, the faithful *in Christ Jesus*;
- Eph. 1:3 Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing *in Christ*;
- Eph. 1:9 And he made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed *in Christ*;
- Eph. 1:13 And you also were included *in Christ* when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit;
- Eph. 1:20 which he exerted *in Christ* when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms;
- Eph. 2:6 And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms *in Christ Jesus*;
- Eph. 2:7 in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us *in Christ Jesus*;
- Eph. 2:10 For we are God's workmanship, created *in Christ Jesus* to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do;
- Eph. 2:13 But now *in Christ Jesus* you who once were far away have been brought near through the blood of Christ;
- Eph. 3:6 This mystery is that through the gospel the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise *in Christ Jesus*;
- Eph. 3:11 according to his eternal purpose which he accomplished *in Christ Jesus* our Lord;
- Eph. 3:21 to him be glory in the church and *in Christ Jesus* throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen;
- Eph. 4:32 Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as *in Christ* God forgave you;
- Phil. 1:1 Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus, To all the saints *in Christ Jesus* at Philippi, together with the overseers and deacons:
- Phil. 1:26 so that through my being with you again your joy *in Christ Jesus* will overflow on account of me;
- Phil. 3:3 For it is we who are the circumcision, we who worship by the Spirit of God, who glory *in Christ Jesus*, and who put no confidence in the flesh—
- Phil. 3:9 and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith *in Christ*—the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith;
- Phil. 3:14 I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward *in Christ Jesus*;
- Phil. 4:7 And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds *in Christ Jesus*;
- Phil. 4:19 And my God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches *in Christ Jesus*;
- Col. 1:2 To the holy and faithful brothers *in Christ* at Colosse: Grace and peace to you from God our Father;
- Col. 1:28 We proclaim him, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone perfect *in Christ*;
- Col. 2:10 and you have been given fullness *in Christ*, who is the head over every power and authority;

PAUL'S LETTER TO THE GALATIANS

- Col. 2:17 These are a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality, however, is found *in Christ*;
- I Ths. 4:16 For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead *in Christ* will rise first;
- I Tim. 1:14 The grace of our Lord was poured out on me abundantly, along with the faith and love that are *in Christ Jesus*;
- II Tim. 1:1 Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, according to the promise of life that is *in Christ Jesus*;
- II Tim. 1:13 What you heard from me, keep as the pattern of sound teaching, with faith and love *in Christ Jesus*;
- II Tim. 2:1 You then, my son, be strong in the grace that is *in Christ Jesus*;
- II Tim. 2:10 Therefore I endure everything for the sake of the elect, that they too may obtain the salvation that is *in Christ Jesus*, with eternal glory.

Appendix Two

Quotable Quotes from Luther and Calvin

Luther's Works, Vol. 26, pp. 308f.:

Therefore the true function and the chief and proper use of the Law is to reveal to man his sin, blindness, misery, wickedness, ignorance, hate and contempt of God, death, hell, judgement and the well-deserved wrath of God. . . . For since the reason becomes haughty with this human presumption of righteousness and imagines that on account of this it is pleasing to God, therefore God has to send some Hercules, namely, the Law, to attack, subdue and destroy the monster with full force. . . . Hence this use of the Law is extremely beneficial and very necessary. For if someone is not a murderer, adulterer, or thief, and abstains from external sins, as the Pharisee did (Luke 18:11), he would swear, being possessed by the devil, that he is a righteous man; therefore he develops the presumption of righteousness and relies on his good works. God cannot soften and humble this man or make him acknowledge his misery and damnation any other way than by the Law. Therefore the proper and absolute use of the Law is to terrify him with lightning (as on Mount Sinai), thunder and the blare of the trumpet, with a thunderbolt to burn and crush that brute which is called the presumption of righteousness. . . . For as long as the presumption of righteousness stays in a man, there remains immense pride, self-trust, smugness, hate of God, contempt of grace and mercy, ignorance of the promises and Christ. The proclamation of free grace and the forgiveness of sins does not enter his heart and understanding, because that huge rock and solid wall, namely the presumption of righteousness by which the heart itself is surrounded, prevents this from happening.

