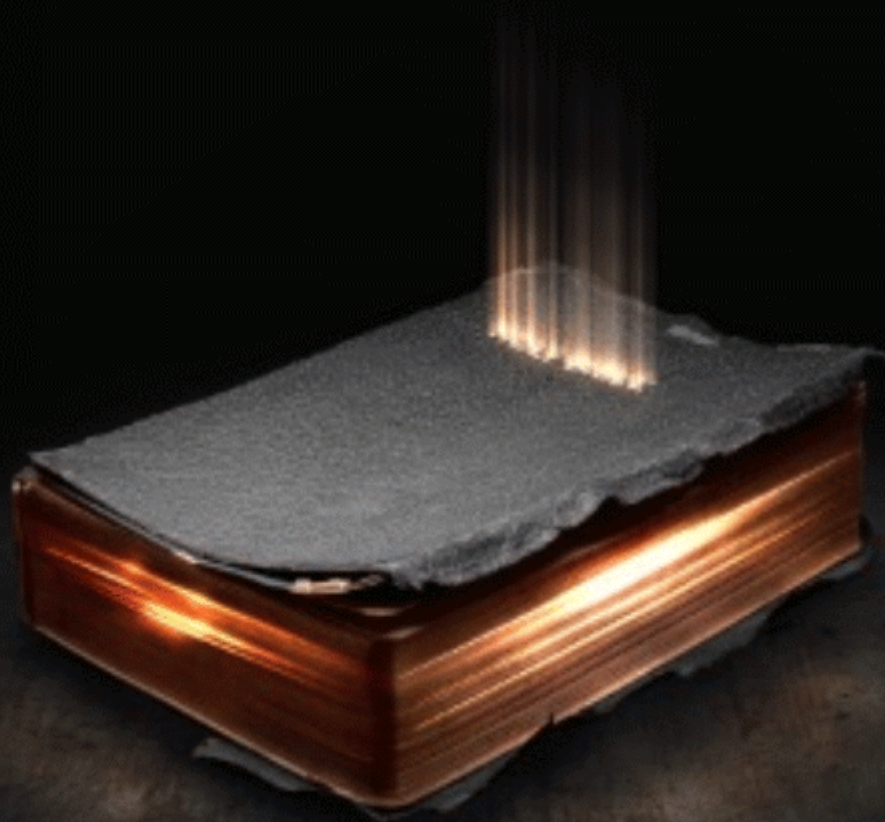


THE GOOD NEWS
OF
GALATIANS



JOE GRESHAM

THE GOOD NEWS OF GALATIANS

*A Simple, Systematic Commentary on the Book of
Galatians*

Joe W. Gresham

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Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION	iv
--------------------	----

Chapter 1

So Soon Removed	6
-----------------------	---

Chapter 2

Righteousness Is By Faith	19
---------------------------------	----

Chapter 3

Who Has Bewitched You?	41
------------------------------	----

Chapter 4

The Two Covenants	62
-------------------------	----

Chapter 5

The Works of the Flesh	83
------------------------------	----

Chapter 6

Be Not Deceived	112
-----------------------	-----

Books by the Author	118
---------------------------	-----

Introduction

The book of Galatians is one of the most exciting books of the Bible. This epistle had such an impact on the faith, life, and teachings of the great Reformer, Martin Luther, that he declared: "The Epistle to the Galatians is my Epistle. I have betrothed myself to it; it is my Katie von Bora."

The theme of this book, as is the book of Romans, is justification by faith. Paul was the author of both of these books. Galatians was written first (about A.D. 57/58) and this theme was expanded upon in Romans a short time later. Unlike most of Paul's letters, this one was not written to a particular individual or church, but rather, it is a regional letter written to several churches in the Roman province of Galatia located in Asia Minor.

The Galatian churches were predominantly gentiles and instability of character was a well recognized trait of these people. In writing of the Galatians, Caesar said that they "for the most part affect new things." "They are giddy headed hearers." "Constant only in their inconstancy." Because of their tendency to be blown about by every wind of doctrine, they were especially susceptible to a group of legalists known as Judaizers. This sect, with their pharisaical tendencies, were drawing the people away from the truth as it is in Jesus, particularly concerning the great doctrine of justification by faith. They claimed that salvation came from obedience to the law and Old Testament ceremonies with the main point of contention being the necessity of circumcision.

The Galatians failed to discern that those false teachers were hypocritical, unregenerate men, unholy in heart, and corrupt in life. Their religion consisted in a round of ceremonies by the performance of which they

expected to receive the favor of God. Hence, they clung to their errors, deceiving themselves and deceiving others. Therefore, the apostle urged upon the Galatians, as their only safe course, to leave the false guides by whom they had been misled and to return to the faith, which they had received from the Source of truth and wisdom.

Open, unmasked error was supplanting the gospel message. Christ, the true foundation of the faith, was virtually renounced for the obsolete ceremonies of Judaism. This demanded that most decisive measures must be taken, the sharpest warnings given. There is a tremendous contrast between the way Paul addressed the problems here and those in Corinth. In writing to the Corinthians, Paul manifests great caution and tenderness, but the Galatians he reprovcs with abrupt severity.

His purpose in writing to the Galatians was threefold: 1. To recover those who had been perverted. 2. Settle those who were wavering. 3. Confirm those who were standing steadfast. Thus, he sets out to prove that righteousness is by faith alone in Christ in both the Old and the New Testaments; the end result of which is perfection in Christ.

CHAPTER ONE

So Soon Removed

Paul's apostleship had been challenged, so he begins by asserting his authority as an apostle and that he had not received this position from any man, but had been called by Jesus Himself after His ascension.

1 Paul, an apostle, (not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised him from the dead;) 2 And all the brethren which are with me, unto the churches of Galatia: 3 Grace be to you and peace from God the Father, and from our Lord Jesus Christ,

Although most of these churches were corrupted and were accepting heretical teaching, they are still called churches. Simply because an individual or a group of people have erroneous (or heretical) beliefs and practices this does not disqualify that person (or church) from being acknowledged as a child or children of God. However, when greater light comes and that light is rejected and people cling to their man-made traditions and superstitions, they place themselves outside the saving grace of God and He can no longer claim them as His own. Every time we reject the prompting of the Spirit of God, our hearts become hardened. Each ray of light that is rejected plunges us deeper into darkness. The Holy Spirit will lead us into light and truth or leave us in darkness and error. The decision is up to each one of us individually. "Wherefore (as the Holy Ghost saith, To day if ye will hear his voice, Harden not your hearts)" (Hebrews 3:7-8).

We find in the third verse that grace comes only from the throne of God. The Father is the source of all grace and the Son is the channel through which we receive that grace. Once we have received the grace, we will receive the "peace" of God. Grace, however, must precede peace. Until we have the grace, we cannot have true peace. "Grace releases sin, and peace makes the conscience quiet" is the way Martin Luther put it. If we truly believe that Jesus has forgiven us, that He has accepted us, that His grace is sufficient, that all power is given to Him, that He is able to keep that which we have committed to Him, that He is with us always; ought we not to have peace?

If we do not have the peace, it is because we do not exercise the faith which claims the grace. If we truly believe, then amidst the greatest turmoils of life, the greatest trials the devil throws at us, we could - nay, we would - have peace. It is essential we have the peace that passeth understanding, the peace that only Jesus can give us.

If you have peace, you are rich without money; if you have it not, you are poor with millions. The grace and peace of God must come into our lives and be a guiding, governing, controlling power in our Christian experience. Therefore, may the "Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ" (2 Peter 1:2). The very foundation of the Gospel is presented now as Paul declares that it was Jesus:

4 Who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father. 5 To whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.

THE GOOD NEWS OF GALATIANS

We also find here the problem with so many Christians today. They do not want to be delivered from this "present" world. They want their deliverance to be sometime in the future, after they have gone where they want, said what they want, ate what they want, drank what they want, and seen what they want. In short, they do not want deliverance from the things they want to do, but choose rather to "enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season" (Hebrews 11:25). Thus, multitudes are racing headlong on the downward path to perdition, apparently oblivious to the fact that "the friendship of the world is enmity with God" and "whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God" (James 4:4). These poor souls reject or ignore God's counsel to "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world"; and failing to realize that the world and its things are all going to pass away, they see no need (nor have any desire) for deliverance from it (1 John 2:15-17).

I am reminded of a story of a minister who once asked a group of children if they all wanted to go to heaven. When little Johnny did not raise his hand, the minister said: "Johnny, don't you want to go to heaven when you die?" To this the little boy responded: "Oh, yes, when I die, I thought you were trying to get a group together today." The questions to which each of God's children should give serious contemplation are: "Have I been delivered from this 'present evil world?'" And "Do I really desire to be delivered?"

After giving his short salutation and introduction, Paul begins to immediately and pointedly address the problem in Galatia.

6 I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that

called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: 7 Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. 8 But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. 9 As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed.

This is the only place in all his letters where Paul expresses astonishment, rather than love and joy. The true gospel, which is the "power of God unto salvation" (Romans 1:16), was being perverted and the people were now starting to believe in salvation by a power other than God. Paul was absolutely astonished that the Christians of Galatia would be willing to accept a perverted gospel. He fully realized that by removing themselves from the gospel, they were removing themselves from the very One who gave that gospel. Notice, this is not another gospel, but is in actuality a perversion of the true gospel. There is, and always has been, only one gospel, but there are so many perversions of that gospel. That is the problem the early church faced, and that is the problem we face today.

As one author has stated: "The doctrines which the Galatians had received, could not in any sense be called the gospel; they were the teachings of men, and were directly opposed to the doctrines taught by Christ." (White, *Sketches From the Life of Paul*, p. 189).

The gospel had become so perverted that it had not only become useless, but even deadly, and in many ways this is also true today. It is God that calls us to the grace of Christ (1 Corinthians 1:9; 1 Peter 5:10) and when

THE GOOD NEWS OF GALATIANS

we remove ourselves from the gospel, we are removed from the One who called us and of necessity from His saving grace. This is why Paul was so concerned, for he knew that a departure from the gospel would bring separation from God and certain damnation. The defection was (and is) threefold:

1. Separation from the gospel.
2. Separation from God.
3. Separation from His grace.

Today, as at the time of Paul, there are those in the church who have separated themselves from God and his grace through the acceptance and promulgation of perversions of the gospel. One's position in the church, the prestige in which others hold you, the honor bestowed upon you, has no bearing on your salvation. Salvation is dependant upon your faithfulness and faith in the promises of God.

In reality Paul is dealing with two problems among the Galatians. One is a perversion of the gospel and the second is the unsettling influences which were causing doubts and schisms and troubling the churches. The latter of these is always the sure result of the former. As the result of a perverted gospel and those who were perverting it, schisms were developing in the church, and it is because of this very thing that so many schisms exist in Christianity today. Therefore, Paul's counsel to the Galatians is most applicable today, that you not be soon removed from the hope of the gospel. Do not accept a perverted gospel whether preached by priest, prelate, pastor, or parent, even an "angel from heaven." We have been forewarned that "Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness" (2

Thessalonians 11:14, 15).

Heresy had begun to settle into the church of Christ, weakening the church, unsettling the faith, and hindering the kingdom of God. The great evil of heresy is that it is a sin against God, the soul, the truth, the church, and the world. Therefore, I beseech you, do not be removed from the only hope you have. Do not accept a perverted gospel, but rather believe, lay hold upon, and preach the "everlasting gospel" with the full assurance that it is indeed "the power of God unto salvation" (Revelation 14:6; Romans 1:16). Never be ashamed of it and never pervert it. Even if "an angel" should "preach any other gospel" than that contained in the word of God, do not believe it, and let that "man" or "angel" be "accursed."

Notice that Paul said those who present a false gospel are to be "accursed," not persecuted or killed. One of the great sins within Christianity for centuries has been the persecution or destruction of those whose religious beliefs differ from one another. Not only have millions of people been massacred in the past for "religious" reasons, but it is even happening today in places such as Yugoslavia, Albania, and Ireland. How sad! How contrary to Scripture! How evident the gospel is forgotten and the Spirit of Christ is gone.

Always remember, whenever one turns their back upon any part of the gospel of Christ, they lose their hold on Christ and inevitably drop back into the old life from which they had been saved. Many, even today, reject certain portions of God's word for fear of what others might think or say. They tend to compromise the truths of Scripture in order to please people, win popularity, and increase in size. This is the issue Paul now addresses.

THE GOOD NEWS OF GALATIANS

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

The question is: "Are we to please self, men, or God?" This is the real issue today. Any time we seek to please anyone more than God, we have placed ourselves outside of His saving grace. The early church of Rome, in order to gain influence over the heathen, began to relax the strictness of some of the Bible principles, which they held. Their intentions in doing this were not evil, but whenever one compromises truth, evil is always the end result. In order to gain favor with the people, they compromised truth and the church became corrupted. Any church or individual that compromises what they know to be truth will always become corrupted and proven to "not be the servant of Christ."

There is today a tendency to dull the edge of truth, so as not to lose favor with the wealthy or influential, or cause membership numbers to decrease. So to prevent the loss of tithe or a decrease in membership, Christian churches today compromise the Bible teachings on standards, temperance, stewardship, creation, inspiration, the sufficiency of Scripture, and a multitude of other Bible truths. We must remember that Christians are called to be fishers of men, not people pleasers. We are to point people toward the straight and narrow path to the kingdom of heaven, not pat them on the back as they race madly down the broad way to perdition. It is imperative all Christians realize that any time we deviate from the gospel that Jesus has given us, we fall. We cannot depart from the path that God has set for us without bringing destruction upon ourselves. Yet we see

our brothers and sisters departing from the fundamental doctrines of the word of God - from the pillars of "the faith which was once delivered unto the saints" (Jude 1:3) - and we remain strangely silent.

We are set as watchmen and God warns us that if we do not "speak to warn the wicked from his way, [and] that wicked man die in his iniquity... his blood will I require at thine hand" (Ezekiel 33:6-8). As Christians we are required to do all we can to save souls, not please them.

11 But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man. 12 For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ. 13 For ye have heard of my conversation [conduct] in time past in the Jews' religion, how that beyond measure I persecuted the church of God, and wasted it: 14 And profited [progressed] in the Jews' religion above many my equals in mine own nation, being more exceedingly zealous of the traditions of my fathers.

Paul again asserts that the gospel, which he preached to the people of Galatia, was not a man-made gospel, but rather it was THE gospel, which he received directly from Jesus Christ. He further informs them that he profited, or progressed, above all his peers in Judaism. He was considered one of the most brilliant, up-and-coming theologians of his time. He had studied under the renowned Gamaliel. He was a Pharisee and a highly honored and respected religious leader greatly esteemed by the people. He was a Jew of Jews, but he gave it all up for Christ.

Paul's great problem before receiving Christ was much like the one most Christians face today. He was

THE GOOD NEWS OF GALATIANS

"exceedingly zealous of the traditions" of his fathers. When tradition becomes the predominant theme in our thoughts, words and actions, when it replaces the clear teachings of God's word, it is not only dangerous, but fatal. When one's dedication is more to a church than to Christ, then that person has made the church his saviour. Jesus, in speaking of some of these man-made traditions said, "Why do you transgress the commandment of God by your tradition?" "Thus have ye made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition." "But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men" (Matthew 15:3, 6, 9). Not only were these people making the commandment of God of none effect by their tradition, but by so doing, their worship of Christ was unacceptable.

Our Christian zeal must be for God and His word and never for man-made traditions. When Paul's zeal was directed from the traditions of men to God and His word, he became a mighty channel for truth, grace, and salvation. So it can also be with us.

15 But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace, 16 To reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen; immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood: 17 Neither went I up to Jerusalem to them which were apostles before me; but I went into Arabia, and returned again unto Damascus.

Christ revealed Himself to Paul that he might reveal Himself in him. I believe that most Christians today do not understand their purpose in life. They do not realize that Jesus' great desire is that He might be revealed in their

lives. As one author has said: "Christ does not stand afar off and lay down right principles for us to follow; but He impresses himself upon us, takes possession of us as we yield ourselves to Him, and makes manifest His life in our mortal flesh."

God has been patiently waiting to reveal His Son in us that His character might be vindicated. He is waiting with longing desire for the manifestation of Himself in His people. When the character of the Lord Jesus shall be perfectly reproduced in His people, then He will come to claim His own.

Paul states that after his conversion experience on the Damascus road (Acts 9:1-9; 22:4-11; 26:9-18), he went to Arabia and then returned to Damascus. During this three-year period he has had no contact with the apostles.

18 Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter, and abode with him fifteen days. 19 But other of the apostles saw I none, save James the Lord's brother.

Paul spent three years in the Arabian desert learning from Christ. He then went to Jerusalem to meet with Peter and James and spent 15 days with them. This is the first of the apostles with whom he has had contact. It is significant that although Paul had been converted through a miraculous encounter with Christ and called to be an apostle, he nonetheless sought out the organized body of Christ and submitted himself to investigation by the church leadership. This he did again some 14 years later at the Jerusalem Council, over which the Apostle James presided (Galatians 2:1; Acts 15:1-35).

The fact that James is identified as one of the

THE GOOD NEWS OF GALATIANS

apostles destroys the erroneous theory held by many that only the original 12 were apostles. We find that Paul, Apollos, Barnabas, Silvanus, Timothy, and "James the Lord's brother" are also called "apostles" (Galatians 1:1; 1 Corinthians 4:6, 9; Acts 14:14; 1 Thessalonians 1:1; 2:6; Galatians 1:19). In addition to this, it is clear one of the gifts of the Spirit to be found in the church until the coming of Christ is that of "apostle" (1 Corinthians 12:28; Ephesians 4:11-13).

20 Now the things which I write unto you, behold, before God, I lie not. 21 Afterwards I came into the regions of Syria and Cilicia; 22 And was unknown by face unto the churches of Judaea which were in Christ: 23 But they had heard only, That he which persecuted us in times past now preacheth the faith which once he destroyed. 24 And they glorified God in me.

After meeting with Peter and James, Paul leaves Jerusalem and begins to preach the gospel in Syria and Cilicia. As word reached the Christians of Judaea that this man who had "once persecuted the church of God, and wasted it" (Galatians 1:13) was now "preaching the faith which once he destroyed," they were absolutely amazed and readily recognized it as a miracle of God. It is only the miraculous grace of God that can take the hardened, bigoted, prejudiced, persecuting heart of man and transform it to reveal the beauty, love, compassion, and grace of the Lord Jesus Christ.

