

The Basis and Condition of Salvation in Reference to Galatians

by Earle Craig

	BASIS of Salvation¹	CONDITION of Salvation²
Description	That which God does apart from both <ol style="list-style-type: none"> what happens inside a sinful human being and what the sinful human being does³ and that guarantees the sinner's deliverance from His eternal wrath, condemnation, and destruction. ⁴	That which happens <ol style="list-style-type: none"> inside a sinful human being and which reveals itself through identifiable choices, which eventually results in his complete and eternal salvation.⁵
Explanation	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Before the beginning of the creation, God, as an act of love, chooses and predestines specific sinful human beings to be saved.⁶ In the midst of the first creation, God, as an act of love, sends His unique Son Jesus to die for sinful human beings during his first appearance and to intercede for His chosen ones at Jesus' second appearance.⁷ 	The sinful human being's heart changes, ⁸ resulting in – <ol style="list-style-type: none"> the Jew's <ol style="list-style-type: none"> most importantly believing in Jesus as king and priest and obeying his commandments,⁹ and pursuing obedience to the Mosaic Covenant in an appropriate manner,¹⁰ and the Gentile's believing in Jesus as king and priest and obeying his commandments.¹¹
Implications	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> God lovingly guarantees that those sinners whom He has chosen before the beginning of creation will indeed fulfill the necessary condition of a changed heart so as to obtain complete and eternal salvation.¹² God lovingly mandates that only Jesus as the crucified Messiah can and will advocate for changed-of-heart sinners before Him so that they assuredly obtain eternal salvation.¹³ 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Because the BASIS of salvation is Jesus and his death, the Christian Jew is permitted to abstain from following the Mosaic Covenant when he is interacting with a Christian Gentile or evangelizing an unbelieving Gentile.¹⁴ Because the BASIS of salvation is Jesus and his death, the Christian Gentile has no obligation to keep or obey the Mosaic Covenant.¹⁵

The Error of the Jews from Jerusalem in Galatians
1. They saw the Mosaic Covenant as the BASIS of salvation and obedience to it as the only necessary CONDITION of salvation for all believers in Jesus the Messiah, both Jews and Gentiles. ¹⁶
2. They placed all the responsibility on themselves for fulfilling the CONDITION of salvation and obtaining God's forgiveness and eternal life. ¹⁷
3. They failed to understand the depth of their sinfulness which requires that God's choices alone be the BASIS of their salvation and that God's choices be the ultimate cause of their fulfilling the CONDITION of salvation. ¹⁸
4. As a result of #3, they lacked mercy and kindness towards other Christians who disagreed with them, accusing them of moral laxity for not following the Mosaic Covenant at all times during their lives, even though, from God's perspective, the Jewish Christians were properly and lovingly interacting with their fellow Gentile believers and the Gentile believers were properly and lovingly interacting with their fellow Jewish believers. ¹⁹