Therefore this presumption of righteousness is a huge and horrible monster. To break and crush it, God needs a large and powerful hammer, that is, the Law, which is the hammer of death, the thunder of hell, and the lightning of divine wrath. To what purpose? To attack the presumption of righteousness, which is rebellious, stubborn and stiff-necked beast.

Luther's Works, Vol. 26, p. 380f.:

Crying: Abba! Father!

Paul could have said 'God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, *praying* "Abba! Father!"' But he purposely says 'crying', to indicate the trial of the Christian who is still weak and who believes weakly. In Rom. 8:26 he calls this crying 'sighs too deep for words'. 'Likewise', he says, 'the Spirit helps us in our weaknesses; for we do not know how to pray as we should, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with sighs too deep for words.'

It is a very great comfort when Paul says here that the Spirit of Christ, sent by God into our hearts, cries 'Abba! Father!' and when he says in Rom. 8:26 that He helps us in our weakness and intercedes for us with sighs too deep for words. Anyone who truly believed this would not fall away in any affliction, no matter how great. But many things hinder this faith. In the first place, our heart was born in sin. In the second place we have the innate evil in us that we are in doubt about the favour of God toward us and cannot believe for a certainty that we are pleasing to God. Besides, 'our adversary, the devil, prowls around, issuing terrible roars: (I Peter 5:8); and he says 'You are a sinner. Therefore God is wrathful with you and will destroy you forever.' We have nothing to strengthen and sustain us against these great and unbearable cries except the bare Word, which sets Christ as forth as the Victor over sin, death, and every evil. But it is effort and labour to cling firmly to this in the midst of trial and conflict, when Christ does not become visible to any of our senses. We do not see Him, and in the trial our heart does not feel His presence and help. In fact, Christ appears to be wrathful with us and to be deserting us at such a time. Besides, in this trial a man feels the power of sin, the weakness of the flesh, and his doubt; he feels the fiery darts of the devil (Eph. 6:16), the terrors

PAUL'S LETTER TO THE GALATIANS

of death, and the wrath and judgement of God. All these things issue powerful and horrible cries against us, so that there appears to be nothing left for us except despair and eternal death.

But in the midst of these terrors of Law, thunderclaps of sin, tremors of death, and roarings of the devil, Paul says, the Holy Spirit begins to cry in our heart, 'Abba! Father!'. And His cry vastly exceeds, and breaks through, the powerful and horrible cries of the Law, sin, death and the devil. It penetrates the clouds and heaven, and it reaches all the way to the ears of God.

Luther's Works, Vol. 26, p. 384:

I have discussed this at some length in order to show what the work of the Holy Spirit is and how He usually carries it out. In temptation we must not on any account decide this matter on the basis of our feeling or on the cry of the Law, sin, and the devil. If we want to follow our feeling here or to believe those cries, we shall decide that we are bereft of all help from the Holy Spirit and that we have been utterly banished from the presence of God. Should we not rather remember, then, that Paul says that the Holy Spirit helps us in our weakness and cries 'Abba! Father!'? That is, He emits what seems to us to be some sort of sob and sigh of the heart; but in the sight of God this is a loud cry and sigh too deep for words. In every temptation and weakness, therefore, just cling to Christ and sigh! He gives you the Holy Spirit, who cries: 'Abba! Father!' Then the Father says: 'I do not hear anything in the whole world except this single sigh, which is such a loud cry in My ears that it fills heaven and earth and drowns out all the cries of everything else.'

Calvin, *NT Commentaries*, Vol. 11, p. 51:

Unbelievers differ from the children of God in that while they also enjoy the benefits of God, they devour them like cattle and look no higher. The children of God, on the other hand, knowing that all these benefits have been sanctified by the promises, acknowledge in them God as their Father.

Luther's Works, Vol. 26, p. 259:

. . . no one can describe in words how horrible and dreadful a thing it is to seek righteousness apart from the blessing, in the Law and in works. For this is the abomination standing in the holy place (Matt. 24:15), which denies God and establishes creature in place of the Creator.

Luther's Works, Vol. 26, p. 273:

Although works follow faith, yet faith should not be works, and works should not be faith, lest they be confused; but the boundaries and the realms of the Law or works and of faith should be correctly distinguished from one another.