In the inspiring little book *Steps to Christ*, we find the following beautiful thought: "Those who become new creatures in Christ Jesus will bring forth the fruit of the Spirit, 'love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness,

faith, meekness, temperance' (Galatians 5:22, 23). They will no longer fashion themselves according to the former lusts, but by the faith of the Son of God they will follow in His steps, reflect His character, and purify themselves even as He is pure. The things they once hated, they now love; and the things they once loved, they hate. The proud and self-assertive become meek and lowly in heart. The vain and supercilious become serious and unobtrusive. The drunken become sober, and the profligate pure." (White, *Steps to Christ*, p. 58)

The apostle Paul could say of the early church: "They glorified God in me." Shouldn't we strive to live so the same words can be said of us? How is it though that we are to glorify God? Here are a few Biblical examples: "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven" (Matthew 5:16). "Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit" (John 15:8). "Being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God" (Philippians 1:11). We are to glorify God by our "good works," by bearing "much fruit," and this fruit is to be "the fruits of righteousness," All of these works, or fruits of righteousness, are not the things which we do; but rather they are the things which we, through submission to God, allow Him to do through us. "For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure" (Philippians 2:13). The promise of Jesus is: "He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing" (John 15:5).

Remember, our precious Savior is waiting with longing desire for the manifestation of Himself in His people. When the character of the Lord Jesus shall be

THE GOOD NEWS OF GALATIANS

perfectly reproduced in His people, then He will come to claim His own. As one author put it: "It is the privilege of every Christian in the world today, not only to look for, but to hasten, the coming of the Lord. Were all who profess His name bearing fruit to His glory, how quickly the world would be sown with the seed of the gospel! Quickly the last great harvest would be ripened, and Christ would come." (*White, Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students*, p. 324)

The rest of this letter to the Galatians will deal with the revelation of Christ in His people and their response to the power of His love. As we come to the second chapter of Galatians, we find the Apostle Paul begins to contrast the true, "everlasting gospel" with the perversion of the gospel, which he so strongly condemned in chapter one.

CHAPTER TWO

Righteousness Is By Faith

1 Then fourteen years after I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, and took Titus with me also. 2 And I went up by revelation, and communicated unto them that gospel which I preach among the Gentiles, but privately to them which were of reputation, lest by any means I should run, or had run, in vain.

Fourteen years after his initial visit with Peter and James (Galatians 1:18, 19), or seventeen years after his conversion, Paul returns to Jerusalem to attend a church council. The time (about A.D. 51) and the agenda of the council clearly indicate that this is the Jerusalem Council over which James presided, and which is recorded in the fifteenth chapter of Acts. Paul states the reason he appeared before the Council was to communicate "unto them that gospel which I preach among the Gentiles."

In the past there had been "certain men which came down from Judaea, [which] taught the brethren, and said, Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved. When therefore Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and disputation with them, they determined that Paul and Barnabas, and certain other of them, should go up to Jerusalem unto the apostles and elders about this question" (Acts 15:1, 2). Because of those insisting that circumcision was necessary for salvation, Paul had taken Titus, an uncircumcised Gentile, to this Council. The issue was great for had these legalists prevailed to have Titus circumcised, it would have been imposed upon all Gentiles, and this would have been a

rejection of the gospel itself.

3 But neither Titus, who was with me, being a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised: 4 And that because of false brethren unawares brought in, who came in privily to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage: 5 To whom we gave place by subjection, no, not for an hour; that the truth of the gospel might continue with you.

Verses 3-5 are a parenthetical, or a thought that Paul inserts between verses two and six, in order to show his stand on circumcision, and thus reveal it was the Judaizers, not Paul, that stood in opposition to the apostles. James even confirmed this in the official letters he sent to the churches (Acts 15:23, 24).

Paul vehemently opposed all such madness as salvation by works. Circumcision was at this time an insignificant thing, but when insisted upon as something necessary to salvation, it would become a thing of bondage. If he gave way in one little aspect, it would have opened the door for a whole flood of legalistic practices to enter the church. Therefore, Paul declared that circumcision was not to be made an issue.

The Judaizers themselves did not understand the true significance of circumcision. They had come to believe the act of circumcision itself brought them righteousness. They had lost sight of the fact it was a sign of the folly of the flesh in attempting to bring about that which God has promised to perform, and which only He is able to accomplish.

The rite of circumcision was first instituted at the time of Abraham. Abraham had been promised he would be

given a son through which the Messiah was to come. Sarah, his wife, doubted the possibility of this happening because of their age and suggested that Abraham take Hagar, Sarah's maid, so that he may have the promised child. The thinking was since she was so far past child bearing age, they needed to give God a hand in order for Him to keep His promise. From the standpoint of human reasoning it sounded pretty logical. So Abraham took Hagar and they had a son, Ishmael, when he was 86 years old. The results of this illicit relationship brought nothing but hardship and heartbreak for Abraham and his family.

Thirteen years later, when Abraham was 99 years old, the Lord appeared to him and declared that he and Ishmael were to be circumcised. This was done to show that the works of the flesh profits nothing, and that the child of which God spoke was to come by the promise and power of God alone. Sarah became pregnant and at age 100, Abraham receives the promised child that only God could give. Thus, circumcision was given as a symbol of the cutting away of the works of the flesh, which cause nothing but trouble and heartache. Hagar and Ishmael were later sent away under the protecting hand of God. Still today, the works of the flesh and faith in the promises of God are incompatible and, of necessity, one will drive the other away. The result of Abraham's folly was failure. Even today the problems in the middle east are nothing more than a family feud among the descendants of Abraham, and they have been fighting ever since Ishmael and Isaac.

The dubious relationship between Abraham and Hagar ended up producing a bondservant instead of an heir and as a reminder of his failure, and of the fact that

THE GOOD NEWS OF GALATIANS

the "flesh profiteth nothing" (John 6:63), Abraham received the sign of circumcision, a cutting off of the flesh. This was to impress upon him, and all that were to follow, that since in the "flesh dwelleth no good thing" (Romans 7:18), the promise of God can be realized only by putting away the works of the flesh and by faith laying hold of the promise.

The meaning of circumcision, and true circumcision itself, has still been lost sight of today. "For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and *have no confidence in the flesh*" (Philippians 3:3). "For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and *circumcision is that of the heart*" (Romans 2:28, 29). Through faith in Christ we are to be "circumcised with the *circumcision made without hands*, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh *by the circumcision of Christ*. Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him *through the faith of the operation of God*, who has raised him from the dead" (Colossians 2:11, 12). Here is the good news of the gospel and the contrast between the everlasting gospel and the perverted gospel. One of the perversions of the gospel says you have to do something in order to be saved; the true gospel says we are saved by faith in the "operation of God." Circumcision was given to show that "the flesh profiteth nothing" and therefore we are to "have no confidence in the flesh," but rather to put off "the sins of the flesh" (John 6:63; Philippians 3:3; Colossians 2:11).

The circumcision the people of God are to experience is to allow the Spirit of Christ to come into their lives and cut away the works of the flesh from their hearts. Thus, they put away these works and now live by "faith in

the operation of God."

The controversy was between the true gospel and a counterfeit gospel, between liberty in Christ or bondage to Satan. All of the "works of the flesh" are sin and "they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God" (Galatians 5:19, 21). One Christian scholar and theologian has declared: "Sin is a bondage, and to teach men to put their trust in a false hope, which will cause them to rest satisfied in their sins, thinking that they are free from them, is simply to fasten them in bondage." (Waggoner, E.J, *The Gospel in Galatians*, p. 10) This is something that many Christian churches are guilty of today. They falsely proclaim: "You don't have to concern yourself with allowing Christ to come into your life and make you obedient to His word." The people are thereby allowed to place their trust in a false hope that God will save people "in" their sins, rather than "from" their sins (Matthew 1:21; Romans 6:1, 2). Thus, they become satisfied in their sins, believing there is nothing that can be done about them. There are two extremes to which people tend to move and the Devil doesn't care which of the two a person chooses, as long as it is one of the two; whether it is trying to be saved through some type of work, or the false hope that one can be saved while living in deliberate disobedience to God's word.

These people that were presenting a perverted gospel were not true Christians, but were "false brethren." Jesus had warned His church that this type of people would come, and He referred to them as "wolves" in "sheep's clothing" (Matthew 7:15). These people exist in the church today, as well, and some use them as excuses for not attending church. Notice, however, never did Paul say that because there are false brethren in the church,

THE GOOD NEWS OF GALATIANS

get out of it, or because there are hypocrites in the church, don't go. He says there are false brethren in the church and be aware of it - and stand up to them - and present the truth, so that error will not prevail within the church.

Paul said I did not give these false brethren so much as an hour "that the truth of the gospel might continue with you." Do you desire the truth of the gospel to continue? If so, then receive no teaching from anyone, if they can not prove them to be truth from the word of God, and speak out against those who would present the errors of a perverted gospel.

6 But of these who seemed to be somewhat, (whatsoever they were, it maketh no matter to me: God accepteth no man's person:) for they who seemed to be somewhat in conference added nothing to me: 7 But contrariwise, when they saw that the gospel of the uncircumcision was committed unto me, as the gospel of the circumcision was unto Peter; 8 (For he that wrought effectually in Peter to the apostleship of the circumcision, the same was mighty in me toward the Gentiles:) 9 And when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given unto me, they gave to me and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship; that we should go unto the heathen, and they unto the circumcision. 10 Only they would that we should remember the poor; the same which I also was forward to do.

Paul submitted himself to the church for investigation and recognition, and he could not have received the recognition without the investigation. He did not go to Jerusalem to learn what the truth of the gospel was, but to proclaim and maintain that which he had been preaching

among the Gentiles. His gospel was the same as their's, though he had not been instructed by them. The church recognized this fact and extended "the right hands of fellowship" and sent them back to continue preaching the gospel to the Gentiles.

As Paul appeared at this council, he was fully aware "that God is no respecter of persons" (Acts 10:34) and that it is not position that gives authority, but authority that gives the real position. The higher the position one holds, the greater servant he is to be. The hierarchial system found in much of Christianity today, that tends to promote the ministry above the laity, is so contrary to God's plan of the priesthood of all believers. We are "all one in Christ Jesus" and must "by love serve one another" (Galatians 3:28; 5:13).

Sometime later Paul and Peter were working together in Antioch when a serious problem arose. They were working with the Gentile Christians when a delegation of Jewish Christians, sent by James from Jerusalem, arrived in Antioch to observe the progress of the work there. Upon their arrival Peter became fearful of displeasing them and withdrew himself from the Gentile brothers and sisters, thereby playing the part of a hypocrite.

11 But when Peter was come to Antioch, I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed. 12 For before that certain came from James, he did eat with the Gentiles: but when they were come, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing them which were of the circumcision. 13 And the other Jews dissembled likewise with him; insomuch that Barnabas also was carried away with their dissimulation [hypocrisy].

THE GOOD NEWS OF GALATIANS

The passage before us should forever refute the papal claim of Peter's primacy. This is irrefutable proof that Peter was not, nor ever considered himself to be, the head of the early church, or as some claim "the first pope." If Peter had held a position such as this, Paul would never have dared to confront him openly in such a public way. All early Christians acknowledged that Christ alone was the head of the church and no human being was to ever be considered as holding that position. We have already seen it was James that chaired the Jerusalem Council, not Peter. It was James who suggested that letters be sent to the churches, and it was James who sent the emissaries from Jerusalem to Antioch, which led to the confrontation between Paul and Peter (Acts 15:13-24; Galatians 2:9, 12).

Although James held this prominent position in leadership as chairperson or facilitator, never did he, or any of the rest of the church, consider him the head of the church. It was not until centuries later, when apostasy had corrupted the Christian faith, that a hierarchal system developed, which divided the church between laity and clergy; as well as degrees of honor, respect, power, and authority among the clergy. This division continued to develop within the apostate church as the struggle for power and supremacy increased. Insidiously, man began to usurp the role of the Spirit of Christ as the head of the church on earth until one man was set over all the rest. He was eventually declared to be infallible and demanded homage and obedience from all others. Thus, the equality and priesthood of all believers was abolished and eventually lost sight of.

In the early church every member was answerable to the body of believers, never to a single individual. Not

only did Paul and Barnabas have to appear before the church for investigation and recognition, but even Peter had to give an account to the church in Jerusalem for his actions in Caesarea with Cornelius (Acts 11:1-18). While it is true that individuals can address certain issues within the church (even as Paul did with Peter), the ultimate authority in all things belongs to the corporate body, as based upon the word of God. This is what Jesus meant when He said, if your brother will not hear you, then take it to the church (Matthew 18:15-18).

When Paul saw Peter doing something he should not have been, he went to him face-to-face. There is a very important lesson to be learned here. If you ever see a brother or sister at fault, always confront them to the face or personally. What a tremendous amount of grief, heartache, and conflict would be avoided, if we would only follow this Bible principle. Even the pagan king, Nebuchadnezzar, when he heard that Meshach, Shadrach, and Abednego would not obey his command to worship an image, did not simply believe the report, but confronted them to the face and asked, "Is it true" (Daniel 3:14). Should we, as the disciples of Jesus, not be willing to do as much?

Because of the "dissimulation" or hypocrisy of Peter and the Christians from Jerusalem, the church was threatened. This revelation of weakness on the part of those who were such loved and respected leaders, left a most painful impression on the minds of the Gentile believers and cast a stumbling block before them in their Christian experience. However, we must remember that weakness and inconsistency is found in the very best of people when left to themselves. Of ourselves, we are all so very apt to falter in our duty to God out of an undue

THE GOOD NEWS OF GALATIANS

regard for pleasing people. We should never forget the great force of our bad examples upon others. Because of Peter's hypocritical actions, Barnabas and others followed suit and the church of Christ was threatened and the heart of Christ pained.

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

When we see someone who is not walking "uprightly according to the truth of the gospel," not according to our likes and dislikes, our ideas and standards; but according to the "truth of the gospel," we need to try and bring them back to that truth. If you think a brother or sister is wrong, and you can not substantiate it from the word of God, leave them alone. But if you see them walking contrary to what you know to be the word of God, you dare not remain silent or your own soul will be in peril. It will become evident to heaven and earth(as we saw in chapter 1) that you can "not be the servant of Christ."

Peter had been preaching one thing and practicing another and the church suffered. Some stumbled at the inconsistency and others followed into error and hypocrisy. But what about you, dear reader? What kind of an example are you setting? Are you walking "uprightly according to the truth of the gospel"?

This action on the part of Peter and the others was not only a denial of the gospel, but it was a virtual denial of Christ. Peter was present at the Jerusalem Council when it was declared that circumcision was not necessary

to salvation and therefore not to be made an issue (Acts 15:1-24). He had encountered this situation before when God had clearly revealed to him that he was not to consider any one class of people as "common or unclean" (Acts 10:28). He had even declared that he understood "that God is no respecter of persons: But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him" (Acts 10:34, 35). Clear testimony had been borne by the Holy Spirit, the other apostles, and the corporate church body that there was to be no distinction between Jew and Gentile, and that righteousness is by faith alone in Christ Jesus. Yet in light of all this, Peter and the others had withdrawn themselves from the uncircumcised Gentile believers and this discrimination was in effect saying, "Except ye be circumcised... ye cannot be saved" (Acts 15:1).

The teaching that faith in Christ is essential, but insufficient, lies at the heart of this great heresy. Belief that certain meritorious works must be performed in order to receive salvation strikes at the very heart of the gospel, and therefore, Paul addressed the problem head on.

15 We who are Jews by nature, and not sinners of the Gentiles, 16 Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.

Peter, as well as Paul, knew the law could not save a person. That is why they had turned to Christ for salvation, and as such, how could they now return to the law for a salvation they had already acknowledged it

THE GOOD NEWS OF GALATIANS

could not give? Since righteousness is by faith alone, faith will ultimately be the greatest issue the church will have to face. This is why Jesus asked the question: "when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?" He did not ask if He would find his people "doing" anything. Works, of any kind, were not His concern; for He knew that if He found true faith, there He would (of necessity) find every good work.

The faith God's people are to have is called "the faith of Jesus." This is a faith that comes from Jesus, and is actually the very faith which He exhibits. We are also assured those who have that faith will also "keep the commandments of God" and only they "have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city" of God (Revelation 14:12; 22:14). Some today, however, have been deceived into believing that since we are "justified by faith without the deeds of the law" (Romans 3:28), that faith must then nullify or abolish the law of God. All one must do to see the devilish delusion in accepting such an erroneous position is read but a little further in Scripture where we clearly find the following: "Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: we establish the law" (Romans 3:31). True faith never makes one a law breaker, but rather empowers that person to establish the law through obedience to it. True faith is a "faith which worketh by love" and purifies the soul (Galatians 5:6). This love is "shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us" (Romans 5:5), and having now received this love the natural response is obedience to God. "If ye love me, keep my commandments" and "He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me" (John 14:15, 21) is what Jesus said.

RIGHTEOUSNESS IS BY FAITH

31

The reality of the relationship of faith and works is, it "is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure" (Philippians 2:13), and this He is able to accomplish only through our faith that what He has promised, He is able to perform. If it is indeed God who does the works, then the works must be righteous, for God is righteous. While it is true that "God imputeth righteousness without works" (Romans 4:6), it is also true that the works which follow will, of necessity, be righteous works. Even so, we must remember that these works are only evidence of the faith we have and add nothing to the righteousness we have received, for it is "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost" (Titus 3:5).

Faith must work or it is not genuine. It is essential we remember this important fact, for whoever refuses to allow the grace of God to bring them into a more perfect obedience to the will of God is rejecting that grace itself and thereby turning their backs upon Christ, the source of that grace, and salvation, the result of grace. This is what James was referring to when he said, "faith without works is dead" (James 2:26). "Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone. Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: show me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works" (James 2:17, 18). And Paul, in Romans, makes it very clear that it is "not the hearers of the law that are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified" (Romans 2:13). The Bible is clear, righteousness is by faith. If we have not the faith of Jesus, then we have a faulty faith, and if our faith is faulty, then we must have a faulty righteousness, for righteousness is by faith.

THE GOOD NEWS OF GALATIANS

As strange as it may seem, there are many today that believe that to have been justified by the grace of God means they are now free to sin. It is true they do not put it in these words, but what they do say is they are now free to transgress the law of God. However, since the Bible says that "sin is the transgression of the law" (1 John 3:4); when one says they are free to break God's law, they are saying they are free to sin. The word of God also says that "the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good" (Romans 7:12). When someone refuses to keep that which is good, he comes under condemnation for "to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin" (James 4:17). Since "all unrighteousness is sin" (1 John 5:17), it is evident one can not have the righteousness of God while practicing sin or breaking God's law. Notice, sin is the absence of righteousness and righteousness is the opposite of sin (or unrighteousness). Since unrighteousness, or sin, is transgression of the law, it stands to reason that righteousness is obedience to the law.