Further Explanations of the Charts Above

1. Before I state in the chart the concise, biblical descriptions, explanations, and implications of the BASIS of salvation and the CONDITION of salvation, here in the first and second endnote are simple definitions and explanations of the important words in these phrases as they pertain to the Bible. First, the word “basis” means foundation, support or grounds. If we imagine a building, the basis of the building is its foundation on which the rest of the building is built. The foundation can exist without the rest of the building, but the rest of the building cannot exist without the foundation. Indeed, to use the word “rest” in a different sense, the upper portion of the building rests on the foundation and is supported by it. Therefore, the BASIS of something is that on which the remaining portion depends and cannot exist without.
- Second, the word “salvation” refers to being delivered or rescued from harm, ruin, or loss. All three are things which no human being wants to experience. No one wants to be harmed and hurt physically, psychologically, or emotionally. No one wants to endure financial ruin or the ruin of their reputation or living circumstances. No one enjoys suffering the loss of something or someone dear, valuable, or important such as a beloved parent, spouse, or child—or even a football game or golf match. Therefore, salvation involves the strong possibility of suffering and pain that results from harm, ruin, or loss and escaping from all these by some effective means.
- Third, the biblical BASIS of salvation is the foundation, support, and grounds for any sinful human being’s obtaining deliverance from God’s eternal wrath, condemnation, and destruction. While there are many things from which people desire to be “saved” during the course of their lives, e.g., disease, war, violence of any kind, famine, financial catastrophe or destitution, emotional heartache or pain, etc., there is no salvation more important than that from God, His justice, His anger, His condemnation, and the consequent eternal destruction. The Bible is always sensitive to other things from which we all want salvation. For example, the Israelites appealed to God to rescue them from slavery in Egypt, and He did so under Moses’ leadership. In addition, people eagerly sought Jesus’ help to cure them from physical and spiritual illnesses, and when the Father worked through him, they found their cure by means of the miracles which God performed. However, the Bible’s message clearly focuses both on the Jews’ salvation in the present realm from their enemies in the first stage of the Kingdom of God on this earth and, for both Jews and Gentiles, on eternal salvation from God’s justice and that which results, which is forgiveness and a morally perfect life in the second and final stage of the Kingdom of God on the next and eternal earth. One addition worth mentioning is that believers in God who have died or are living when Jesus returns will at that time be given morally perfect and eternal bodies which they will enjoy during the first stage of the Kingdom of God on earth.
- In these notes, I will focus on the second kind of salvation, i.e., eternal life, but the BASIS and CONDITION for the first kind of salvation for the Jews are the same as those for the second. Consider what the apostle Paul writes in Romans 2:3-11 in regard to the second kind of salvation
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Romans 2:3 But do you suppose this, O man, when you pass judgment on those who practice such things

[that Paul mentioned at the end of Romans 1, i.e., grave and serious sins and evil which human beings commit, e.g.,

1:29 being filled with all unrighteousness, wickedness, greed, evil; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, malice; they are gossips,

1:30 slanderers, haters of God, insolent, arrogant, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents,

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- 1:31 without understanding, untrustworthy, unloving, unmerciful] and do the same yourself, that you will escape the judgment of God?]
- 2:4 Or do you think lightly of the riches of His kindness and tolerance and patience, not knowing that the kindness of God leads you to repentance?
- 2:5 But because of your stubbornness and unrepentant heart you are storing up wrath for yourself in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God,
- 2:6 who will render to each person according to his deeds:
- 2:7 to those who by perseverance in doing good seek for glory and honor and immortality, eternal life;
- 2:8 but to those who are selfishly ambitious and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, wrath and indignation.
- 2:9 There will be tribulation and distress for every soul of man who does evil, of the Jew first and also of the Greek,
- 2:10 but glory and honor and peace [shalom] to everyone who does good, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.
- 2:11 For there is no partiality with God [NAS95].

In these verses, Paul speaks of a person who considers himself morally better than others and fails to admit that he is actually no different from them—that he is guilty of deep desires, obsessive thoughts, and willful actions that are contrary to God’s moral commandments, thereby deserving God’s rightful anger and eternal condemnation when He judges all human beings at the end of the present realm. However, Paul indicates that there is salvation from God’s anger and condemnation through doing biblical goodness in the midst of wanting more than anything else the honor of eternal life from God.

Here, Paul is actually speaking of the **CONDITION** of salvation and not its **BASIS** as will become clearer in the notes which follow. Nevertheless, he indicates that the central message of the Bible is salvation from God’s eternal justice, condemnation, and destruction. This is to say that the central message is not about escaping any other suffering or painful element in human existence in the present realm. Indeed, believers in God may go through suffering death similar to that of Jesus because of the world’s hostility towards truth and because of the very nature of the reality in which we live where disease, famine, war, and natural disasters are commonplace and unavoidable.