Calvin, *NT Commentaries*, Vol. 11, p. 77 (Calvin on the Sabbath):

When we today make a distinction of days, we do not lay a snare of necessity on the conscience, or distinguish between days as if one were more holy than another, nor do we set them up as religion and the worship of God. We merely give heed to order and harmony. Among us the observance is free and void of all superstition.

Calvin, *NT Commentaries*, Vol. 11, p. 51 (Calvin on exposition):

For they (i.e. Origen and others) inferred that the literal sense is too meagre and poor and that beneath the bark of the letter there lie deeper mysteries which cannot be extracted but by hammering out allegories. And this they did without difficulty, for the world always has and always will prefer speculations which seem ingenious, to solid doctrine. . . . Scripture, they say, is fertile and thus bears multiple meanings. I acknowledge that Scripture is the most rich and inexhaustible fount of all wisdom. But I deny that its fertility consists in the various meanings which anyone may fasten to it at his pleasure. Let us know then, that the true meaning of Scripture is the natural and simple one, and let us embrace and hold it resolutely.

Luther's Works, Vol. 27, p. 4:

For Christ has set us free, not for a political freedom or a freedom of the flesh but for a theological freedom, that is, to make our conscience free and joyful, unafraid of the wrath to come. This is the most genuine freedom; it is immeasurable. When the other kinds of freedom—political freedom and freedom of the flesh—are compared with the greatness and the glory of this kind of freedom, they hardly amount to one little drop. For who can express what a great gift it is for someone to be able to declare for certain that God neither is nor ever will be wrathful but will forever be a gracious and merciful Father for the sake of Christ.

Luther's Works, Vol. 27, p. 7:

The wicked notion that the Law justifies clings to the reason very stubbornly, and the whole human race is finally so entangled and conquered by it that it can only be rescued with the utmost difficulty.

Luther's Works, Vol. 27, p. 13:

The more men try to satisfy the Law, the more they transgress it. The more someone tries to bring peace to the conscience through his own righteousness, the more disquieted he makes it.

Luther's Works, Vol. 27, p. 35 (Christ presented in the scriptures in two ways, i.e. as a gift and as an example):

To those who are afraid of their sins Christ the Saviour and the gift should be announced, not Christ the example and the lawgiver. But to those who are smug and stubborn the example of Christ should be set forth, lest they use the Gospel as a pretext for freedom of the flesh and thus become smug . . . Both forms of proclamation have their proper time; if this is not observed, the proclamation of salvation becomes a curse.

Calvin, *NT Commentaries*, Vol. 11, p. 93:

Christ won this liberty for us on the cross; the fruit and possession of it are bestowed on us through the Gospel. Paul does well, then, to warn the Galatians not to be entangled again with the yoke of bondage; that is, not to allow a snare to be laid for their consciences. For if men lay an unjust burden on our shoulders, it can be borne; but if they want to bring our consciences into bondage, we must resist valiantly, even to death. If we let men bind our consciences, we shall be despoiled of an invaluable blessing and at the same time an insult will be offered to Christ, the Author of freedom.

Select Bibliography

Bingham, G. C. *Galatians, A Commentary* (NCPI, Blackwood, S. Aust.).

Bruce, F. F. *Commentary on Galatians* in the NEW INTERNATIONAL GREEK TESTAMENT COMMENTARY series (Wm B. Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, Michigan 1982).

Burton, E. *Galatians* in the INTERNATIONAL CRITICAL COMMENTARY series (T. & T. Clarke, Edinburgh, 1921).

Calvin, J. *Galatians* in CALVIN'S NEW TESTAMENT COMMENTARIES (Wm B. Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, Michigan 1965).

Lightfoot, J. B. *The Epistle of Paul to the Galatians* in the ZONDERVAN COMMENTARY series (Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1957).

Guthrie, D. *Galatians* in THE NEW CENTURY BIBLE COMMENTARY series, (Wm. B. Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1973).

Luther, M. *Lectures on Galatians*, LUTHER'S WORKS, VOLS. 26 & 27 (Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis, 1963).

Ridderbos, H. *Paul, An Outline of His Theology* (Wm B. Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, Michigan 1975).