It is sin that brings death for "the sting of death is sin" (1 Corinthians 15:56). Sin is our great enemy and has the very poison of death in it. It is like the most malignant cancer imaginable. It gets into every fiber of our being. Of ourselves we can do absolutely nothing to get it out. If we could get it out and put it even one centimeter from us, we could live, we would be saved, but then we would not need Jesus. The only way we can get sin out of our lives is to allow Jesus to come in and take it out. Only the Great Physician can remove it, and the only way He can do this is through circumcision of the heart, by cutting away the works of the flesh, and this can only be accomplished through a living, active faith.

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

Will we be so bold as to presume that we can be the servants of Christ while we are willfully continuing in sin? Is "Christ the minister of sin"? Whose servants are we while we are committing sin? According to Scripture we must make one of two choices. We can either choose to serve Satan, which is "sin unto death," or to serve Jesus, which is "obedience unto righteousness" (Romans 6:16). We can not serve two masters. Therefore, it is impossible to serve sin and righteousness at the same time. When we are "the servants of sin," we are "free from righteousness" (Romans 6:20). However, when we are "made free from sin," we become "the servants of righteousness" (Romans 6:18), and "now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life" (Romans 6:22).

This is the very thing Jesus was talking about when He said, "ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:32). The Jews, in their self-righteous piety, said they "were never in bondage to any man." This was a most blatant lie and denial of established fact, for they had been in bondage to numerous people from Egypt to Rome. Jesus now goes right to the very heart of the matter and declares: "Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin" (verse 34). It is imperative we grasp what it is that Jesus is promising freedom from; it is sin and He says, "If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed" (verse 35).

Does Jesus mean what He said? Can we take the Bible as it reads, or do we need some pope, priest, pastor,

THE GOOD NEWS OF GALATIANS

theologian, or scholar to tell us what Jesus meant by what He said or what He should have said? We, as Christians, have made little "loop holes" for our sins and keep making excuses for them. We are so hesitant to come to the place where we dare believe that the Christian life can, and should, be a life of continuous victory. If Jesus promises justification by faith, but is unable to fulfill His promise, He must be held responsible for the remaining state of sin. But is He the "minister of sin"? "God forbid." Christ has promised to justify all who came to Him in faith. But, if after accepting the saving grace of God, we are still found to be practicing sin; what hope do we have? Remember, regardless of what some might say, there is no such thing as a righteous sinner.

For a Christian to continue in the indulgence of sin after accepting the pardoning and transforming power of that grace is to deny its very purpose and existence and thus forfeit the power, freedom, and salvation of God. Any indulgence in sin is a return to the bondage of sin from which grace has released us. This is what Paul was referring to when he said: "Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?" (Romans 6:1, 2).

18 For if I build again the things which I destroyed, I make myself a transgressor. 19 For I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God.

The word "if" in this passage shows there is a choice to be made. When we choose that which is wrong, we make ourselves the transgressor and are "found sinners" (verse 17). Never, when we sin, should we seek to make excuses for those sins or blame God. Never should we say, "Well after all, I'm only human." Not only is that a

feeble excuse, it is to place the blame on God, for He made us in our humanity. It is to echo the sentiments of Adam in trying to excuse his sin by saying "the woman whom thou gavest" (Genesis 3:12) is what caused him to sin. "If you had not made her I would not have listened to her and sinned." Can you see what an assault this is on the very character of God? Never, ever, seek to make "Christ the minister of sin" (verse 17), but acknowledge that you have, by your own choice, made yourself the transgressor or sinner.

If a Christian tears down or destroys his sins through Christ, then later builds those sins back up, he again becomes a lawbreaker. Here we are able to see the fallacy of the prevalent, yet erroneous, teaching of once saved, always saved. We have the freedom to choose to serve God, and once we do, we do not forfeit this freedom. We always retain the freedom to choose to serve or not to serve Him. (See also Romans 11:20-23; 1 Corinthians 9:26, 27; Ephesians 4:30; 2 Timothy 2:18; Hebrews 6:4-6; 2 Peter 1:10.) If God had wanted mere animated robots with no free will, no intelligent mind to choose between right and wrong, He could have made us that way from the beginning and saved this world (and Himself) a lot of heartache.

That which is to be destroyed is the body of sin. In Romans we read "that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. For he that is dead is freed from sin" (Romans 6:6, 7). It is destroyed that we might be free from its power and no longer serve it. But until people "reckon" themselves "dead indeed unto sin" (verse 11), they can never experience death to sin. They will continue to transgress the law and fall under its condemnation. If you plan on sinning, it is guaranteed

THE GOOD NEWS OF GALATIANS

you will do just that. But when you reckon yourself dead to sin, you will not let "sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it," "For sin shall not have dominion over you," and "being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life" (Romans 6:12, 14, 22). The question is: Do we believe the word of God? Do we believe the power of God can put to death this body of sin and bring us into this blessed union with Christ? Do we further believe this same power can hold us in perfect union with our Saviour? The word of God is clear. When we surrender to Christ, we are brought under the control of the Holy Spirit and set free from the bondage of sin. Now, whether we believe this or not is another matter. Those who doubt God and His word will never experience the power of God in their lives or the freedom that Christ can bring. Those, on the other hand, who by faith lay hold of the "exceeding great and precious promises" (2 Peter 1:4) of God must never forget their strength lies in submitting to God. All victory is in yielding to Christ that He might keep us in His presence.

There has been much discussion over the centuries as to which law (moral or ceremonial) Paul is referring to here in Galatians. Upon investigation, however, it becomes evident the Holy Spirit, through the apostle, is speaking primarily of the moral law. This law reveals sin to us, and causes us to feel our need of Christ and to flee to Him for pardon and peace by exercising repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.

To the Hebrew the word law (Torah) referred to five things.

1. The Pentateuch (the first five books of the Bible).

2. The moral law (the Ten Commandments).
3. The ceremonial law (the sacrifices and ordinances).
4. The health law (the law pertaining to dietary practices and healthful living).
5. The civil law (the governmental laws of the nation).

Any one, or any combination, of these was referred to as "the law" and the only way to know which is meant is by the context of the passage. When we consider the context in Galatians, it becomes clear that Paul is referring primarily to the moral law or ten commandments. The ceremonial law never had the power to slay anyone, but even if it had, it was nailed to the cross three years before Paul's conversion (Colossians 2:14). Therefore, how could that which had not existed for three years have the power to slay him?

Some have mistakenly assumed it is the law that is dead in verse 19, but Paul clearly states it is he that is dead and that his death "to" the law came "through" the law. The law must be fully in force for one to be dead to it. But how does one become dead to the law? There is but one way and that is by receiving its full penalty, which is death. Remember, "sin is the transgression of the law" (1 John 3:4) and "the wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23). Those who do not sin, who do not transgress the law, are not under the law, for they are in obedience to it. Those, however, who break the law, come under the law and its condemnation. The law itself is not sin, nor is it responsible for sin. It simply points out sin, but offers no remedy for it, only condemnation. Paul said, "For by the law is the knowledge of sin" (Romans 3:20) and "I had not known sin but by the law" (Romans 7:7). What the law does is point

THE GOOD NEWS OF GALATIANS

out the fact that sin is killing us. But how can we stop sinning, stop transgressing the law, and falling under its condemnation?

Scripture is clear there is but one way and that is by dying (Romans 6:3, 7, 11, 14). We are so closely identified with sin that it cannot be destroyed without our dying. It is only by dying that we can live a life of righteousness. Therefore, it is imperative that we be "crucified with Christ."

20 I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me. 21 I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain.

Christ is to be revealed and exalted in our lives to where the life we live in the flesh is in reality the life of Christ as He lives out His life in us. Then, and only then, can He be revealed in us. The only way for Christ to be revealed in any human being is for Him to be living in that person. And the only way for Christ to live in any human being is for that person to die - to be crucified with Christ.

No matter how much we desire to be joined to Christ, we can not be while we are joined to sin, but sin can not be taken from us without taking our life. If we could only get sin to die, we would be free, but it will not die. Thus, there is only one way for us to be free from sin; that is for us to die, for self to be crucified. Therefore, if we are crucified with Christ, the "body of sin" is also crucified. It is because so many know little of the actual experience of dying in Christ, that they find it so difficult to live in Him. The great difficulty with so very many of us is that we are

trying to live His life without first dying with Him. Remember, He does not give us our own life back again, instead, He gives us His life. But until we are dead with Christ, we can not live with Him. There is no more fatal mistake than to imagine that we can live with Christ without first having died with Him. But when we are dead with Him, the new life that we have is the life of Christ - and what kind of a life is that? It can be nothing other than a righteous life.

Though the body of sin is crucified with Him, we also have a resurrection with Him. In our previous union with the old man, we were kept in bondage to sin, but now we are set free in Christ, and the life we now live is through the power of His life. And when is it that we shall live with Christ? As soon as we die, are buried, and risen with Him. But unless we are crucified with Him, His death and resurrection will profit us nothing.

There can be absolutely no question as to what is meant by the believer's dying with Christ. It is a death to sin. And this new life can only be lived wholly unto God as it is lived wholly of God. There is power in Christ, a power to keep us from sin. Once we transfer our hope from our human struggles to the "exceeding great and precious promises" of God, the only limit to our attainments is that of our own faith. The victory depends, however, upon the vital connection of faith by which our unity with Christ is maintained.

Notice the beauty and simplicity of the believer's relationship with Christ as presented in the book *Steps to Christ*. "He [Christ] died for us, and now He offers to take our sins and give us His righteousness. If you give yourself to Him, and accept Him as your Saviour, then, sinful as your life may have been, for His sake you are accounted

THE GOOD NEWS OF GALATIANS

righteous. Christ's character stands in place of your character, and you are accepted before God just as if you had not sinned.

"More than this, Christ changes the heart. He abides in your heart by faith. You are to maintain this connection with Christ by faith and the continual surrender of your will to Him; and so long as you do this, He will work in you to will and to do according to His good pleasure. So you may say, 'The life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me.' Galatians 2:20.... Then with Christ working in you, you will manifest the same spirit and do the same good works - works of righteousness, obedience." (White, *Steps to Christ*, pp. 62, 63)

Remember, we are not told to try and do as well as He did, or to exercise as much faith; but simply to take His faith and let it work by love and purify the heart. It is time we stopped our trying and accepted His doing that it might get done in our lives. What we need is a faith that kills self that Christ might live in us. We need the faith of Jesus that gives us the very life of Jesus.

CHAPTER THREE

Who Has Bewitched You?

In chapter three of Galatians, Paul comes back to the fact that the Galatians, having once accepted the gospel are now being led astray by these false teachers who are presenting "another gospel," a "perverted gospel" (Galatians 1:6-9).

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

Paul refers to the Galatians as foolish, for there was no valid reason for them to reject or renounce salvation by faith. It was as if they had been bewitched or subjected to some influence besides reason, for reason itself would condemn such a course as they were taking. They had received the truth and had acknowledged it as truth, but now they were choosing not to obey that truth. It is never enough to know the truth and say we believe it; we must live by the truth and we must obey it. Those who will not accept and follow the truth when it is set before them are spiritually bewitched. Every individual who cherishes a known error, in faith or practice, is under the power of sorcery, and is practicing sorcery upon others. Satan employs him to mislead other souls.

Jesus had been "evidently set forth" (literally "publicly proclaimed") among them, so Paul is amazed at their course. They had accepted Christ as their only hope of salvation and were now being deceived into believing that works could add to that free gift, a gift purchased at

THE GOOD NEWS OF GALATIANS

such a supreme sacrifice. The problem with the Christians of Galatia was much like us today. Not until we have seen Christ crucified before us, and see the cross at every turn, will we understand the reality of the gospel.

2 This only would I learn of you, Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? 3 Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?

Paul says, "I only want to know one thing from you, and this one thing should settle the argument forever. How did you receive the Holy Spirit?" These people had received the Holy Spirit at the beginning of their Christian experience solely through faith, and now they felt they needed to add something to this, that faith was no longer sufficient. Just as there was no other way of beginning the Christian life than by faith, there was no other way to live that life than by faith. Foolish indeed is the man who has not the power to begin a work, to think he has the strength to finish it. If we can't begin it, how can we finish it? It must be finished in the same way it was begun, by FAITH. Jesus is "the author and finisher of our faith" (Hebrew 12:2) and therefore, He who "began a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ" (Phil. 1:6).

The Galatians were beginning to turn their backs on God and His plan of salvation just as He had begun to work it out in them. What great blessings they were about to forfeit by abandoning God and His way for a way of human devising. So it is today for many whose religious experience is based on nothing more than feelings. "I want to feel good" is the cry of many. Is that the only reason you go to church, the only reason you choose a particular church? "I want to feel loved and accepted"

they say, but on whose terms, yours or God's?

Still others have a religious experience based on works. "I believe in righteousness by faith, BUT it requires more than faith, we have to do certain good works, too." Therefore, they feel they MUST attend church on a regular basis. They MUST return tithe. They MUST attend prayer meeting. They MUST change their diet, etc. Friends, that is salvation by works. Satan does not care which of those two extremes he gets you into, just so long as it is one of them.

If a person has not laid hold on Jesus Christ by faith, and made Him first and foremost in their life, it isn't going to do them any good to go to church, to tithe, attend prayer meeting, or change their diet, etc.; for those things will never be able to save a person. Only Jesus can save you, and unless He reigns in your life, these other things are empty forms.

On the other hand, if you attend a church only for what you can get out of it, there is something drastically wrong. Yet many attend a particular church because the location is convenient, the services are entertaining, the sermons are humorous, the choir is excellent, the congregation is large, or friends attend there. Very few today have chosen to attend church for the purpose of getting to know God and His word better, of discovering more fully His will for their lives, of seeking an ever-closer relationship with Him, of more fully revealing His love and character. The question we should each ponder is: "Do I really want to know Him better? Do I truly desire to say with Paul, 'I don't want to know anything but Jesus Christ and Him crucified'"? That's the place God wants each of us to come to.

Paul's message in Galatians is one of salvation by

THE GOOD NEWS OF GALATIANS

grace through faith, which empowers the recipient to live a life that is altogether new. He declares it to be the very life of the Son of God (Galatians 2:20). What makes his message so important is that it is the only plan of salvation there is. Therefore, his appeal to the people of Galatia is most urgent, for having once accepted the gospel, they are now being led astray by these false teachers who are presenting another gospel or a perversion of the true gospel (Galatians 1:6-9). They had accepted Christ as their only hope of salvation, but were now being deceived into believing that works could add to that free gift. He therefore asks them straight-forwardly: "This only would I learn of you, Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?" He points out that it is indeed foolish for one who has not the power to begin a work to think he has the strength to finish it.

4 Have ye suffered so many things in vain? if it be yet in vain. 5 He therefore that ministereth to you the Spirit, and worketh miracles among you, doeth he it by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?

The apostle points out how foolish it appears in having suffered for their belief in righteousness by faith; they now desert this for the error of faith plus works. He says, "Consider all the suffering you have had to endure for your faith. Are you now ready to throw it all away for a perversion of the saving truth of the gospel?" Everything in the Christian faith (including the working of miracles) is done solely by faith. The great folly of all apostates, or backsliders, is they lose all the benefits of what they have

done, or suffered, or been given, once they turn their backs on the truth of the gospel. It has all become "vain" and their former righteousness shall not be remembered.

Where are you in your Christian experience? Have you laid hold on Jesus Christ? Have you laid hold on the righteousness of God and claimed the power of His Spirit that you might overcome in "this present evil world" (Galatians 1:4)? Are you allowing the Son of God to be revealed in you? We must each one decide in our own hearts if this is what we want. Or whether we want to turn our backs on Christ and everything He has done for us, and everything he wants to do in and through us, by accepting a perverted gospel. Do you perhaps feel God's way is too restrictive, that you will just worship God your way? This is the very problem Cain had. Remember, there is only one way. Jesus said, "I am the Way." There is only one truth and He proclaims: "I am the Truth." He says there is only one life and declares: "I am the Life." Unless that one life, the life of Christ, is being lived out in your life, what hope do you have?

It is through "the power of His resurrection" that the power of His life is able to be lived out in our lives (Philippians 3:8-10). And if Christ is not raised from the dead, then our faith is "vain" and "we are of all men most miserable" (1 Corinthians 15:14, 19). But have we died to ourselves and been raised in a newness of life that Christ might live in us, or are we caught up in the things of the world, good or bad. (See Romans 6:1-7; Ephesians 4:22-24; Colossians 3:1-10). Isn't it time we stopped wounding the heart of God? Isn't it time we started believing that "what He has promised, He is able also to perform" (Romans 4:21)? It is truly past time to lay aside all doubt, all evil surmising, all of the works of the flesh, and cry from

THE GOOD NEWS OF GALATIANS

the depths of our souls: "Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief" (Mark 9:24).

6 Even as Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness. 7 Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham.

Abraham was accounted righteous the moment he exercised faith in God, before any works on his part (Romans 4:8-12). Faith, therefore, must always precede works, and works of righteousness can never supersede faith. Faith, however, does not satisfy the demands of the law, for the law requires perfect obedience. Divine grace only can satisfy and save. Faith simply CLAIMS the grace, "for by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast" (Ephesians 2:8, 9). True faith is, in reality, a "faith which worketh by love" (Galatians 5:6) and purifies the soul.

8 And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed. 9 So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham.

The gospel was preached to Abraham by God Himself. This gospel was the same gospel as Paul's; it was the "everlasting gospel" (Revelation 14:6). God requires the same today as at the time of Abraham - nothing more, nothing less. It is also important to realize this gospel was also preached to the gentiles, for Abraham was himself a gentile. He was raised in a heathen home. Terah, his

father, served other gods until the gospel was preached to him. Abraham believed the gospel and as a result, through him, all nations were to be blessed. This blessing is due to the fact that through him the Messiah was to come, and those today who will by faith lay hold on the gospel of Christ will be "blessed with faithful Abraham."

The apostle Paul has shown with great power that salvation is by grace alone through faith in the mighty working of the power of God and any deviation from this is a perversion of the gospel. Now, as we come to verse 10 he begins a clear presentation of the relation of faith and the law.

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

Notice who it is that is under the curse! It is those who "are of the works of the law" or, literally, relying on the works of the law to save them. It is those who RELY on the works of the law, not those who KEEP the law. It is those who live like the Jews. For one to seek salvation through any means other than faith in Christ is to come under condemnation. Not only are we not able to find salvation through the law, but we cannot even keep the law except by faith. Verse 9 assures us that faith brings blessing, and verse 10 warns that to substitute works for faith will bring a curse.