2. The word **CONDITION** refers to the set of circumstances that must exist before something else can happen or come about. Using the analogy of a building from the first note, I am using the word **CONDITION** to mean the upper portion of the building and not its foundation (the **BASIS**). Without this upper portion, no one can use the building for its intended purpose. As a result, this upper portion constitutes the set of circumstances which must exist before something else can happen, i.e., the building’s being properly used. Nevertheless, the upper portion is not the foundation or **BASIS** of the building. The foundation or **BASIS** is something different and that on which the upper portion rests and relies.

It also makes sense to think of the foundation or **BASIS** as that which holds a position of priority in comparison to the **CONDITION**. For example, when constructing a building, the foundation is laid first, and then the upper portion is built. We can therefore say that the foundation is primary, and the upper portion is secondary. Also, when speaking of a building, the priority of the foundation in comparison to the upper portion is both in terms of the time when it is built and its spatial location. The foundation is built before the upper portion and below it. We will find that the **BASIS** (foundation) of salvation involves a priority of both time and historical value. This is to say that, in regard to Paul and the Christians to whom he is writing in Galatians, the **CONDITION** of salvation follows after the **BASIS** occurs and is theologically less valuable than

it in Christian history. Nevertheless, the CONDITION of salvation is still morally and eternally valuable and necessary, especially for the people who fulfill this CONDITION. In other words, both the BASIS of salvation and the CONDITION of salvation must be true for a sinful human being to escape God's condemnation.

Using the same definition of "salvation" as in note #1, the biblical CONDITION of salvation is the requirement that God places on sinners and that must occur with respect to them in order that they be delivered from His eternal wrath, condemnation, and destruction and thereby gain eternal life.

In the notes which follow, I will include Bible passages which describe both the BASIS of salvation brought about by God and the CONDITION that God places on sinners to obtain His eternal salvation, which we will find is also brought about by God. I will also quote certain passages in Paul's letter to the Galatians where he identifies the errors of his opponents in their understanding of both the BASIS and the CONDITION of salvation and where he describes his correct understanding of these.

3. Notice that both a. and b. here in the column "**BASIS of Salvation**" refer to a. and b. in the column "**CONDITION of Salvation**." In this way, I am pointing out that the BASIS of salvation and the CONDITION of salvation are two separate realities. The BASIS of salvation is what *God does* apart from what *a sinful human being does* to fulfill the CONDITION of salvation. The Jews from Jerusalem who are Paul's opponents in Galatians would agree with this separation of the BASIS and the CONDITION. In other words, their stated belief is the same as Paul's. However, as will become clearer by the chart, they misunderstand what constitutes the BASIS, and they misunderstand the nature of the CONDITION. They have concluded that the Mosaic Covenant is the BASIS of salvation for all human beings, and they are placing the final responsibility for fulfilling the CONDITION on their shoulders and not on God's. As a result, in spite of their stated belief in Jesus as the Messiah who died for their sins, they do not value him as highly as they should, and they are not willing to admit that their sinfulness is a problem that is impossible for them to solve in and of themselves. Therefore, their actual belief, i.e., the belief by which they lived their lives, is different from their stated belief. They are saying that their gospel is the same as Paul's, but the way they live out their Christianity is demonstrating that it is not.

Paul writes of this difference between stated vs. actual belief in Galatians 2:11-13 –

Galatians 2:11 But when Cephas [Peter] came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he was acting like someone who would be condemned.

2:12 For prior to the coming of certain men from James, he used to eat with the Gentiles. But when they came, he began to withdraw and hold himself aloof, being intimidated by those from the circumcision.

2:13 And the rest of the Jews joined him in hypocrisy, with the result that even Barnabas was carried away by their hypocrisy.

Paul identifies his opponents as the "men from James," meaning that they have come from the Christian community in Jerusalem and, therefore, have the same, correct stated belief as the apostles. They state that they believe exactly what the apostles believe—the apostolic message of Jesus that Jesus himself taught them. However, these "men from James" are so demanding in their attitude that they have intimidated both Peter and Barnabas into obeying the ritual commandments of the Mosaic Covenant of separating themselves from Gentiles who are their fellow believers in Jesus. Therefore, their actual belief is that Jews and Gentiles *must* obey the Mosaic Covenant as genuine believers in Jesus as the Messiah.