The law is not the curse. Transgression is not even the curse. Transgression is what brings the curse. The curse is death. The word of God clearly declares that "sin is the transgression of the law" (1 John 3:4), and that "the wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23) for "the sting of death

THE GOOD NEWS OF GALATIANS

is sin" (1 Corinthians 15:56). On the other hand, "The law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good" (Romans 7:12). As a transgressor of the law, we are under its curse. The curse is found, not in doing, but in not doing. When we wilfully transgress the law of God, we commit sin and come under condemnation and the curse will result in the "second death" (Revelation 21:8). "Behold, I set before you this day" says God "a blessing and a curse; a blessing, if ye obey the commandments of the Lord your God,... and a curse, if ye will not obey the commandments of the Lord your God" (Deuteronomy 11:26-28). The assurance is "blessed are they that do His commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city" (Revelation 22:14). Obedience brings blessings, not curses.

11 But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident: for, The just shall live by faith. 12 And the law is not of faith: but, The man that doeth them shall live in them.

Verse 11 can also be rendered: "He who through faith is righteous shall live." No one can be made righteous or justified by the law. This process can occur only through the medium of faith. It is the moral law that Paul is referring to here. This passage is equivalent to his statement in Romans 2:13 where he declares: "not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified." That he is speaking here of the moral law can be seen from the statement that "the law is not of faith," for the ceremonial law was nothing but faith.

Christ Himself bore the curse of the moral law for us. That curse was death and He humbled Himself to "taste

death for every man" (Hebrews 2:9). There is no other law that has any curse attached to it. If the curse attaches to the ceremonial law, then violation of the ceremonial law is sin; and if violation of the ceremonial law is sin, then there is sin not forbidden by the ten commandments; and the ten commandments are not a perfect rule of action. Furthermore, there would be no sin today for that law has been done away with.

How vain to look for justification through the law. If we are placed on trial and place our defense on the law, we are surely lost, for all the law can do is point out our sin. Consider the following:

1. All unrighteousness is sin (1 John 5:17).
2. Sin is transgression of the law (1 John 3:4).
3. Unrighteousness is transgression of the law (1 John 5:17).
4. Righteousness is obedience to the law (Romans 6:11-22).
5. To be made righteous is to be made a keeper of the law (Romans 3:31; 6:1, 2).

The question therefore, is not IF the law should be kept, but rather HOW to keep it.

13 Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree: 14 That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.

Jesus has redeemed us from the curse of the law, from our failure to continue in its righteous requirements. In other words we need not continue in sin any longer. (See Romans 6:1, 2, 6, 7, 12-15, 18, 20-23). He has cut the

THE GOOD NEWS OF GALATIANS

cords of sin that have bound us (John 8:31-36), and through His grace we can be set free from every besetting sin (Hebrews 12:1). His victory is to be ours. But it is only through faith that we are able to keep God's holy law. Paul tells us in Romans 9:30-33 that the gentiles "have attained to righteousness, even the righteousness which is of faith"; but the Jews did not receive this righteousness because "they sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law."

Many Christians today are being told that Jesus KEPT the law for us and, therefore, we no longer need to keep the law. While it is true that He indeed kept the law, it is a gross perversion of the gospel to say that His obedience was to make us disobedient; for as we have seen, true faith makes us law-keepers, not law-breakers. The true power of the grace of God makes us obedient children, not disobedient.

Others are told that we need not keep the law for Jesus KEEPS it for us. Again this is only partially true for not only does He keep it FOR us, but He also keeps it IN us. Scripture is clear that the problem was not with the law, but with the flesh and so "God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled IN us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit" (Romans 8:3, 4).

As we come to verse 15, Paul gives a powerful illustration that God's grace and His law are not contrary to one another and that one does not "disannul" the other.

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

Paul says I want to speak to you "after the manner of men," or I am going to give you a "human illustration." His illustration is simple. If one draws up a will and then dies, no one can change that will. It has been attested to and no one can add to it or disannul it. Therefore, if human agreements or arrangements are so binding, would not God be bound by what He said or promised? Would He arbitrarily change or alter that which He had promised? A "man's covenant" can be either accepted or rejected, but it can not be altered. The same is also true of God's promise.

16 Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ. 17 And this I say, that the covenant, that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect. 18 For if the inheritance be of the law, it is no more of promise: but God gave it to Abraham by promise.

Verse 16 clearly shows that the promise God gave to Abraham was also given to Christ, who is the seed. That the "covenant" and "promise" are identical can be easily seen from Paul's synonymous usage of these words in verses 15-18. What, though, is the promise that was given? "For the promise, *that he should be heir of the world*, was not to Abraham, or to his seed, through the law, but through the righteousness of faith" (Romans 4:13). This is further seen from Hebrews where we are told that all of the faithful from previous ages (including Abraham, verse 8) "having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise" (Hebrews 11:39), but "having seen them

THE GOOD NEWS OF GALATIANS

afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth" (Hebrews 11:13). Even Jesus has not yet received this promise, for we all receive it together when He shall establish His eternal kingdom and His people "shall inherit the earth" (Matthew 5:5).

The law that was written on tables of stone 430 years after the promise was given to Abraham could in no way make of none effect the promise that had preceded it. The assurance of the inheritance was given as a promise from God totally aside from, and before, the performance of any works on the part of Abraham. It was not a contract, an agreement, or bargain; but a promise (verse 18).

Some mistakenly interpret verses 19-25 to mean that all of the Old Testament laws ended at calvary. Thus, they declare, the people of the Old Testament were saved by works of the law, and those of the New Testament are saved by grace through faith. Paul has just declared, however, that 430 years before Sinai, Abraham was justified by faith.

19 Wherefore then serveth the law? It was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made; and it was ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator. 20 Now a mediator is not a mediator of one, but God is one.

Years in captivity had caused God's people to lose sight of God's law, which had always existed. Some have mistakenly believed the Ten Commandments did not even exist until Mount Sinai. There are six very important Bible points to remember that clearly show the error of such a

position:

1. The purpose of the law is to point out sin (Romans 3:20; 7:7).
2. Sin is defined as the transgression of the law (1 John 3:4).
3. If there was no law, there would be no sin (Romans 4:15).
4. Adam, however, did sin and brought the entire world under the condemnation of death (Romans 5:12).
5. Sin and death were in the world from Adam, centuries before God gave the law in written form to Moses (Romans 5:14).
6. If there was no sin, there would be no need of a Savior. (Romans 5:18; Matthew 1:21).

Therefore, just as surely as Adam sinned in the Garden of Eden, God's law existed from the creation of this world. It was simply given in more explicit detail at Sinai, given in written form to show the people their sinfulness and need of a Savior.

The law was "added" or literally "spoken" (See Deuteronomy 5:22) because of transgression. The law had never been written before this time, for there had been no written language until just prior to Sinai. Up to now writing had consisted primarily of hieroglyphics, but now that there was a written alphabet, God Himself inscribed these eternal commandments on time-enduring stone with His own finger.

There are some who reject Paul's statement in verse 19 that there were angels present at Mount Sinai because there is no mention of them in Exodus 20. This they do even in the face of such Bible evidence as Psalm 68:17; Deuteronomy 33:2; and Acts 7:51-53. Friends, can you see

THE GOOD NEWS OF GALATIANS

the great importance of taking all of the word of God and believing it, regardless of what others may say?

God desired to take His people directly from Mount Sinai to Mount Zion, but their sinful unbelief would not allow Him to do so (Exodus 15:1, 2, 13, 17). They doubted His promises and even as He was writing His law upon the tables of stone, they were transgressing them by dancing around a golden calf in a drunken orgy. Instead of simply believing God's promise, they felt they had to promise Him something in return. "And all the people answered together and said, All that the LORD has spoken we will do" (Exodus 19:8).

God does not call upon us to make promises to Him, but rather in simple faith lay hold of His promises to us. This can be illustrated by the following paraphrase of Galatians 3:20. "Now a mediator is the middleman between two or more people, but the covenant promise of God is unilateral and is contingent upon Him alone."

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

The law could never impart righteousness or give eternal life. But even the law is a part of the promises of God; they are not contrary to one another. God's promise is: "I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people" (Hebrews 8:10). Again He says: "Hearken unto me, ye that know righteousness, the people in whose heart is my law" (Isaiah 51:7). Only those who have God's law in their hearts will know righteousness.

Would we be so foolish as to believe that God would write His law in our hearts in order for us to violate or break that law? God's promise is to make us righteous, and when He does, He actually puts that law within our hearts and we delight to keep the law rather than look for excuses not to keep it. We have no power to keep the law or to live the life we should, but all He requires of us, He gives us the power to perform. It was God Himself that gave both the law and the promise, and part of the promise is that He will put the law in our hearts and make us obedient children.

22 But the scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe. 23 But before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed.

Paul says that the word of God has "concluded" or "confined" and "shut up" together all mankind. "All have sinned and come short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). Sinners are represented in Scripture as being in bondage, in prison. Jesus died "that through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil. And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage" (Hebrews 2:14-15). The instant one sins, he is confined; he is shut up under sin.

Whenever men are in prison, it is the law that puts them there. However, Jesus brings freedom from the bondage of sin and makes us servants of God rather than servants of sin. He makes this very clear in John 8:31-35 and then concludes in verse 36 by stating that: "If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed."

THE GOOD NEWS OF GALATIANS

Paul reiterates these very sentiments of Jesus throughout Romans Chapter 6. Notice how clearly this is presented.

"Knowing this, that *our old man is crucified with him*, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.

For he that is dead is *freed from sin....*

Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof.

Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but *yield yourselves unto God*, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God.

For *sin shall not have dominion over you*: for ye are not under the law, but under grace.

What then? *shall we sin*, because we are not under the law, but under grace? *God forbid*.

Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?...

Being then made *free from sin*, ye became the servants of righteousness....

For when ye were the servants of sin, ye were free from righteousness....

But now being *made free from sin*, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life." (Romans 6:6,7, 12-16, 18, 20, 22)

People are shut up because of sin (Galatians 3:22). This includes all, both Jew and Gentile (Romans 3:9; 11:32). Scripture clearly reveals that "under law" (verse 23) is identical with "under sin" (verse 22). When one comes to Christ, his relation to the law is changed. Before, he was "under the law," now he is "in the law" (Psalm 119:1) and

the law is in him (Psalm 37:31).

24 *Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. 25* **But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster.**

A "schoolmaster" refers to a "guardian" or a "leader of children." The purpose of the law is to bring us to Christ, not point us to Him. It points out the sin in our lives and our great need of a Saviour, and thus we are brought to Christ for cleansing and pardon. The ceremonial law brought no one to Christ. It showed the belief one already had, for they did not observe it until they already had faith. Faith led to the offering of sacrifices; the offering of sacrifices did not lead to faith. Furthermore, to be under a schoolmaster or under law is to be condemned by the law, but the ceremonial law condemned no one.

A renowned theologian of the previous century, J.N. Andrews, aptly described the schoolmaster as follows:

"How is the law our school-master to bring us to Christ?... It shows our guilt and just condemnation; and that we are lost without a Saviour.... It shows our just condemnation, its penalty hangs over our heads; we find ourselves lost, and fly to Jesus Christ.... What does He do to save the transgressors from the sentence of the law? He gives up Himself to die in their stead.... Had the law been abolished at the death of Christ, it could not have been a school-master many years afterward to bring the Galatians to Christ." (*The Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, September 16, 1851)

Another has so beautifully stated this concept in the following words: "'The law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith' (Galatians

THE GOOD NEWS OF GALATIANS

3:24). In this Scripture, the Holy Spirit through the apostle is speaking especially of the moral law. The law reveals sin to us, and causes us to feel our need of Christ, and to flee unto Him for pardon and peace by exercising repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ." (White, *Manuscript Releases*, Vol. 1, p. 130)

It is sad there are those who use these verses to try and set aside God's great moral code, but as long as the new hearts and minds of the children of God endure, the divine law in living characters will be engraved upon their hearts making them obedient sons and daughters of God.

26 For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. 27 For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. 28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. 29 And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

There are many who attempt to nullify this clear passage of Scripture and make it appear as if the nation of Israel is God's chosen people. Today, however, no nation holds preeminence above another, but God's people are comprised of people of every nation. Paul makes it clear that a true Jew is not one of the flesh, or even one who has been circumcised, but one who has had his heart changed by the power of God. "For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God" (Romans 2:28, 29). "Not as though the word of God

hath taken none effect. For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel: Neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children: but, In Isaac shall thy seed be called. That is, They which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God: but the children of the promise are counted for the seed" (Romans 9:6-8). Therefore, "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise" (Galatians 3:28, 29).

Still others, in the blazing light of this inspired statement of Scripture that "we are all the children of God by faith," declare all people are God's children - regardless of faith. This is a tremendous error that causes multitudes to become secure in their carnality, thinking they will be saved without having made Jesus their Lord and Savior. However, the Bible proclaims with certainty and authority that without faith, we cannot become God's children. We must have that "faith which worketh by love" (Galatians 5:6) and purifies the soul. This faith brings to the believer righteousness, "even the righteousness of God which is by faith" (Romans 3:22). Therefore, a person who is living an unrighteous life, who does not accept the dictates of God's word as authority in his or her life, cannot be a child of God.

The Holy Spirit has declared: "as many as received him [Jesus], to them gave he power [right or privilege] to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name" (John 1:12).

Belief in Jesus is more than a mental acknowledgment that He is the Son of God, for even the Devil acknowledges this universal fact (Matthew 8:28, 29).

THE GOOD NEWS OF GALATIANS

This belief that makes us God's children is a transforming power that changes the life of a believer to where he or she becomes "a new creature" in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17).

Thus, through faith in the redeeming blood of Christ, we "receive the adoption of sons" and God sends "forth the Spirit of his Son" into our hearts, and now as His children, we become "an heir of God through Christ" (Galatians 4:5-7). Having received the Holy Spirit into their hearts they "are led by the spirit of God, [and] they are the sons of God" (Romans 8:14).

Baptism is the outward symbol, decreed by God, of the inward transformation of this adoption and faith relationship of the sons and daughters of God. The Bible declares that by His death, Jesus redeems us from the curse of the law, but we must die with Him. Baptism is the likeness of His death. "Know ye not that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into His death?" (Romans 6:3). Our identity is to be lost in His, then being one with Him we have a right to all that is His; and we, thus, become a part of spiritual Israel.

To put on Christ means we profess our discipleship to Him; we obligate ourselves to behave as His faithful servants. We will seek to adopt His principles, to imitate His example, to accept His guidance, to become like Him. We are baptized into His death and resurrection that in conformity, thereunto, we should die to sin and walk in a newness of life. It would be of great benefit to us, if we were to more frequently remember this. Our life must be swallowed up and lost sight of in His. Only He is to be seen. "Not I, but Christ" will become our motto. We are now to live by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God. This can only be accomplished by faith, for "the

HAS BEWITCHED YOU?

61

just shall live by faith" (Romans 1:17).

Not the labors of my hands
Can fulfill Thy law's demands;
Could my zeal no respite know,
Could my tears forever flow,
All for sin could not atone;
Thou must save, and Thou alone.
Nothing in my hand I bring,
Simply to Thy cross I cling;
Naked, come to Thee for dress;
Helpless, look to Thee for grace;
Foul, I to the fountain fly,
Wash me, Savior, or I die!

- Augustus Toplady

CHAPTER FOUR

The Two Covenants

As we come to the fourth chapter of Galatians, we will discover this chapter amplifies and illustrates the great truth presented in chapter three verses 17-29. Chapter three closed with who are heirs. Chapter four continues with how to become an heir.

1 Now I say, That the heir, as long as he is a child, differeth nothing from a servant, though he be lord of all; 2 But is under tutors and governors until the time appointed of the father.

The minority of the child represents the status of individuals while under the law. Thus, they were kept in a state of subjection like a child under a tutor or governor. A child has a right to, but not authority over his inheritance. As such, "children" refers to the condition in which one finds himself before he receives the adoption. Notice Paul's use of "children" in Ephesians: "That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine" (Ephesians 4:14). The apostle had already explained in Ephesians chapter two that these unstable children were "the children of wrath," "the children of disobedience."

"Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: Among whom also we all had our conversation [conduct] in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and the mind; and

were by nature the children of wrath" (Ephesians 2:2, 3).

When one becomes a son or daughter of God, they discover real peace, stability, and purpose in life. That person is no longer "tossed to and fro" seeking to fulfill "the desires of the flesh and mind," for he or she has been transformed by the renewing of their minds and now know and abide in the "good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God" (Romans 12:2).

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

Jesus came to deliver us from this present evil world (Galatians 1:4; Titus 2:11-14), but do we want to be delivered? Is it possible that we prefer the friendship of the world? James 4:4 tells us, in no uncertain terms, that to be a friend of world is to be an enemy of God, and John makes it clear that all those who love the world will pass away with the things they so love. "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever" (1 John 2:15-17).

Paul says all were in bondage before the adoption of verse 5. This bondage was to the elements or rudiments (margin) of the world. (See also verse 9) He makes a similar statement in Colossians where he warns: "Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ" (Colossians 2:8).

THE GOOD NEWS OF GALATIANS

4 But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, 5 To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.

If, as many believe, the ceremonial law is here referred to, only the Jews were redeemed. But He died for all mankind. He tasted death for every man. Everything God does, He does according to His own timetable. "When the fulness of time was come," Jesus went forth declaring that "the time is fulfilled" (Mark 1:15). "In due time" or according to the time (Romans 5:6-8), God works out His divine plan for His people. The very time that Jesus came was during the Pax Roma (or Roman Peace). There was one world government. Relative safety for travel. A universal language. The Old Testament had been translated into that language. Daniel's prophecy of the Messiah had been fulfilled. All events foretold were fulfilled, or in the process of being fulfilled, and all was in readiness for the coming of the Messiah.

God chose to adopt us and deliver us from these things of the world that were bringing about our death. He chose us in all of our ugliness, filth, and foul tempers. He knew what we were and what we could become. You have not chosen Me, He says, but I have chosen you. He did not seek the prettiest, best behaved, or loving children to adopt. He chose the most needy, helpless, rebellious creatures in the universe. He came to seek and to save the lost.

Jesus' pre-existence is declared in this passage. "God sent forth His Son," which declares the very divinity of Christ. But this Son was "made of a woman," revealing that this pre-existent Being took upon Himself humanity. Jesus, who was Himself God and the Creator of all things (John

1:1-3), "was made flesh and dwelt among us" (John 1:14), but what kind of flesh was it that He took upon Himself? Paul tells us it was "in the likeness of sinful flesh" (Romans 8:3) that Jesus came. Can this be true? There are many today that doubt this biblical declaration, but it is an irrefutable Bible fact that Jesus "was made in the likeness of men" (Philippians 2:7), and that "he also himself likewise took part of the same" flesh as we, and "that in *all* things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren" (Hebrews 2:14-17). If Christ had not been made in all things like unto His brethren, then His sinless life would be no encouragement to us. We might look at it with admiration, but it would be the admiration of that life itself that would cause us hopeless despair.