However, when so-called Christians like these Jews from Jerusalem have an actual belief which is different from their stated belief, especially when their stated belief is the same as that of the apostles, then they are guilty of religious "hypocrisy." But their hypocrisy is not due to pretense

or a lack of sincerity. They are not pretending to believe one thing and do another, which is how we typically define hypocrisy. In fact, they are absolutely sincere in saying that they believe exactly what the apostles believe, and they are absolutely sincere in manifesting their beliefs through their actions in a manner that is completely different from what the apostles believe and do.

This is the diabolical nature of their hypocrisy and error—that these men cannot recognize and admit the radical difference between what they say and what they do, because, as John says of his opponents in his first letter, “the darkness [of their own lies] has blinded their eyes” (cf. 1 John 2:11). In other words, the level of self-deception is so great in Paul’s opponents that they are insisting that there is no difference between what they are saying and what they are doing. Nevertheless, in Galatians 1:9, Paul says of them who are proclaiming to the Galatians such an eternally dangerous and different gospel,

Galatians 1:9 As we have said before, so I say again now, if any man is preaching to you a gospel contrary to what you received [and embraced from Paul and his apostolic co-workers], let him be condemned.

4. This is why the BASIS can be called the BASIS. Whatever God does that results in the BASIS of salvation, He does so in order to guarantee and make absolutely certain that the sinners who are the object of the BASIS never encounter His eternal anger and condemnation. As we will see, this means that God, by His grace, also ensures that these same sinners fulfill the necessary CONDITION of salvation. In other words, through the gracious, inward work of His Holy Spirit, He literally causes them to meet the CONDITION in order to obtain His eternal forgiveness and life by means of the BASIS of salvation which He brings about.
 5. As I stated in the previous note, it is important to recognize that God is the ultimate cause of the CONDITION of the salvation just as much as He is the cause of the BASIS of salvation. However, the BASIS is that which God causes apart from the CONDITION, while the CONDITION is that which God causes as a result of and in the light of the BASIS. In other words, the BASIS of salvation is that which God causes outside a sinful human being, while the CONDITION of salvation is that which He causes inside a sinful human being. For example, God’s choosing a sinner before He even brings the creation into existence is clearly apart from the sinner’s actually choosing to believe in Jesus as his Lord and Savior during the existence of the creation. However, the sinner’s believing in Jesus is certainly as a result of and in light of God’s choosing him before the beginning of the creation. We will see that God’s choice of sinners (outside the sinners) to receive salvation is part of the BASIS of salvation while a sinner’s belief in Jesus (inside the sinner) is part of the CONDITION of salvation.
- In addition, God’s causing the CONDITION to be fulfilled is specific to each human being on an existential level. For example, if God has chosen a sinner before bringing the creation into existence, then He changes the sinner’s heart at a moment that is also His sovereign decision and is obviously during the sinner’s existence on earth. Plus, by means of the changed heart, God causes the sinner to believe in Jesus as the crucified Messiah who died for his sins. Both of these, God’s changing the sinner’s heart and the sinner’s believing in Jesus, are components of the sinner’s actual life experience. They happen to the sinner by the sovereign grace and control of God, but we can also say that the sinner participates in their occurring within him by his making the existential choice to believe in Jesus.
- This can be a bit confusing. How are we to understand that God causes a human being to make a choice and the human being takes part in making the choice? The answer lies both in thinking of God as the author of the story of human history who causes every choice to occur and in thinking of human beings as characters in the story who take part in the author’s causing their choices to

occur. For example, at the very beginning of Moby Dick, Ishmael, the narrator, chooses to say, “Call me Ishmael.” How exactly does this happen? It is very easy to explain. Herman Melville, the author, causes Ishmael to say, “Call me Ishmael,” and Ishmael, the character in the story, makes the existential choice to say, “Call me Ishmael.” In this way, Ishmael participates in Herman Melville’s bringing about his choice to say, “Call me Ishmael.” Both Melville’s causing Ishmael to say what he said and Ishmael’s choosing to say what he said are elements of the existential reality in which Ishmael is living.

The classic example of a biblical passage which identifies God as the author of the story of human history within this created reality is Romans 9:18-24, where Paul refers to God as a potter and to us as His clay pots, which is the same dynamic between an author and the characters in his book –

Romans 9:18 So then He [God] has mercy on whom He desires, and He hardens whom He desires.

9:19 You will say to me then, “Why does He still find fault? For who resists His will?”

9:20 On the contrary, who exactly are you, O man, who answers back to God? The thing molded will not say to the molder, “Why did you make me like this,” will it?

9:21 Or does not the potter have a right over the clay, to make from the same lump one clay pot for honorable use and another for common use?

9:22 What does it matter if God, while willing to demonstrate His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much patience clay pots of wrath prepared for destruction?

9:23 And He did so to make known the riches of His glory upon clay pots of mercy, which He prepared beforehand for glory,

9:24 even us, whom He also called, not from among Jews only, but also from among Gentiles.

Just as Herman Melville sovereignly caused Ishmael to speak and act as he does in Moby Dick, so also God sovereignly causes all human beings as clay pots on His potter’s wheel to make the choices which they do. Therefore, God brings about a changed heart and the choice to believe in Jesus as the crucified Messiah for all sinners whom He has chosen before the beginning of the creation of the universe. And all these sinners, like Ishmael in Moby Dick, participate on an existential level in His bringing about their choice to believe in Jesus.

It may be obvious, but a sinner’s participating in what God does within him in regard to the **CONDITION** of salvation is radically different from what God does for him with respect to the **BASIS** of salvation. In the next row under the heading “**BASIS of Salvation**,” I mention two elements of the **Explanation** of this BASIS—

- 1) God’s choosing sinners before the creation, and
- 2) His sending Jesus to die and intercede for them.

Because these sinners did not exist at the moment when God chose them, they certainly did not participate in God’s making His choice. But in regard to the second element, sinners, i.e., the Romans and the Jews of Jesus’ day, did participate in what God was doing when He sovereignly brought about Jesus’ death. But most likely, these sinners had not fulfilled the **CONDITION** of salvation. We would definitely expect that authentic believers in Jesus did not join the crowd in demanding the crucifixion of their Lord and Savior. Perhaps some of this same crowd did fulfill the **CONDITION** of salvation *later* in their lives and repented and grieved over their calling for Jesus’ death. But because it would be later when God’s Spirit changed their hearts, their participation in this element of the **BASIS** of salvation when Jesus died occurred apart from the **CONDITION** of salvation within them. In contrast, the **CONDITION** of salvation always occurs as a result of and in the light of God’s choosing sinners and Jesus’ dying for sinners as the **BASIS** of their salvation.

An example of someone who participated in Jesus' crucifixion and later very likely became an authentic believer in Jesus is the centurion in charge of executing and guarding Jesus as he hung on the cross. Mark in his gospel writes,

Mark 15:39 When the centurion, who was standing right in front of him, saw the way took his last breath, he said, "Truly this man was the Son of God!"

We do not know for sure if and when the centurion became a believer in Jesus, but perhaps he was an unbeliever in the process of carrying out Pontius Pilate's orders to crucify Jesus. And, then, in the midst of watching Jesus die, the Holy Spirit changed his heart and he became an authentic believer. In this way, God caused him to fulfill the CONDITION of salvation in line with the BASIS of his salvation when 1) God chose him to become an authentic believer before He brought the creation into existence and 2) Jesus died right before his eyes—because he nailed him to the cross!

6. Paul does not mention in Galatians this specific element of the BASIS of salvation. The closest he comes is in Galatians 3:8-9 where he says,

Galatians 3:8 And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by belief, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, "All the nations will be blessed in you <Genesis 12:3>."

3:9 So then those who are of belief are blessed with Abraham, the believer.