Notice how beautifully the following account from the most powerful and inspiring commentary on the life of Jesus has captured, with such clarity, the marvelous condescension of Christ:

"He [God] made Him [Jesus] to be sin for us... that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him" (2 Corinthians 5:21). When was He made sin for us? It was when He was made flesh. He was made sin that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him. He went to the very lowest depths to which man had fallen, in order that He might lift us to His own exalted throne; yet He never ceased to be God, or lost a particle of His holiness. In taking upon Himself man's nature in its fallen condition He did not in the least participate in its sin.

"It would have been an almost infinite humiliation for the Son of God to take man's nature, even when Adam stood in his innocence in Eden. But Jesus accepted humanity when the race had been weakened by four thousand years of sin. Like every child of Adam He

THE GOOD NEWS OF GALATIANS

accepted the results of the working of the great law of heredity. What these results were is shown in the history of His earthly ancestors. He came with such a heredity to share our sorrows and temptations, and to give us the example of a sinless life."

"In our humanity, Christ was to redeem Adam's failure. But when Adam was assailed by the tempter, none of the effects of sin were upon him. He stood in the strength of perfect manhood, possessing the full vigor of mind and body.... It was not thus with Jesus.... For four thousand years the race had been decreasing in physical strength, in mental power, and in moral worth; and Christ took upon Him the infirmities of degenerate humanity.... Our Saviour took humanity, with all its liabilities. He took the nature of man, with the possibility of yielding to temptation. We have nothing to bear which He has not endured." (White, *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 49, 117)

The Jesus that came to save us from our sins is the same Jesus who said, "I delight to do Thy will, O my God; Thy law is within My heart" (Psalm 40:8). Since Jesus has now become our substitute, literally taking our place, not INSTEAD of us, but actually coming INTO us and living His life IN us and FOR us, it necessarily follows the same law must be within our hearts when we receive the adoption.

6 And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father. 7 Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ. 8 Howbeit then, when ye knew not God, ye did service unto them which by nature are no gods. 9 But now, after that ye have known God, or rather are known of God, how turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements, whereunto ye

desire again to be in bondage?

A slave is one who is in bondage to sin. A slave possesses nothing and has no control over himself. We were all in bondage to sin, in servitude to Satan, but God has bought our freedom and adopted us as His children. Knowing this, why would we want to sell ourselves into bondage again? Would this not border on the very threshold of insanity?

The word of God is clear, we cannot serve two masters. We can not serve both God and Satan. We can not serve both sin and righteousness. "Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness... ye were the servants of sin, but... being made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness... for when ye were the servants of sin, ye were free from righteousness... But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life" (Romans 6:16-22).

This is the same thing Jesus was addressing when He said, "Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin. And the servant abideth not in the house for ever: but the Son abideth ever. If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed" (John 8:34-36). This is why He was able to declare that He was the fulfillment of the prophecy of Isaiah 61:1-3 by proclaiming: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to *preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance [from sin] to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty [from the power of Satan] them that are bruised"*

THE GOOD NEWS OF GALATIANS

(Luke 4:18).

The people of Galatia had known God and this knowledge was more than just a mental perception. They had entered into a personal, experiential, and experimental knowledge of God, but they were beginning to turn away from the truth that had been delivered unto them and thereby returning to bondage. From this we may see it is possible for those who have made a great profession of religion to afterward be drawn away. God will never take away any human being's free will. We shall always be free to choose for or against God and the truth of His word.

There are many, however, that reject this Bible teaching of the freewill of man and teach that God has chosen some to be saved and others lost; and unless we have been predestined by God to receive eternal life, we cannot choose to follow Jesus, for He has already condemned us to destruction. What an injustice this is to the loving character of God, who is "not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" (2 Peter 3:9). His longing desire is to "have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth" (1 Timothy 2:4).

Closely related to this prominent perversion of predestination is the great delusion of "once saved - always saved." If God has predestinated one to be saved, then it is impossible for them to reject God's irresistible grace and be lost. Thus, once saved - always saved and predestination go hand in hand.

Again, it is imperative we understand that predestination teaches the horrible heresy that God chooses some to be lost and others to be saved without any choice or action on their part and nothing can alter

their destinies. Individuals are not saved because they have responded to God's love, nor lost because they have rejected it, but because God has foreordained them to be lost or saved. This stands in stark contrast to what the Bible teaches. One of the most beautiful, simple, sublime, and comforting passages in God's word assures us:

"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God" (John 3:16-18).

Based upon the above words of Jesus, is salvation based upon belief or predestination? Remember, two things determine our Salvation, the sacrifice of Jesus and our response to that gift.

Scripture is filled with warnings about falling away and being lost. (Hebrew 6:4-6; 2 Peter 2:20-22; 2 Peter 3:14-17) If God's grace is irresistible, such warnings would be unnecessary. Even Paul realized he could become a "castaway" (1 Corinthians 9:26, 27), and the warning of Jesus is that unless one remains faithful, He will "blot out his name out of the book of life" (Revelation 3:5). If it were impossible to lose salvation, why would the Bible contain so many warnings about this possibility becoming a reality?

Jesus said, "he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved" (Matt. 24:13). Salvation is conditional upon faithfulness to the end. Believers can choose to be lost as surely as sinners can choose to be saved. If once a person was saved they could never fall,

THE GOOD NEWS OF GALATIANS

then the devil would not even waste his time on believers, nor would he need expend his energies on non-believers for they are already his.

If salvation is based upon God's "irresistible grace," then even faith becomes unnecessary. God simply chooses whom He will save regardless of any act of faith or response to His love. One can live as he or she pleases and still be saved because God has ordained it so. If this is so, then why did not God exercise this "irresistible grace" in the Garden of Eden and save this world a lot of trouble, suffering, and heartache? The reason is clear, He gave each of us a free will to choose or reject salvation. "Therefore, choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live: That thou mayest love the LORD thy God, and that thou mayest obey his voice, and that thou mayest cleave unto him: for he is thy life" (Deuteronomy 30:19, 20).

A person who knows not the true God is known as a heathen. One who apostatizes and turns from God and His word becomes a heathen. Paul is amazed that one would "desire" to be in bondage after having been set free from sin and death. According to Proverbs 8:36 to sin is to love death. When one turns from what they know to be truth, when they reject the word of God, they judge themselves worthy of death. This is what happened to the Jews and they received the awesome pronouncement: "It was necessary that the word of God should have first been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the gentiles" (Acts 13:46).

10 Ye observe days, and months, and times, and years. 11 I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labour in vain.

The Galatians, before their conversion, were not Jews, but heathen; and these days, months, times, and years of the Levitical law were becoming but a substitute for those pagan holidays, which they had regarded with superstitious reverence while heathen. Some, even today, say we must keep the feasts and ceremonies of Judaism, but should we also eat bitter herbs and lamb while standing? Should we take all leaven from the house during Passover? Are we to put blood on the doorpost of our houses? The last Passover that was ever to be kept was in the upper room the night of Jesus' betrayal. That was the last that was ever to be celebrated. The Lord's Supper was to take the place of the Passover and the latter was to pass away forever. "Christ our passover is sacrificed for us" (1 Corinthians 5:7).

Others would so distort this passage as to say that it refers to the Sabbath of the fourth commandment. However, if Sabbath observance subjects man to bondage, then Jesus Himself entered into bondage when He observed the world's first Sabbath at creation, as well as throughout His life on earth. These "days, and months, and times, and years" were the Levitical ceremonies that pointed to the coming of the Savior and were nailed to the cross. Notice how clear Paul makes this: "Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross;... Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days: Which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ" (Colossians 2:14, 16, 17). Once Jesus came in fulfillment of these ceremonies, it would be a denial of His Messiahship and the sufficiency of His sacrifice for one to continue in them. Any attempt

THE GOOD NEWS OF GALATIANS

to transfer some saving ability to these ordinances would be to reject Jesus as the sole Savior of the world. Only the Lord Jesus can save and He "is able to save them to the uttermost that come to God by Him" (Hebrews 7:25).

Paul was so fearful all of his labor in bringing them the Gospel of Christ would be of none effect that he now turns from the clear and logical arguments he has been presenting, since chapter one, to a most heartfelt entreaty imploring them to fully consider this about-face they are making.

12 Brethren, I beseech you, be as I am; for I am as ye are: ye have not injured me at all. 13 Ye know how through infirmity of the flesh I preached the gospel unto you at the first. 14 And my temptation which was in my flesh ye despised not, nor rejected; but received me as an angel of God, even as Christ Jesus. 15 Where is then the blessedness ye spake of? for I bear you record, that, if it had been possible, ye would have plucked out your own eyes, and have given them to me. 16 Am I therefore become your enemy, because I tell you the truth?

The "infirmity" with which Paul suffered is believed by many to have been very poor eyesight. This can be seen from a couple of points. First of all is the reference here that the Galatians had thought so highly of Paul that they would have been willing to exchange eyes with him. Secondly, whenever Paul wrote to the churches, he usually dictated his letters, but on the few occasions he wrote himself, he would make reference to the fact and comment on how large the writing was, as is the writing of most who are visually impaired. These points have lead scholars to conclude that Paul's "thorn in the flesh," or

"infirmity," was a visual impairment of some sort. (See 2 Corinthians 12:7-10; Galatians 4:12-15; 6:11.)

This passage also helps us to see how fickle human friends can be and how easily they are drawn into contempt of those for whom they once had the greatest esteem and affection. What happened to Paul here, still happens to God's faithful servants today. Often people will think of us as enemies when we try to share truth with them. The truth often makes people angry. Jesus said it would even divide the closest earthly ties (Luke 12:53). It is for this reason that some today who know truth refuse to share it with others. They are afraid of offending them or making them angry; thus, they allow them to continue on in the darkness of superstition and error, deceiving themselves into believing that this will make them a better friend. Actually Paul was their best friend, willing to risk even the loss of their friendship in his attempt to save them. "Faithful are the wounds of a friend, but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful" (Proverbs 27:6).

17 They zealously affect you, but not well; yea, they would exclude you, that ye might affect them. 18 But it is good to be zealously affected always in a good thing, and not only when I am present with you.

These Judaizers were "zealously affecting" or "avidly pursuing" the Galatians, attempting to exclude them from the gospel and church membership. They were trying to win them over to their legalistic views. If only those who had the truth of the gospel were as zealous as those who present error, how much brighter would the truth of God's word shine today? Lack of zeal or enthusiasm on the part of Christians is often responsible for the lack of interest

THE GOOD NEWS OF GALATIANS

shown by non-Christians. A non-Christian once told a friend of mine: "If you Christians want us to accept your Redeemer, you had better start acting a little more redeemed."

There are two rules to help regulate the zeal of a Christian. First, the zeal is to be exercised only on the good. Before his conversion, Paul was so "exceedingly zealous" of the "traditions" of his fathers that he "persecuted the church of God" (Galatians 1:13, 14). Even today, there are those who are so zealous of the traditions of man that they persecute, belittle, and malign those who would stand upon the truth of God's word alone. The second rule is to be constant and steady in your faith. Zeal can never be a substitute for sanctified, straight thinking and the truth of the word of God. Do not allow yourself to be governed by an emotional roller coaster of feelings and circumstances. Zeal founded on anything other than the truth of God's word becomes nothing more than folly.

19 My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you, 20 I desire to be present with you now, and to change my voice; for I stand in doubt of you.

Paul greatly desired to be present with the believers in Galatia that he might discover what had been reported was false and that he might change his "voice," or literally his tone of voice, or attitude; for as it now stood, he was in doubt of them and perplexed because of their apparent departure from the truth. His heart-felt longing was to see them standing firmly upon the gospel and having Christ fully reflected in their lives. This is what God has always desired of His people. But today, as in the days of Paul,

Christ can not be fully formed in us until we cease to trust in our own righteousness, and come to rely totally upon Him and His righteousness. When He lives within us, He lives out His life through us. Our mind becomes His mind, His love controls us, and the fruit of the Spirit will be fully evidenced in our lives.

As one author so beautifully stated: "Christ is waiting with longing desire for the manifestation of Himself in His church. When the character of Christ shall be perfectly reproduced in His people, then He will come to claim them as His own." (*White, Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 69)

Verses 21-31 of this chapter are Paul's appeal against the follies of legalism or any form of work-oriented religion. In this passage he uses the two sons of Abraham, Isaac, born of Sarah, and Ishmael, born of Hagar, to illustrate the two covenants. One son, Isaac, fell heir to the covenant, the other did not. Thus, he clearly illustrates that simply being a physical heir of Abraham did not guarantee receiving the promise of God. Instead one must be a child of the promise to be an heir (*Galatians 3:26-29*).

21 Tell me, ye that desire to be under the law, do ye not hear the law? 22 For it is written, that Abraham had two sons, the one by a bondmaid, the other by a freewoman. 23 But he who was of the bondwoman was born after the flesh; but he of the freewoman was by promise. 24 Which things are an allegory: for these are the two covenants; the one from the mount Sinai, which gendereth to bondage, which is Agar.

In the religious world today, we find much confusion and misunderstanding on the beautiful Bible teaching of

THE GOOD NEWS OF GALATIANS

the covenants. However, there is no need to be confused by the artificial definitions used by the theologians, such as the "Adamic covenant," the "Noachian covenant," or the "Abrahamic covenant," for these are all the same covenant -- the "New" or "Everlasting" covenant that God promised to different people under varying circumstances.

Because of a misunderstanding of this principle, many have been led to believe the covenants are mutual agreements between God His people. Thus, many believe the "old covenant" is an agreement or promise made between God and His people, the Jews, and the "new covenant" is an agreement between God and Christians, which has replaced the "old covenant." Therefore, they conclude the "old covenant" refers to the Old Testament dispensation and the "new covenant" to the New Testament dispensation. However, the word of God clearly reveals the covenants are not a bargain struck between God and His people, nor are they a matter of time, but rather of condition.

What then are the two covenants? This can be readily discerned from Galatians 3:16-18 where we discover that to disannul the covenant is to make void the promise. Thus, we can see that His covenant and His promise are one and the same (verse 17).

That God's covenant and His promise are the same thing can again be found in the book of Genesis (Genesis 9:8-16), where it is recorded that God made a covenant with every creature on the earth. These creatures did not promise God anything in return; they simply received the promise. That is all we can do as well, simply receive.

God promises all that we need and all that is necessary for life and godliness, even exceedingly, abundantly above all that we can ask or even think. (See

Ephesians 3:20; 2 Peter 1:3, 4). He has given us everything. He has even given us Himself. The problem is we have trouble receiving without trying to strike a bargain with God. We tend to want to make it an equal, mutual affair, a transaction in which we can consider ourselves on a par with God, a sort of a 50/50 arrangement. "God, you do this for me, and I will do this for you." Our problem is feeling we have to promise God something in return, rather than simply believing God's promise.

When the Lord brought the children of Israel out of Egypt, He desired to reaffirm His covenant made to Abraham and promised to make them "a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation" (Exodus 19:6), but rather than simply accept His promise by faith, as had Abraham, they felt they had to make a promise in return "and all the people answered together, and said, All that the Lord has spoken we will do" (Exodus 19:8). Thus, they entered into the "old covenant" of works, of futile promises, and within a few weeks they had broken their covenant with God and found themselves dancing around a golden calf, "in bondage" and "under the law," unable to keep their promise. What a sad sight, unwilling to believe the "new covenant" and unable to keep the "old covenant." This is the experience Paul is referring to in verses 22-31.

25 For this Agar is mount Sinai in Arabia, and answereth to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children. 26 But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all.

The covenant from Sinai brings bondage; the one from above brings freedom, not freedom from obedience, but from disobedience. It has never been a question of IF

THE GOOD NEWS OF GALATIANS

the law should be kept, but rather HOW and WHY it is to be kept. Why should one keep the commandments of God? Jesus said, "If ye love Me Keep my commandments (John 14:15). We are to keep the commandments because we love Jesus and for no other reason. How can we keep the commandments? Again Jesus says, "without me ye can do nothing" and "except ye abide in me" all of our efforts will be futile (John 15:5, 4). But if Christ truly lives in the Christian, then "it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure" (Philippians 2:13).

As one renowned commentator, J.N. Andrews, has so aptly stated: "The bondage of the Jews did not consist in that God had given them His law, but because they were its transgressors - the servants of sin. John 8:33-36. The freedom of the children of 'Jerusalem which is above,' does not consist in that the law has been abolished, but in that they have been made free from sin. Romans 6:22" (*The Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, September 16, 1851).

Abraham himself looked for this city. How did he look? "By faith" "he looked for a city...whose builder and maker is God" (Hebrews 11:8-10). The gospel was as full and complete in the days of Abraham as it ever has been or ever will be. No additions to it or changes to its conditions or provisions could possibly be made after God's promise to Abraham. Nothing could be taken away from it as it thus existed, and not one thing can ever be required from any man more than what was required of Abraham.

There are some today that have the false concept the people of the Old Testament era were saved by works, and we, of the New Testament time, are saved by faith, and thus the gospel did not even exist until after the

coming of Christ. However, the absolute absurdity of such an assertion is clearly seen in Paul's proclamation that "if Abraham were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory; but not before God. For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness" (Romans 4:2-3). Justification always has been and always will be by faith. If we are justified by works, we make God our debtor.

God's promise was given to Abraham before any works on his part. He simply believed God and followed God's instruction (verses 10-13). He made no promise in return, he simply "believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness." "He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; and being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform. And therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness" (Romans 4:20-22).

At age 99 God again assures Abraham of His promise, calling it an "everlasting covenant" (Genesis 17:7). The reason this "everlasting covenant" is also called the "new covenant" is because even though it "was made with Adam and renewed to Abraham, it could not be ratified until the death of Christ. It had existed by the promise of God since the first intimation of redemption had been given; it had been accepted by faith; yet when ratified by Christ, it is called a *new covenant*." (White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 370, 371)

There are many today, however, who are living under the "old covenant," for "these two covenants exist today. The two covenants are not matters of time, but of condition. Let no one flatter himself that he cannot be bound under the old covenant, thinking that its time is passed." (Jones, *The Glad Tidings*, p. 100) Each of us are

THE GOOD NEWS OF GALATIANS

living under the one or the other. Which of the covenants are you under? Do you say, "I accept" or "I will," "I believe" or "I promise"?

In the little book *Steps to Christ*, we find this beautiful assurance. "Your promises and resolutions are like ropes of sand. You cannot control your thoughts, your impulses, your affections. The knowledge of your broken promises and forfeited pledges will weaken your confidence in your own sincerity, and cause you to feel that God cannot accept you; but you need not despair. What you need to understand is the true force of the will. This is the governing power in the nature of man, the power of decision, or of choice. Everything depends on the right action of the will. The power of choice God has given to men; it is theirs to exercise. You cannot change your heart, you cannot of yourself give to God its affections; but you can choose to serve Him. You can give Him your will; He will then work in you to will and to do according to His good pleasure. Thus your whole nature will be brought under the control of the Spirit of Christ; your affections will be centered upon Him, your thoughts will be in harmony with Him." (White, *Steps to Christ*, p. 47)

The beautiful "good news" of the two covenants is that "the new covenant" was established upon better promises - the promise of forgiveness of sins and the grace of God to renew the heart and bring it into harmony with the principles of God's law. "For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people" (Hebrews 8:10). We are not only given the ability to keep the law, but we are given the mind that delights in doing it (Psalm 40:8; Hebrews 8:10; 10:9, 10).

"The same law that was engraved upon the tables of stone is written by the Holy Spirit upon the tables of the heart. Instead of going about to establish our own righteousness we accept the righteousness of Christ. His blood atones for our sins. His obedience is accepted for us. Then the heart renewed by the Holy Spirit will bring forth 'the fruits of the Spirit.' Through the grace of Christ we shall live in obedience to the law of God written upon our hearts. Having the Spirit of Christ, we shall walk even as He walked." (White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 372)

27 For it is written, Rejoice, thou barren that bearest not; break forth and cry, thou that travailest not: for the desolate hath many more children than she which hath an husband. 28 Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise. 29 But as then he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit, even so it is now. 30 Nevertheless what saith the scripture? Cast out the bondwoman and her son: for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the freewoman. 31 So then, brethren, we are not children of the bondwoman, but of the free.

There are four things that are imperative of notation in this passage.

1. The heir came by promise, not works.
2. All who seek salvation through any means other than faith will be cast out as was Hagar and Ishmael.
3. Children of the promise will be persecuted by children of the flesh.
4. Only children of the free woman - faith - are eligible to the birthright.

THE GOOD NEWS OF GALATIANS

If we are truly "Abraham's seed and heirs according to the promise" (Galatians 3:29), then we must have the faith of Abraham, "who staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; and being fully persuaded that, what He had promised, He was able also to perform. And therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness" (Romans 4:20-22).

"This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith" (1 John 5:4).

CHAPTER FIVE

The Works of the Flesh

The connection between chapters four and five are so close, it doesn't even warrant a division here.

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

This admonition to "stand fast," is of supreme importance today in the face of immeasurable, unscriptural theories that are bombarding Christ's church, but if we are to stand fast we must have firm ground upon which to stand. Many today are renouncing Christ altogether when they deny and abandon truth, and place themselves under the bondage of error and sin.

Jesus came to restore that which was lost, thus, the liberty with which He sets us free is the liberty that existed before the curse came. By His merits he has freed us and by His power He keeps us free. He made us free from sin that we might live free from sin. This is fact. Faith does not make facts, it simply lays hold on them.

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

Having rejected Christ and placed their hopes on the law, Christ could profit them nothing, nor be of any effect to them. Though Jesus is able to save to the uttermost, there are multitudes for whom He will profit nothing. He will not be the Saviour of any who do not rely

THE GOOD NEWS OF GALATIANS

upon Him as their ONLY Saviour.

Paul says, "I say unto you" for to remain silent in this crisis would make him a traitor before Christ. He received his power and authority from Christ and he expected to be recognized as God's representative, speaking in Christ's stead.

Circumcision here stands as a symbol of any type of work done for the purpose of obtaining righteousness. Christ is the only source of righteousness.

3 For I testify again to every man that is circumcised, that he is a debtor to do the whole law. 4 Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace.

If one part of the law can justify us, then we become debtors to the "whole law" not just circumcision. If the law can save, what need have we of Christ. The problem here is not the law, or keeping the law, but being a debtor to the law. To be a debtor is to owe. What the law requires is righteousness, but it cannot provide righteousness. If we owe the law that which we do not have, we come under the curse of the law (Galatians 3:10), and the only way to come out from under the curse is to be in Christ and walk in the Spirit. The Scripture is very clear on this point.

"There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk

not after the flesh, but after the Spirit" (Romans 8:1-4).

Because of the biblical fact that we are "justified by faith without the deeds of the law" (Romans 3:28), many falsely assume (and some even teach) that the law has been abolished and replaced by faith. However, Paul's statement in verse 31 clearly reveals the great error in such a position. "Do we then make void the law through faith?" is his pointed question. The answer is immediate and forceful: "God forbid: yea, we establish the law" (Romans 3:31). God's "law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good" (Romans 7:12) and reflects the very character of God. This is easily seen in the following passage of Scripture:

"The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple. The statutes of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes. The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring for ever: the judgments of the LORD are true and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold: sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb. Moreover by them is thy servant warned: and in keeping of them there is great reward" (Psalms 19:7-11).

Both the Lord and His law are:

1. Perfect, converting the soul.
2. Sure, making wise the simple.
3. Right, rejoicing the heart.
4. Pure, enlightening the eyes.
5. Clean, enduring for ever.
6. True and righteous altogether.
7. Holy, and just, and good (Romans 7:12).
8. Stand fast for ever and ever (Psalms 111:8).

THE GOOD NEWS OF GALATIANS

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

The phrase "wait for the hope" is found six times in Scripture and always refers to the second coming of Jesus. We are to patiently wait for His coming and the restoration of all things. This is the "hope of" or hope imparted by righteousness by faith "through" the Spirit.

Paul said in Romans 8:4 that the "righteousness of the law" is to "be fulfilled in us." Many wonder what is meant by this statement, but if one keeps in mind that the law is a reflection of the character of Christ, then it stands to reason if that law is written in our hearts by our God (Hebrews 8:10), then we will begin to reflect the righteous character of our Savior. If we are truly "waiting patiently for the hope imparted by righteousness by faith" (the second coming) we must, also be earnestly longing for the "hope of glory" "which is Christ in you" (Colossians 1:27).

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

The Bible is clear, faith must work. Notice how clear Scripture is in this point: "What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can faith save him? If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, And one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit? Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone. Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: show me thy faith without thy works, and I will show thee my faith by my

works. Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble. But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead?.... For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also" (James 2:14-26).

The great significance of this fact can be seen in the words of Jesus. "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven" (Matthew 7:21).

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

The life of the Christian is a race; we must run and hold on if we would obtain the prize. It is not enough that we run by a profession of Christianity, we must run well by living up to that profession.

Have you perhaps ran well, but are now beginning to turn out of the way or to fire of the race? Who or what doth hinder you? The word of God gives three very important principles of how to run this race if we would come through victorious.

1. Don't run with uncertainty.

"Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain. And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible. I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air: But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I

THE GOOD NEWS OF GALATIANS

have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway" (1 Corinthians 9:24-27).

2. Run looking to Jesus.

"Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God" (Hebrews 12:1-2).

3. Press forward and forget the past.

"Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith: That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death; If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead. Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching

forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 3:8-14).

The truth is not only to be believed, it is to be obeyed and that is only possible through faith. There is but one reason for obeying the truth and that is the same reason for embracing it in the beginning and that is because it is truth. It is only if we "run well" that we can have the same assurance Paul had when he said: "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love His appearing" (2 Timothy 4:7-8). Therefore, dear reader, "Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompense of reward. For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise. For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry. Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him. But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul" (Hebrews 10:35-39).

8 This persuasion cometh not of him that calleth you.

This course they were pursuing could not have come from God, for it was contrary to His plan of salvation.

This left only one source, for if it had not come from above, it had to have come from beneath. It is extremely important that we keep this in mind today. With all the different teachings in the world today, we need to be certain those we accept are from Him who called us and

THE GOOD NEWS OF GALATIANS

not "cunningly devised fables" (2Peter 1:16) or "doctrines of devils" (1Timothy 4:1).

9 A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump. 10 I have confidence in you through the Lord, that ye will be none otherwise minded: but he that troubleth you shall bear his judgment, whosoever he be.

It is dangerous to encourage or patronize those who propagate destructive errors, for it only takes a little false teaching to corrupt the entire congregation. Those who trouble the church and bring in false and heretical teachings will one day stand in judgment for those things. However, when dealing with and reproving sin and error, the church needs to distinguish between the leaders and the led - those who draw away and those who are drawn.

11 And I, brethren, if I yet preach circumcision, why do I yet suffer persecution? then is the offence of the cross ceased. 12 I would they were even cut off which trouble you.

The cross reveals the love of God, the enormity of sin, and man's inability to do good. If he was to lay aside these teachings of the cross and preach righteousness by works, the stumbling block or offense of the cross would then cease and he would no longer suffer persecution at the hands of the legalistic Judaizers.

Paul declared "that the Gentiles... attained to righteousness, even the righteousness which is of faith. But Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, hath not attained to the law of righteousness. Wherefore [why not]? Because they sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law. For they stumbled at that

stumblingstone; As it is written, Behold, I lay in Sion a stumblingstone and rock of offence: and whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed" (Romans 9:30-33).

The phrase "cut off" in verse 12 means literally to castrate or make a eunuch. Thus, Paul is virtually saying if virtue could be earned by circumcision, perhaps even more could be obtained by castration. The absurdity of such a ludicrous belief is Paul's last argument against the Judaizers and his last reference to them in the book of Galatians.

13 For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another. 14 For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. 15 But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another.

The Christian is "called unto liberty" and that freedom comes only through Jesus Christ. Notice how clear Jesus makes this point.

"Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, *If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.* They answered him, We be Abraham's seed, and were never in bondage to any man: how sayest thou, Ye shall be made free? Jesus answered them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, *Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin.* And the servant abideth not in the house for ever: but the Son abideth ever. If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be *free indeed*" (John 8:31-36).

Notice some very key words that have been italicized in the above passage. What is the Christian set

THE GOOD NEWS OF GALATIANS

free from? It is the very thing he was a servant of and in bondage to - SIN. According to Jesus He sets us free from sin, which the Bible defines as "transgression of the law" (1 John 3:4). John fearlessly affirms that Jesus "was manifested to take away our sins" and "whosoever abideth in him sinneth not" (1 John 3:5, 6). The reason for this is self evident for, "He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil. Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God. In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God" (1 John 3:8-10). The line of distinction between the children of God and the children of the Devil is made simple by God's word. The children of God keep His commandments and do righteous works, whereas the children of Satan reject God's commandments (even if it is only one) and their works are works of unrighteousness - sin. They are "the children of disobedience" (Ephesians 2:2).

The entire sixth chapter of Romans addresses this very issue. Observe how plain Paul presents this great biblical doctrine of deliverance FROM sin.

"What shall we say then? *Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid.* How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?... even so we also should walk in newness of life.... our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. For he that is dead is *freed from sin*.... reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord. Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body,

that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof. Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God. For *sin shall not have dominion over you*: for ye are not under the law, but under grace. What then? *shall we sin*, because we are not under the law, but under grace? *God forbid*. Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?... Being then *made free from sin*, ye became the servants of righteousness.... For when ye were the servants of sin, ye were free from righteousness.... But now being *made free from sin*, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life. For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Romans 6:1-23).

Friends, we have the promise of God through His word, therefore, we have the deliverance, but has the truth freed you? We have been set at liberty FROM sin, not at liberty TO sin. Yet many today use their "liberty for an occasion to the flesh." As such, they eat what they want, drink what they want, do what they want, etc. In short they seek their own will. They choose to be willingly ignorant that we are freed from the curse of the law, not obligation to it.

According to verses 14 and 15 dissension and strife are marks of departure from the faith, if indeed one was ever in it and are clear revelations of one's bondage and condemnation. They are attributes of the spirit from beneath and not from above.

THE GOOD NEWS OF GALATIANS

16 This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh. 17 For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would. 18 But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law.

This passage has often been misunderstood and misapplied. What things are these that can't be done: the good things or the bad things? Many believe it is the good that we cannot do. What a terrible state that would be, not to be able to do good and forced to go through life doing only evil. However, verse 16 makes it clear that what Paul is saying is if we walk in the Spirit, we will not do evil. "This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh" (Galatians 5:16).

We are so accustomed to running our own lives, we often ignore, resist, or reject the leading and promptings of the Holy Spirit, but if we allow the Holy Spirit to have control of our lives, we cannot do the works of the flesh. For example, the Spirit of God will never lead anyone to lie, steal, cheat, commit adultery, etc. Having been crucified with Christ, the carnal mind is put to death, and being now spiritually minded we walk in the Spirit and "sin shall not have dominion over you" (Romans 6:14). "But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life" (Romans 6:22). Those who reject and resist the Bible teaching that we can fully obey and do good works have never fully experienced the power of God's grace and His Spirit.

What it basically comes down to is which is greater, the Spirit or the flesh? If we believe, as the Bible teaches,

that the Spirit of God is all powerful, then it stands to reason that the power of the Spirit can overcome the desires of the flesh. The assurance of God's word is "greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world" (1 John 4:4). The question is, "do you believe this?" Not only can we, through the power of the Holy Spirit, overcome the lusts of the flesh, we must overcome them, for unless we walk in the Spirit, we are in a state of disaster; we are under the condemnation of God. However, "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit" (Romans 8:1).

Being "in Christ" is not a one-time event, but a moment-by-moment choice – a continual surrender of our will to His. If we are walking after the flesh, we are not in Christ and are under condemnation. "So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God. But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his... For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God" (Romans 8:8, 9, 14).

As we have previously seen, it is walking in the Spirit rather than the flesh that distinguishes the "sons of God" from the "children of this world." Remember, "the Christian's life is not simply a modification of the old, but a total transformation, because the old man is dead. There is a death to self and sin, and a new life altogether. This change can be brought about only by the effectual working of the Holy Spirit" (White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 172)

The following encapsulates so vividly and with such simplicity what it means to walk in the Spirit:

"When the Spirit of God takes possession of the heart, it transforms the life. Sinful thoughts are put away,

THE GOOD NEWS OF GALATIANS

evil deeds are renounced; love, humility, and peace take the place of anger, envy, and strife. Joy takes the place of sadness, and the countenance reflects the light of heaven." (Ibid., p. 173)

If only we would come to see how our Lord longs for us to put away all doubt, and in simple faith accept the promise of His Spirit that we might be "changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord" (2 Corinthians 3:18). Yet the "mystery of iniquity" has such a control over the minds of the multitude that they are demonically driven to vehemently resist or reject the glorious good news that by the power of the Holy Spirit the moral image of God is to be perfected in the character. They stand as a adamant stone in opposition to the biblical fact that we are to be wholly transformed into the likeness of Christ. Thus, while bearing the name "Christian," they perform the "works of the flesh" rather than exhibit the "fruit of the Spirit."

Verse 18 makes it clear that it is only those who are "led of the Spirit [that] are not under law." Every person on this planet is either "under law" or "led of the Spirit." Just as it is impossible for one who is led of the Spirit to be under the condemnation of the law, it is equally impossible for one to transgress the law and come under condemnation while being led of the Spirit. Remember, the Holy Spirit is not the minister of sin, but is the minister of righteousness and will therefore, never lead anyone to sin or break God's law and bring them under the condemnation of death. Thus, Paul declares: "But [literally "therefore"] if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law" (Galatians 5:18). "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit" (Romans 8:1).

19 Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, 20 Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, 21 Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.

In the above passage Paul lists some of the "works of the flesh," which we shall now consider with these questions in mind: Is it possible for God's professed people to be walking in these "works" without even realizing it? Is it possible that they are committing murder, adultery, fornication, etc.? Oh, that our pharisaical robes may be torn from us that we may indeed see that "all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags" (Isaiah 64:6).

As we consider the first of these (adultery), it becomes immediately clear this involves much more than physical acts of immorality. In addressing this sin Jesus declared: "I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart" (Matthew 5:27-28).

In addition to the physical and mental acts of adultery, God refers to a "spiritual" adultery. "Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God" (James 4:4).

Thus, it becomes evident that whether physical, mental, or spiritual "whoso committeth adultery with a woman lacketh understanding: he that doeth it destroyeth his own soul" (Proverbs 6:32).

It is imperative for us today to heed the warning of Jesus to ancient Israel. "For what shall it profit a man, if he

THE GOOD NEWS OF GALATIANS

shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul? Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation; of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels" (Mark 8:36-38).

The second of the "works of the flesh" (and closely related to the first) is "fornication." This, too, has tremendous spiritual implications as is seen repeatedly throughout Scripture.

"For, lo, they that are far from thee shall perish: thou hast destroyed all them that go a whoring from thee" (Psalms 73:27). Here we see our unfaithfulness to God is a form of fornication.

In Revelation the Apostle John is shown "the judgment of the great whore that sitteth upon many waters: With whom the kings of the earth have committed *fornication*, and the inhabitants of the earth have been made drunk with the wine of her fornication" (Revelation 17:1-2).

This woman is a "great whore" because she is guilty of "fornication." She bears the name "Babylon," which is the name of the city in which Nimrod and his followers built the "tower of Babel" and where God confused the language of the people. (Genesis 10:10; 11:9) The meaning of the name is simply "confusion" and in its symbolic sense refers to all the confused religious bodies that have fallen away from the truth of God's word to follow man-made teachings. This "great whore" has replaced the teachings of Scripture with "cunningly devised fables" (2 Peter 1:16) and "doctrines of devils" (1 Timothy 4:1) and, as such, have become guilty of spiritual fornication.

THE WORKS OF THE FLESH

99

People today are accepting the teachings and doctrines of Babylon (confusion). Basing their belief on error, they commit fornication. Many are taking fanciful ideas and theories as though they were fundamental doctrine.

If you have been deceived by the fornication of Babylon, be assured they have no foundation in Scripture, but are solely the product of confusion and "God is not the author of confusion" (1 Corinthians 14:33). It is most essential that we come all the way out of Babylon, severing ourselves totally from all error and stand upon the word of God. His last message of warning is: "Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues" (Revelation 18:4).

The third of these "works" is "uncleanness" or literally "impurity." Notice the tremendous parallel between the works of the flesh in Galatians and the result of these works in Romans. In Romans 1:18 Paul refers to those who "hold the truth in unrighteousness." He further describes them as follows:

"When they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things. Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves: Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen" (Romans 1:21-25). Notice that they knew God, but did not glorify Him. They were

THE GOOD NEWS OF GALATIANS

unthankful and vain. Thus, professing themselves wise, they became fools and their foolish hearts were darkened resulting in idolatry, lust, immorality, perversion of the truth, and self-centeredness.

Inasmuch "as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient; Being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers, Backbiters, haters of God, despiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, Without understanding, covenantbreakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful: Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them" (Romans 1:28-32).