Paul is saying that, when God made certain promises in Genesis 12:1-3, the "Scripture," i.e., God Himself, assured Abraham that there would be Gentiles who obtained with him (and the Jews) the blessing and gift of eternal life. And, as Paul argues in 2 Timothy 3:16 that the Bible is literally "God-breathed," the "Scripture" is the only inerrant and authoritative source of truth about God and the reality which He has created. Thus, the words in the Bible indicate that God was looking into the future and predicting that He would "bless" the Jews and the Gentiles ("all the nations") as He would "bless" Abraham. God was "foreseeing" these events, and we can conclude that, before He brought the creation into existence, God had predestined certain Gentiles to imitate Abraham's belief and thereby gain eternal life with him.

On the other hand, Ephesians 1:3-6 and 11 is a good example of a passage which explicitly states that God's pre-creation choice of sinners to receive His eternal mercy and salvation is the BASIS of salvation –

Ephesians 1:3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus the Messiah, who is blessing us in the Messiah with every Spiritual blessing in the heavenly places,

1:4 just as He chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and acceptable before Him. In love

1:5 He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus the Messiah to Himself, according to the satisfying of His desire,

1:6 for the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved...In him

1:11 also we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will.

In these verses, Paul indicates that, before God brought the creation into existence and as an act of love, He chose and predestined certain sinful human beings to receive His mercy and eternal life and thereby become His children for all eternity. As I explained in note #5 above, God is the

author of the story who produces everything within it according to His desire to reveal exactly what He desires to happen in the story of the creation in order to fulfill His own plans and purposes. As a result, His pre-creation choice of sinners to receive eternal life through His mercy is one component of the BASIS of salvation and is clearly something which occurs outside and apart from them. Implied is that the foundation of God's choice and predestination was not any characteristic, choice, or action of the sinners and, therefore, not in any way dependent upon the sinners. The foundation was simply His independent desire to love and rescue them from His eternal condemnation.

When Paul is explaining in Romans 9:6-13 the dynamics of human history involving Abraham's immediate descendants, Isaac, Jacob, and Esau, he mentions in vs. 10-12 the same distinction between "God's purpose" and the existential choices of human beings –

Romans 9:10 ...but there was Rebekah also, when she had conceived twins by one man, our father Isaac;

9:11 for though the twins were not yet born and had not done anything good or bad, so that God's purpose according to His choice would stand, not because of works but because of Him who calls,

9:12 it was said to her, "The older will serve the younger."

Jacob and Esau, Rebekah's "twins" through her husband Isaac, were "not yet born and had not done anything good or bad." Yet, God chose Jacob, "the younger" one of the twins, to be the heir of the promises which He had made to Abraham and Isaac. This was "God's purpose" according to what He sovereignly desired and, obviously, it had nothing to do with how Jacob and Esau would live their lives. Nevertheless, the inference we can draw, as confirmed by the story of these two men in the Bible, is that Jacob's choices did correspond to God's choice to grant him His promises. Therefore, it was God's choice before He brought Jacob and Esau into existence that was the BASIS of salvation for Jacob, which also means that God chose to change Jacob's heart, so that he fulfilled the CONDITION of salvation just as his grandfather Abraham and his father Isaac did.

Romans 8:28-30 is another good example of a passage which explicitly declares that God's pre-creation choice of sinners to receive His eternal mercy and salvation is the BASIS of salvation –

Romans 8:28 And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.

8:29 For those whom He foreknew [chose], He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that he would be the firstborn among many brothers;

8:30 and these whom He predestined, He also calls. And these whom He calls, He also justifies. And these whom He justifies, He also glorifies.

In this passage, Paul means that when God knew certain sinners before the creation, He was choosing them to obtain eternal mercy and salvation. As a result, He predestined these same sinners to obtain salvation, thereby establishing in His mind that their eternal destiny and future would involve being delivered without fail from His wrath, condemnation, and destruction. Thus, both God's foreknowing/choosing sinners and His predestining them to eternal life occurred prior to the creation and its coming into existence. This means, then, that God's calling, justifying, and glorifying sinners by transforming them into immortal and morally perfect human beings all occur after He has brought the creation into existence and in the midst of its existence.

Therefore, we can say that God's choosing and predestining sinners to eternal salvation are both part of this first element of the BASIS of salvation and occur outside and apart from them and their choices. These sinners were not even around when God chose and predestined them, so that His

decision to do so was completely independent of them and guarantees that He will rescue them from His judgment and grant them eternal life and the glory of moral perfection.

7. In his letter to the Galatians, Paul contrasts belief in Jesus, which comes through the gracious inward work of God by the Holy Spirit, with outwardly performing the Mosaic Covenant. The former results in a sinner's obtaining eternal life and salvation from God, while the latter is merely an unsuccessful attempt to make oneself worthy of salvation. Paul is implying all this when he writes in Galatians 1:3-5 near the beginning of the letter and in Galatians 2:20 later –

Galatians 1:3 Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus the Messiah,
1:4 who gave himself for our sins so that he could rescue us from this present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father,
1:5 to whom be the glory forevermore. Amen.

Galatian 2:20 “I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself up for me.”

God had required of the Jews in the Mosaic Covenant that they give Him dead and burned bulls and goats to appease Him for their sins, which most Jews in history have believed are the only appropriate sacrifices for this purpose. And this is exactly what Paul thought before Jesus appeared to him on the road to Damascus and called him to be his apostle. Then, after spending years restudying the Old Testament, Paul realized that the only acceptable offering to God for eternal forgiveness of sins is that of the death of the Messiah on a cross, which is obviously what Jesus accomplished.

Therefore, in vs. 3-5 of chapter 1 and verse 20 of chapter 2 above, Paul is declaring at the outset that Jesus and the New Covenant, not Moses and the Old Covenant, are the BASIS of salvation—outside and apart from sinners and whatever they do. Jesus “gave himself for our sins,” so that through his death, resurrection, ascension, and return all Jews and Gentiles, who believe in Jesus, may be forgiven for their sins and escape God's eternal condemnation.

- 1 Corinthians 3:10-13 is also a good example of a passage from which we can infer that God's choice to send His unique Son Jesus to die and intercede for sinners is the BASIS of salvation –

1 Corinthians 3:10 According to the grace of God which was given to me [Paul], like a wise master builder I laid a foundation, and another person is building on it. But each man must be careful how he builds on it.

3:11 For no man can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid, which is Jesus the Messiah.

3:12 Now if any man builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw,

3:13 each man's work will become evident. For the day will show it because it is to be revealed with fire, and the fire itself will test the quality of each man's work.

Paul is using the analogy of a building to refer to the message which he has presented to the Corinthians and which others should present to them as follow-up information. He speaks of Jesus as both the Messiah and the foundation of the building. In this context, Paul means that a teacher must keep Jesus as central to the message of the gospel instead of allowing the Corinthians' attraction to their teachers to become more important.

Paul mentions this issue in 1 Corinthians 1:10-13 –

1:10 Now I exhort you, brothers, by the name of our Lord Jesus the Messiah, that you all agree and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be made complete in the same mind and in the same judgment.

1:11 For I have been informed by Chloe's people concerning you, my brothers, that there are quarrels among you.

1:12 Now I mean this, that each one of you is saying, "I am of Paul," and "I of Apollos," and "I of Cephas," and "I of Christ."

1:13 Has Christ been divided? Paul was not crucified for you, was he? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?

As a result of these passages and ideas in 1 Corinthians, we can definitely say that Jesus, his death, and his advocacy for sinners are all three an integral part of the BASIS of salvation. We can also say that nothing else and no one else in human history, such as the Mosaic Covenant and Moses himself, is a part of this BASIS. Paul makes this clear in his speech to both Jews and Gentiles in the Jewish synagogue of Pisidian Antioch in Acts 13:38,39 –

Acts 13:38 Therefore let it be known to you, brothers, that through him [Jesus] forgiveness of sins is being proclaimed to you,

13:39 and in this man everyone who believes is justified in regard to all things of which you could not be justified through the Covenant of Moses.