Being filled with all "unrighteousness" or "sin" (1 John 5: 17), they became guilty of the above 22 points. It is significant that Paul not only addresses those who "commit such things," but also those who "have pleasure in them that do them." Just consider how many of these things are portrayed on television and movies and how even professed Christians have pleasure in them. It is an undisputable fact that our sins are often aggravated by our concurrence with and complacency in the sins of others. God's people today have become drunk from watching, reading, and supporting the lust of the flesh.

The sin of omitting that which is good or finding pleasure in that which is evil will lead to the sin of actually committing that which is evil. Those who thus dishonor God are given up to dishonor themselves and man cannot be given up to greater slavery than to be given up to his

own lusts. Remember, as we attribute success and salvation to ourselves and our good works, faith in God will decrease until we are left in darkness.

This chapter of Romans can be summarized as the condition of man without God" and the cause of that condition can be stated in one word - unbelief (Romans 1:16-18). Unbelief leads to self exaltation and faith to humility. Unbelief to the "works of the flesh" (Romans 1:29-31; Galatians 5:19-21) and faith to the "fruit of the Spirit" (Galatians 5:22-26).

Paul further bewails the fourth of the works of the flesh (lasciviousness or unbridled lust) in the following words: "I shall bewail many which have sinned already, and have not repented of the uncleanness and fornication and lasciviousness which they have committed" (2 Corinthians 12:21). Is it not evident if the apostle were alive today, he would "bewail" the abundance of this sin in the churches today?

Idolatry, the fifth of these works is a sin that many Christians have regulated to the realm of non-Christian religions. But under the magnificent magnification of the word of God, we discover this sin entails far more than bowing before some statue. It is putting anything or anyone before God. In Colossians 3:5 the apostle, after listing the sins of "fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence," refers to "covetousness, which is idolatry." This is why Scripture informs us "that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God" (Ephesians 5:5).

The sixth of the works is "witchcraft" and is another of the sins the church has come to believe can only apply to a non-Christian. Remember, however, this message is

THE GOOD NEWS OF GALATIANS

addressed to the Christian church, not the pagan world. This is why the Scriptures clearly declare that "rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry" (1 Sam. 15:23). Any time you rebel against God, you practice the sin of witchcraft; it is that simple. It is to follow in the footsteps of the first great rebel who was cast out of heaven (Revelation 12:7-9).

As we come to the seventh of these works of the flesh, hatred, we again find an abundance of insight into this most monstrous sin among God's professed people.

The apostle John states: "He that saith he is in the light, and hateth his brother, is in darkness even until now.

He that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is none occasion of stumbling in him. But he that hateth his brother is in darkness, and walketh in darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth, because that darkness hath blinded his eyes" (1 John 2:9, 11). If we hate our brother, we are not in light, but darkness. Yet more than this, we are declared to be murderers.

"Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you. We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death. Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him" (1 John 3:13-15).

Not only is hatred murder, but the Bible is clear that if we do not love our brother, we do not love God, regardless of what we may profess. "If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen? And this commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God love his brother also" (1 John 4:20-21).

Jesus carries this concept far beyond our finite understanding by declaring: "Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven" (Matthew 5:43-45). If we harbor hatred rather than love in our hearts, we cannot be the children of God.

It is because of the lack of love that we find "works" eight through eleven so prevalent in the church today. Variance or hostility is defined as "animosity, ill will, unfriendliness, opposition" and it is self-evident that these abound in many professed Christian circles, especially towards those of a different church or denomination.

The same is true concerning "emulations" or "jealousy," which is defined as "efforts or desires to equal or excel others" and is synonymous with competition or rivalry.

"Wrath" can mean "indignation" and here refers to strong, stern, or fierce anger. This is closely related to "strife," which causes discord, struggles, quarrels, and opposition. Nearly a thousand years before the birth of Jesus, God's word had warned: "These six things doth the LORD hate: yea, seven are an abomination unto him: A proud look, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, An heart that deviseth wicked imaginations, feet that be swift in running to mischief, A false witness that speaketh lies, and he that soweth discord among brethren" (Proverbs 6:16-19).

It would accomplish much good if all would remember these inspired words: "Where no wood is, there the fire goeth out: so where there is no talebearer, the strife

THE GOOD NEWS OF GALATIANS

ceaseth. As coals are to burning coals, and wood to fire; so is a contentious man to kindle strife. The words of a talebearer are as wounds, and they go down into the innermost parts of the belly" (Proverbs 26:20-22).

The counsel given by the apostle Paul, if followed, would do much to dispel this disgraceful dilemma within the church. "But foolish and unlearned questions avoid, knowing that they do gender strifes. And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth; And that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will" (2 Timothy 2:23-26).

Work number twelve, "seditions" (dissent or division) is one of the seven things God declared to be an abomination to Him in Proverbs 6:19 and yet, it is so prevalent in the church today.

"Heresies" (number thirteen in Paul's list) refers to factions as well as false teachings, which are so devastating to God's church. So much so that the counsel is: "A man that is an heretic after the first and second admonition reject" (Titus 3:10). Nearly 2,000 years ago God warned his people of a problem that had always existed in His church.

"But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of" (2 Peter 2:1-2).

"Envyings" or to feel or be resentful, spiteful or unhappy is work number fourteen, which is followed by "murders." As we have already seen this sin is also exhibited in hatred for "whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him" (1 John 3:13-15).

As we come to the sixteenth work of the flesh (drunkenness), we find that as with the others, there is both a literal and spiritual application, for in addition to Paul's admonition not to be "drunk with wine" (Ephesians 5:18), we have also seen the great danger of becoming "drunk with wine (false teachings) of her (Babylon's) fornication" (Revelation 17:2).

"Revellings" is the last of the works listed here and definitely would be applicable to the various and numerous "church parties," "Las Vegas Nights," bingo games, etc. that are so familiar within the nominal Christian churches of today.

In order that the church understand the "works of the flesh" include, but are not limited to the 17 here mentioned Paul concludes the list by stating "and such like."

To the great shame of the church, these works are not only ignored and allowed to exist within the membership, but are often cultivated and nurtured until there is little difference between them and the world. Is it not time for the church of the living God to arise and follow His instruction, taking their stand firmly upon His word though all men become offended? What is the church's responsibility toward those who persist in the "works of the flesh" and refuse to live in harmony with God's word?

After listing 20 works of the flesh in 2 Timothy 3:1-5, Paul says "turn away" from those who walk in such things. If we do not, we become "partakers with them" (Ephesians

THE GOOD NEWS OF GALATIANS

5:7) in their sins. We are to "have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them" (Ephesians 5:11). This is not a suggestion or recommendation, for the word of God clearly states: "we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us" (2 Thessalonians 3:6). We are to "mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them" (Romans 16:17). However, before anyone is to be rejected or put away from the church, they are to be admonished and every effort made to restore them.

In addressing the sin of fornication in the church at Corinth, Paul states "that he that hath done this deed might be taken away from among you" (1 Corinthians 5:2). It was understood that such an action was "to deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus" (1 Corinthians 5:5). In 1 Timothy 1: 20, Paul refers to those he had "delivered unto Satan, that they may learn not to blaspheme."

Notice how plain and pointed Paul presents this position. "I wrote unto you in an epistle not to company with fornicators: Yet not altogether with the fornicators of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or with idolaters; for then must ye needs go out of the world. But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat. For what have I to do to judge them also that are without? do not ye judge them that are within? But them that are without God judgeth.

THE WORKS OF THE FLESH 107

Therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person" (1 Corinthians 5:9-13).

It is out of the unconverted heart that the works of the flesh come. Jesus said, "That which cometh out of the man, that defileth the man. For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, Thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: All these evil things come from within, and defile the man" (Mark 7:20-23). The man or woman that is defiled by these shall be destroyed, for "they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God." Therefore, "Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded" (James 4:7, 8).

Remember, the flesh can not be converted, it must be crucified. "Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. For he that is dead is freed from sin" (Romans 6:6,7).

Now, in contrast to the "works of the flesh," Paul presents the "fruit of the Spirit."

22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, 23 Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.

The works of the flesh come naturally, but for the good fruit to come, we must become new creatures. This fruit is not the product of human nature, but is received by a power from outside ourselves. It is the "fruit of the SPIRIT."

Notice that it is fruit - not fruits. It is one fruit that

THE GOOD NEWS OF GALATIANS

contains all nine of the Christian graces. If even one of the nine is missing, it cannot be said that we have *the* fruit of the Spirit. All nine will be evidenced in the life of a follower of Jesus, but it takes only one of the works of the flesh to make us a follower of Satan.

This fruit has been compared to an orange with its many segments, which are all held together, covered and protected by the peel; yet it is one orange. Love is to the fruit of the Spirit what the peel is to the orange. This element is so essential that Jesus said, "By this shall men know that ye are my disciples, that ye have love one to another" (John 13:35). If we have true love (agape), we must love everyone, for as we have seen, Jesus told us we are to even love our enemies (Matthew 5:44). If we do not have this love, we do not truly love God, for "he that loveth not, knoweth not God, for God is love" (1 John 4:8). Does not God love even His enemies? Did Jesus not pray for those who crucified Him? There is not one person God does not love, yet we are so selective in our love and often love only the lovable.

Love comprehends all the other eight segments of the fruit of the Spirit. The others might even be called the fruits of love. In 1 Corinthians 13, commonly referred to as "the love chapter," we find a very interesting parallel and comparison to the fruit of the Spirit.

1. The fruit of the Spirit is love. -- Without charity [love], I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal (verse one). I am nothing (verse two). Without love it profiteth me nothing (verse three).
2. The fruit of the Spirit is joy. - Love Rejoices in truth (verse six).
3. The fruit of the Spirit is peace. - Love is not

easily provoked (verse five).

4. The fruit of the Spirit is longsuffering. - Love suffereth long (verse four).
5. The fruit of the Spirit is gentleness. - Love is kind, vaunteth not itself [is not rash] (verse four).
6. The fruit of the Spirit is goodness. - Love thinketh no evil (verse five).
7. The fruit of the Spirit is faith. - Though I have all faith (verse two).
8. The fruit of the Spirit is meekness. - Love is not puffed up (verse four).
9. The fruit of the Spirit is temperance. - Love does not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own (verse five).

Nothing will so defeat the devices of Satan as will the love of Christ manifested in the lives of His people. This love "beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things" (1 Corinthians 13:7) and will never, ever fail. Of this, you can be absolutely certain.

Sometimes one is asked: "Why do you love me?" If you are able to tell "Why" you love, it is evidence that you do not truly love. For whatever you name may at sometime cease to exist, and when it does, your supposed love will also cease. True agape love is not affected by circumstances. It is endless and unchangeable, because it is the life of God, for God is love.

The key to bearing the fruit of the Spirit is to abide in Christ. "I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman. Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit. Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you. Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit

THE GOOD NEWS OF GALATIANS

of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing" (John 15: 1-5).

We, as Christians, are the branches and only branches in the Living Vine. Our lives must come from the parent vine. It is only by personal union with Christ - by daily communion with Him - that we can bear the fruit of the Spirit. As we experience this living connection with the source of all-enduring strength we shall be brought into captivity to Jesus Christ. We shall no longer live the common life of selfishness, but Christ will live in us. His character will be reproduced in our nature. Thus, shall we bring forth the fruit of the Holy Spirit.

Jesus said, "This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you" (John 15:12). The more closely we resemble Him, the greater will be our love for those for whom He died. If Christians truly have this love, they will be out seeking to save those for whom Christ died. If we are not out there seeking, it is because the love is not in the heart.

"The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost" (Romans 5:5) and that love constrains us (2 Corinthians 5:14); we can not be restrained; we cannot sit idly by while multitudes go down into Christless graves.

As we receive the Spirit of Christ - the Spirit of unselfish love and labor for others - we will grow and go and bring forth fruit. The graces of the Spirit will ripen in our characters. Our faith will increase. Our convictions will deepen. Our love will be made perfect. We are to be one in Christ as He is one with the Father. This union of believers with Christ will, as a natural result, lead to a union

THE WORKS OF THE FLESH 111

with one another. This is the most enduring bond on earth.

By our own natural birth, we inherit the works of the flesh. By the new birth, we inherit all the fullness of God and become "partakers of His divine nature having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust" (2 Peter 1:4). As we continue abiding and walking in the Spirit, the flesh and its desires have no more power over us than if we were dead and in our graves. (Romans 6:1, 2) If we are dead to sin how can we live any longer therein? is Paul's question. I do not understand why so many find this so hard to believe - especially when we consider who said it.

"Now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life" (Romans 6:22). The great good news is that we are set free from sin and have our fruit unto holiness. This fruit can never perish, but will produce after its kind a harvest unto eternal life.

24 And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts. 25 If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. 26 Let us not be desirous of vain glory, provoking one another, envying one another.

When we have crucified the flesh and walk in the Spirit, we can say with Paul: "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me" (Galatians 2:20).

CHAPTER SIX

"Be Not Deceived"

The line of thought from chapter five continues now in chapter six.

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

It is possible, not necessary, for any Christian to fall into sin. "IF any man sin" (1 John 2:1). One can in a moment of weakness be taken "off guard" and overtaken. Brought into sin by the surprise of the temptation, but we are to deal tenderly with them.

It is the spiritual - those led of the Spirit - that are to restore them and lead them back. They seek to labor through reproofs, counsels, and loving concern to restore and bring to repentance. But who are the spiritual? It is not a self-proclaimed position, but it is the church - the body - that is to identify the spiritual leaders within it. The body recognizes the spiritual-minded - those being led of the Spirit - and appoint them as leaders within the congregation (i.e. Elders, Deacons, Deaconesses, etc.).

It is imperative that only the spiritual seek to restore. The word "restore" means literally "to set in joint" a dislocated member of the body and the only way to reach them and restore them is "in the Spirit of meekness." Only the love that flows from the heart of Christ can heal and only he, in whom that love flows, can restore the wounded soul.

It is not a light matter to stand in Christ's stead to any

other human being. Thus we are counseled to consider ourselves, for we cannot restore others unless we are right ourselves. The first thing to do is not go to someone else, or even the erring, but to consider yourself. "How do I stand?"

2 Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.

The law of Christ is the law of love and "he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law" for "love is the fulfilling of the law" (Romans 13:8, 10). This law of love obliges us to a mutual forbearance and forgiveness, to have sympathy with and compassion towards one another. However, "the righteousness of the law" can only "be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit" (Romans 8:4). This love is not something we have of ourselves, but "the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us" (Romans 5:5).

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

"Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall" (1 Corinthians 10:12) is the biblical counsel. Self deceit is man's greatest pitfall. To think to be something, when nothing, is conceit and we deceive ourselves. This self conceit is self deceit. Therefore, "In lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves" (Philippians 2:3). It is the "man of sin" who exalts himself and the child of God who humbles himself.

4 But let every man prove his own work, and then shall he

THE GOOD NEWS OF GALATIANS

have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another. 5 For every man shall bear his own burden.

To prove our own works is to scrutinize our own actions. The better acquainted we are with our own hearts and motives, the less likely we are to despise and condemn others and the more apt we will be to exhibit compassion and orgiveness.

"Every man shall bear his own burden." There is a day coming when we shall all have to give an account of ourselves before God. We must all stand before the judgment seat and be reckoned with according to our actions here.

"Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: fear God and keep His commandments: for this is the whole duty of man. For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil" (Ecclesiastes 12:13-14). We should prove our own works now, since they shall surely be called into account soon.

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

Those who have been taught the Gospel should be ready and willing to share it with others. We also find here an admonition for the support of the ministry. It is also a mistake to think that ministers never need spiritual refreshment, or that they cannot be blessed by the weakest saint. The ones taught are to help sustain the one teaching in every way possible.

7 Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a

man soweth, that shall he also reap. 8 For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.

Mere pretensions or professions are not only dangerous, but fatal. "For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live" (Romans 8:13). If we live we die, if we die we live. If we sow the wind, we shall reap the whirlwind. The harvest at the end of the world shall reveal whether we have been sowing wheat or tares.

9 And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not. 10 As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all [men], especially unto them who are of the household of faith.

We dare not grow weary and faint in our labors for good, for only the ones who endure to the end will receive the promised reward. But how often we tend to grow weary, to want to give up, or pass our responsibility to another. Even though we see no immediate results. Even though those we seek to help seem to be unthankful, we must press on. Jesus said, "the love of many shall wax cold. But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved" (Matthew 24:12, 13). Therefore, let us continue on when we have opportunity and while we have it. The harvest time is in God's hands - the sowing time in ours. We need to pray for understanding to know when and how to labor most effectively now for "the night cometh, when no man can work" (John 9:4).

As mentioned in chapter four, most of Paul's letters were dictated, but here he refers to having written "large

THE GOOD NEWS OF GALATIANS

a letter" or literally in large letters in his own hand.

12 As many as desire to make a fair show in the flesh, they constrain you to be circumcised; only lest they should suffer persecution for the cross of Christ. 13 For neither they themselves who are circumcised keep the law; but desire to have you circumcised, that they may glory in your flesh.

The Jews gloried in their converts and their supposed works of righteousness, as do so many denominations today with their emphasis on so much gain, so many in our denomination. They gloried in their converts, but Jesus said they made them twice as fit for hell as they themselves were (Matthew 23:15). Could this possibly be applicable to many of the churches today?

14 But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world. 15 For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature. 16 And as many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God. 17 From henceforth let no man trouble me: for I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus. 18 Brethren, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen.

This book ends where it began, with death to self and deliverance from "this present evil world." When a person reaches the experience of Paul in verse 14, he has indeed become a "new creature." "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, *all* things are become new" (2 Corinthians

5:17). They "have put off the old man with his deeds; and have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of Him that created him" (Colossians 3:9-10).

In order to experience this, one must put off the former conduct "the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; And be renewed in the spirit of your mind; and that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness" (Ephesians 4:22-24).

The cross of Christ, in which Paul gloried, is what the Jews stumbled at and the Greeks accounted as foolishness (1 Corinthians 1:23). May we not stumble at the cross of Christ, but rather may we consent to be crucified with Christ that we may glory in the one thing whereby the world may be crucified to us and we to the world.

In the cross of Christ there is hope. In the cross of Christ there is salvation. In the cross of Christ there is victory. In the cross of Christ there is the power of God to keep us from falling, for it lifts us from earth to heaven.

BOOKS BY JOE W. GRESHAM

THE ANTICHRIST AND THE MARK OF THE BEAST

One of the most awesome warnings ever given in the Bible says: "If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand, the same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb: And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night, who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name." (Revelation 14:9-11)

The identity of this power is so intricately detailed in the prophetic books of Daniel and Revelation that none need be confused or uncertain as to who it is, when it is to arise, how long it is to rule, what it will do, and what will eventually become of it. Understanding these things is essential to knowing what the "mark of the beast" is and how to avoid receiving it.

There are 17 different distinguishing points clearly identifying this apostate power presented in this book.

DEALING WITH THE DEVIL'S DECEPTION-HOW TO CHOOSE A BIBLE

An overview of the development and dangers of the modern translations of the Bible and the men and motives behind them.

Over four and a half centuries ago the great reformer, Martin Luther, said, "No greater mischief can happen to a Christian people than to have God's word taken from them, or have it so falsified that they no longer have it pure and clear. God grant that we and our descendants be not witnesses of such a calamity."

Is it possible that we, today, are witnessing just such a calamity? The answer and issues will become extremely clear when you finish *Dealing With the Devil's Deception*.

THE DEVIL'S DECEPTION ABOUT DEATH

Where are our beloved dead? Where do people really go at death? Do they haunt houses? Are they reincarnated? Do they perhaps go to someplace called limbo or purgatory? Could it be that they are simply floating around on a little pink cloud strumming a harp? Are they possibly in heaven or hell? That last one is not a very pleasant thought, is it? Yet all of these are prominent teachings in the world today. All religious groups (and even the non-religious) believe one or more of the above. But what does the Bible teach?

THE DIABOLIC DANGERS AND DOCTRINAL DESTRUCTION IN THE MODERN BIBLE VERSIONS

Upon investigation of the modern translations, it immediately becomes evident they often contain variant readings. For example, if a person were to take five different translations of the Bible and turn to Hosea 13:9, they would probably find all five translations say something totally different, as can be seen from the following examples.

O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself; but in me is thine help. (KJV). I will destroy you, O Israel; who can help you? (RSV). I will destroy you, O Israel, because you are against me, against your helper. (NIV). O Israel, if I destroy you, who can save you? (LB). It is your destruction, O Israel, That you are against Me, against your help. (NASB).

The question that naturally arises is: "Which one is correct?" If a person has four Bibles and they all read differently, can they all be the "word of God?" How can one tell truth from error? This book presents many of the doctrinal dangers in the modern translations.

FAITH THAT WORKS, A

A simple, yet systematic, verse-by-verse study of the book of James.

In the midst of all the confusion and dissension over the

relationship between faith and works this book clearly and with simplicity presents the biblical correlation concerning the two imperatives of the Christian faith.

FOOD FIGHTS

Food Fights to children can be fun, for adults they can be fatal.

This little book examines what the Bible says on the subject of food and how many today respond to what God says about food that kills. It presents a thoughtful analysis of the so-called "problem texts" pertaining to this subject that will clarify the confusion and dissolve the delusions.

THE FORGOTTEN COMMANDMENT

It is interesting that the only commandment God prefaced with "remember" is the one the majority of the world has forgotten.

The word of God warned that there would be "false teachers" who would "bring in damnable heresies" and "many shall follow their pernicious ways" and the "truth shall be evil spoken of" (2 Peter 2:1-2). This has truly taken place today. Discover how in *The Forgotten Commandment*.

GOD'S LAST MESSAGE TO EARTH

A simple, yet systematic, verse-by-verse study of the book of Revelation.

Many claim the book of Revelation cannot be understood and that it was never intended to be. The very title of the book, however, refutes this claim, for it is a revelation or revealing.

There is so much in this book God would have His people come to understand that they might prepare themselves and shape their course of action, so as to escape the plagues that are to shortly fall upon the world. His promise is "Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein" (Revelation 1:3).

GOOD NEWS OF GALATIANS, THE

A simple, yet systematic, verse-by-verse study of the book of Galatians.

The glorious good news of the gospel, in Galatians, reveals the power of God that enables the believer to live a victorious life in Christ.

THE KINGS OF THE NORTH AND SOUTH

The prophecy of the Kings of the north and south contain a history that is most essential to understand in order to fully comprehend God's workings among the nations of the world. As we behold how these things have been fulfilled just as God said they would be, we can have full confidence and assurance about those things which lie ahead. Furthermore, if we do not know the historical background of the kings of the north and south it would be impossible to know if they exist today, their identities, how they will meet their end, or when this event is to take place.

This book follows a very important biblical principle of prophetic interpretation: everything should be considered as literal, unless it is obviously symbolic. Because of a failure to adhere to this principle, there have been a variety of views pertaining to this prophecy. Some claim, for example, the king of the north is Turkey, others that it is the Papacy, some that it is Russia, and still others that it is Satan himself. This confusion need not exist (and indeed would not exist), if people would cease to place their own fanciful interpretation on various passages.

Thus, this book allows the Scripture to be its own interpreter and apply the information contained in God's word to a literal, chronological, historical setting.

THE MEN, MOTIVES AND MALICIOUS MUTILATIONS BEHIND THE MODERN BIBLE VERSIONS

With the multiplicity of modern Bibles today we discover there are between 5,000 and 36,000 changes in the modern Bibles,

depending upon the version one chooses. In addition to this there are over 200 cases in which a verse's authenticity is questioned by complete omission, or a footnote, in the modern translations. These various changes affect approximately five percent of the Scriptures, which to some may not appear to be such a large percentage; but it amounts to more than the omission of the entire gospel of John, which is only three percent. It further causes people to doubt and to question what does and does not actually belong in the Bible. For example the NASB contains 4,000 significant additions, subtractions and changes; whereas the NIV contains 6,653 and has 64,094 less words than the KJV.

This book will consider those involved with the manipulation and mutilation of the Bible and reveal their secular approach and handling of the Sacred Scriptures, some of the changes they made, why they made those changes, and how they have destroyed Bible doctrine. You will be both appalled and outraged when you see these crazed critics shredding the word of God, and then officiously piecing it back together with thousands upon thousands of additions, deletions and perversions.

THE MILLENNIUM AND THE PUNISHMENT OF THE WICKED

The millennium is a subject that has for years arrested the attention of people world wide. The word itself does not appear in the Bible, but comes from a compound of two Latin words "mille" and "annum," which means simply, "thousand years." This thousand-year period, called the millennium, is mentioned six times in the first seven verses of Revelation chapter twenty and refers to that period of time in which Satan is to be bound and perfect peace and happiness will reign in the universe.

There are many various theories regarding the millennium which have been based largely upon speculations and fictitious novels. Some have even claimed that the devil has already been bound and we are now in the millennium. To this insanity a minister once replied, "If the devil is bound, he must be tied with

a rubber chain that stretches from Paris to Bombay and from Washington, D.C. to the Kremlin." All we need to do is look about us to see that the devil has never been more active than he is today. This is why the Word of God warns us, "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour" (1 Peter 5:8).

This book will reveal there is no reason for anyone to experience confusion or uncertainty in regard to the millennium, for the Bible speaks quite clearly and in much detail on this subject presenting most clear, concise, and concrete statements pertaining to this thousand-year period.

MODERN PROPHETS

A comparison of the real versus the counterfeit of a much neglected Bible teaching that has been ignored, rejected, and corrupted within Christianity - the gift of prophecy.

Jesus gave repeated warning about false prophets, thus emphasizing a counterfeit of a genuine gift. (Matthew 7:15, 16; 24:11, 24) This subject is so vital that the apostle Paul admonished: "Quench not the Spirit. Despise not prophesyings. Prove all things; hold fast that which is good" (1 Thessalonians 5:19-21). "Beloved, believe not every spirit" is the apostle John's admonition, "but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world" (1 John 4:1).

Is the gift of prophecy to be found in the church today? How are we to try or test one thought to possess this gift? How can one tell the true from the false? The Bible speaks decisively on this subject and gives several tests by which one can tell a true prophet from a false one.

THE MYSTERY OF THE GODHEAD

A treatise on the doctrine of the Trinity.

The doctrine of the Trinity is one of the most important doctrines of the Christian faith. Nevertheless, there exists within the Christian church today a substantial schism concerning this

doctrine. Since God himself is a mystery, how much more the Trinity. However, that should not trouble us as long as the different aspects of these mysteries are clearly taught in Scripture. Even though we may not be able to fully comprehend the various aspects of the Trinity, we need to try and understand, as best as we can, the scriptural teaching regarding it.

SIMPLIFIED STUDIES OF THE SACRED SCRIPTURES

Question and answer studies of many of the great doctrines and prophecies of God's word presented in a simplified and easy-to-understand format.

This 296 page book is an excellent tool for personal study or Bible study classes. It is filled with Scripture to provide you with answers to nearly all your questions on Bible topics.

WHICH GOSPEL?

A treatise of "the everlasting gospel" and how it has been and is being perverted within Christianity.

The word of God makes it clear that the gospel "is the power of God unto salvation." But do we truly understand what the gospel is or the power it has for us today? With the prevailing perversions of the gospel today, can the people of God really discover which gospel contains this life-changing power and how to experience it? This book presents the truths of the gospel in such a way as is seldom seen in the Christian world today, revealing God's purpose in the plan of salvation from the atonement to the reception of the redeemed. From justification to the future of God's Remnant church, this book reveals the power of the Holy Spirit and the assurance that what God has promised, He is able also to perform.

WHY SO MANY DENOMINATIONS

Have you ever wondered, if there's one God and one Bible, why there are so many different churches that dot the hillsides? The world has thousands upon thousands of church congregations

and with this multitude of denominations people often wonder: "How can I find the truth? How can I know what truth is?" With this collection of confusing concepts how can one discover truth? The Bible clearly describes why there are so many different denominations and it helps us find our way through the maze of confusion. It helps intelligent, thinking, rational people to understand where these churches came from, and how to sort out truth from error. As one studies Bible prophecy they will understand what happened to the early Christian church, why it happened, and discover how to find truth for themselves.

THE WISE SHALL UNDERSTAND

A verse-by-verse study of the book of Daniel presented in a simple, easy-to-understand manner.

Of all the books of the Bible, Daniel speaks most repeatedly of last day events and claims to pertain directly to the "time of the end" (Daniel 12:4, 6, 8, 9, 13). The things written in Daniel were written specifically for those of us living today. Now, as never before, it is necessary for us to understand this book. As for those who say it cannot be understood, I would caution them to beware, lest they find themselves calling God a liar, for He has declared in no uncertain terms that "none of the wicked shall understand; but the wise shall understand" (Daniel 12:10).

BOOKLETS FOR SHARING

ARMAGEDDON AND THE PLAGUES

In Revelation chapter fifteen we are introduced to the seven last plagues that culminate in the Battle of Armageddon. These plagues contain God's final judgement which is poured upon the world just before the return of Jesus to take his people home. But before Jesus comes God reveals to John the results of these awesome judgements and shows him those that will survive the plagues. What are these fearsome plagues? How close are we to the Battle of Armageddon? And how can we survive the future? These are questions that are answered in this little book. You will be able to face the future with assurance.

THE ATONEMENT AND THE CLEANSING OF THE SANCTUARY

The urgency of the following inspired statement has prompted the printing of this little book.

"The subject of the sanctuary and the investigative judgment should be clearly understood by the people of God. All need a knowledge for themselves of the position and work of their great High Priest. Otherwise it will be impossible for them to exercise the faith which is essential at this time or to occupy the position which God designs them to fill." *The Great Controversy*, p. 488

BIBLE STUDIES MADE EASY

Outline studies of many of the great doctrines of the Bible presented in a clear and concise manner.

An excellent tool for personal study or for sharing your faith.

CHRISTIAN PERFECTION - DOES GOD EXPECT TOO MUCH?

Jesus came to this world bearing in His flesh the results of sin, but in His humanity was able to live a life free of sin. In His

human nature He was able to overcome all temptations to sin that Satan hurled at Him, and He says to each of us: "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne." (Revelation 3:21) Is this possible? Can we overcome all sin, every temptation, even as Jesus did? God says, YES; Satan says, NO. Whom shall we believe?

THE CITY OF GOD

John said he "saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven" (Revelation 21:2). The real beauty of this glorious city is not found in the golden streets, gates of pearl, or walls of many precious jewels; but something of far more inestimable excellence than all these combined.

DEFYING THE DEATH DECREE

A study of the great golden image of Daniel three and the parallel to the image to be established in Revelation 13:14 when again the death decree will go forth that "as many as would not worship the image of the beast should be killed" (Revelation 13:15).

THE DESIRE OF AGES STUDY GUIDE

A study and chain reference of The Desire of Ages

A study of the human nature of Jesus and the power of the Holy Spirit to live the victorious, sinless life of Christ.

THE GLORIOUS FUTURE OF THE REMNANT CHURCH

When the renowned Christian writer E.G. White said that those "who do not feel grieved over their own spiritual declension, nor mourn over the sins of others, will be left without the seal of God," the reference was to a biblical principle and teaching that many today reject and ridicule. But as with all other teachings of God's word, the opposition of the obstinate or rejection of the rebellious do not nullify its veracity. References to this Bible

teaching are too numerous to ignore or misunderstand and the response of the Remnant Church to the claims that "the people of God are numbered with Babylon," and "the loud cry is a call to come out of her" are of such relevance that it demands our candid consideration.

GOD'S SORROW, OUR SHAME - LET THE PROPHET SPEAK

Various theories have been set forth as to what actually took place at the 1888 General Conference Session in Minneapolis, but many questions still demand straight answers. 1) Did God send a special message to His people 100 years ago? 2) Was the message accepted or rejected? 3) What was this message? Can we know for certain today or did God allow it to be lost for all eternity? 4) Were Jones and Waggoner "trouble makers" as some claim or were they "Christ's delegated messengers"? 5) What was Ellen White's position in the midst of all this turmoil? Just where did the prophet stand? 6) Do the events in the lives of Jones and Waggoner in later years have any bearing on the message they brought to the church in 1888? This little book presents a documented, historical overview of what took place in Minneapolis and the response to the message in the ensuing years.

THE JUDGMENT AND THE CLEANSING OF THE SANCTUARY

When, where, and how does the judgment take place? Where is Jesus now? What is He doing? Why hasn't He come back yet? What does the Bible mean when it says "Unto two thousand and three hundred days; then shall the sanctuary be cleansed?" (Daniel 8:14) These and many other questions are answered in this little book.

THE NATURE OF CHRIST AND THE SPIRIT OF ANTICHRIST

Over a century ago a very gifted Christian writer, E.G. White, declared: "In our conclusions, we make many mistakes because of our erroneous views of the human nature of our Lord. When we give to His human nature a power that is not possible for man to have in his conflicts with Satan, we destroy the completeness of His humanity."

This little book presents an overview of this most vital subject and enables the people of God to see their way through the "erroneous views" and avoid the "many mistakes" that are so prevalent today.

OLD HERESIES AND NEW THEOLOGY - THE MISCONCEPTION OF SIN

What is it about sin that makes it so bad? The Bible is clear that sin is something so deadly that it claimed the very life of the Son of God. (Isaiah 53:1-12; Hebrews 9:28) However, there is much confusion on this subject today. Many have a very limited and often perverted concept of what sin is and its tremendous impact on both God and man. This book is designed to solidify the believer in the biblical teaching about sin that they not be deceived by the many false, man-made theories that are circulating within the Christian community today.

PANORAMA OF PROPHECY

The book of Daniel is a most unique book in that it contains several step-by-step prophecies of world empires from the seventh century B.C. to the very day in which we are now living. These prophecies are some of the most easily understood found in the Scriptures and cover nearly 2600 years of history in absolute accuracy. As one commentator has stated: "Human wisdom has never devised so brief a record that embraced so much. Human

language never set forth in so few words such a great volume of historical truth. The finger of God is here. Let us heed the lesson well."

THE SECRET OF THE RAPTURE: WILL YOU BE LEFT BEHIND?

Since publication of the *Left Behind* series of books, the release of *Left Behind: The Movie*, and the October 2014 release of the movie *Left Behind*, there has been an explosion of interest in the sensational and speculative errors being promoted by the movies and the books upon which they are based. This has resulted in many being deceived into thinking these false (and admittedly fictional) concepts are actually Bible truth. *The Secret of the Rapture* is designed to offset these false and fanciful theories and enable people to see the beauty and truth of the coming of Christ. This little book will strengthen your understanding and faith concerning the "blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ" (Titus 2:13), as well as enable you to share this great Bible truth with those who are being deceived by the errors being propagated today.

SIGNS OF THE SAVIOR'S SOON COMING

Jesus' disciples gathered with Him on the Mount of Olives and inquired: "Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?" (Matthew 24:3). The word of God responds to this question with no less than 53 prophetic events.

In speaking of His coming, Jesus said, "when ye shall see all these things, know that it is near, even at the doors." Matthew 24:33 This little book was prepared that all may "see" and "know" that the "blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ" (Titus 2:13) is closer than many believe.

A STARTLING DREAM

This little book explores one of the most easily understood prophecies found in the Scriptures. It covers nearly 2600 years of history in absolute accuracy, and as one commentator has stated: "Human wisdom has never devised so brief a record that embraced so much. Human language never set forth in so few words such a great volume of historical truth. The finger of God is here. Let us heed the lesson well." Smith, *The Prophecies of Daniel and the Revelation*, p. 39.

THE TRINITY AMONG SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTISTS

While the Seventh-day Adventist Church today espouses the doctrine of the Trinity, this has not always been so. It is important to understand that Adventist views were not uniform in our developing years. As Adventism emerged during the late 1840s, it brought various Christian truths and placed them in the framework of fulfilled prophecy and ongoing discovery of biblical teachings. The evidence from a study of Adventist history indicates that from the earliest years of the church, to the 1890s, a whole stream of writers took an Arian or semi-Arian position.

The last several years has seen an increased renewal of anti-Trinitarian activity within the Seventh-day Adventist Church, similar to that of some of the pioneers in their early, formative years. However, this resurgence has remained at the margins of the advent movement. This fringe of Adventist authors today, who are opposed to the doctrine of the Trinity, are trying to resurrect the views of early pioneers in our developmental years on these issues. What these views were and how they evolved through the study and guidance of inspiration are presented in this little booklet.

THE TWO SIDES OF JUSTIFICATION

Few today have truly understood the depth of what was accomplished at the cross or what motivated such a selfless sacrifice. Although many believe there is unanimity among Christians

pertaining to the justification that came through the shedding of the precious blood of God's Son, in reality there is much diversity concerning who has been justified, as well as how and when justification takes place. This little book explores the initiative of God in the redemption of fallen humanity.

WHY SUFFERING AND DEATH

As we look about us today, we see a world that is filled with sickness, suffering, sorrow, pain and death. Encompassed with agony people cry out "Why does God allow these things to happen? Why does He cause so much affliction and anguish?" He is often blamed for things for which He is not responsible and which were never a part of His plan for planet earth and its inhabitants.

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