In these two verses above, Paul declares unequivocally that the Mosaic Covenant is not capable of providing eternal justification for sinners so that they achieve a standing before God such that they will receive His eternal forgiveness. Instead, only Jesus with his death and not the sacrifices of bulls and goats can provide eternal forgiveness and life from God. Thus, Paul is declaring that Jesus and his death, not the Mosaic Covenant, are the BASIS of salvation and justification, i.e., forgiveness of sins, for sinful human beings.

Another helpful passage is John 3:16 where the author, John, writes,

John 3:16 For God thus loved the world, that He gave His unique Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish, but have eternal life.

Because God sent His Son as an act of love and because Jesus was and is His unique Son, i.e., the final and only Davidic king who is the icon of God within the human race (cf. 2 Corinthians 4:4 and Colossians 1:15), we can conclude that God brings about Jesus' two appearances on earth as the second part of the BASIS of salvation—so that those who embrace him may acquire the promise of the restored Kingdom of Israel on this earth and the promise of life on the eternal earth afterwards.

Hebrews 5:9-10 are also good verses to demonstrate that only Jesus, by his suffering death and rising from the dead (which is implied in these verses), is able to advocate as a priest before God on behalf of sinners for His eternal mercy –

Hebrews 5:9 And having reached his goal [of dying on the cross], he [Jesus] became to all those who obey him the source of eternal salvation,

5:10 being designated by God as a high priest according to the order of Melchizedek.

In these two verses, the author of Hebrews declares that Jesus alone, not the Mosaic Covenant, is the BASIS of salvation. This is in line with what the author of Hebrews communicates a little later in Hebrews 7:11, i.e., that the Mosaic Covenant, with its Levitical priesthood and sacrificial system, is incapable of providing sinners with salvation –

Hebrews 7:11 Now if reaching the goal of eternal salvation was through the Levitical priesthood (for on the basis of it the people received the Covenant), what further need was there for another priest to arise according to the order of Melchizedek, and not be designated according to the order of Aaron?

Hebrews 7:11 is saying that the Mosaic Covenant, with its continuous line of priests from the tribe of Levi, is not the BASIS of salvation, while Jesus from the tribe of Judah, with his offering himself once on the cross and becoming a priest outside the Mosaic Covenant, is definitely the BASIS. And the author of Hebrews goes on in verse 15 of chapter 9 to say the same thing and add the fact that Jesus is the focal point of the New Covenant, which is completely separate from the Mosaic Covenant –

Hebrews 9:15 For this reason he [Jesus] is the mediator of the New Covenant, so that, since a death has taken place for the redemption of the transgressions that were committed under the first Covenant, those who have been called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance.

In addition, Hebrews 9:27-28 indicates that Jesus accomplishes his task and responsibility of interceding for the sinners whom God has chosen by means of his two appearances, the first in order to suffer death on the cross, and the second in order to be their priest at the final judgment –

Hebrews 9:27 And inasmuch as it is appointed for men to die once and after this comes the judgment,

9:28 so the Messiah also, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time for salvation apart from sin, to those who eagerly await him.

The phrase in v. 28 “apart from sin” sounds confusing. If Jesus appears “a second time” to intercede on behalf of sinners, then certainly this has something to do with sins, i.e., the sins of human beings for whom Jesus advocates and obtains God’s eternal forgiveness. Therefore, the Greek phrase χωρὶς ἁμαρτίας as “apart from sin” means that not only will Jesus return and never experience the effects of other people’s sin which resulted in his dying on the cross, but also his purpose will not be to deal with the issue of sin by offering himself to God as a propitiatory sacrifice. It was not mankind’s goodness, love, and kindness that resulted in Jesus’ being crucified. It was their evil that brought about this existential experience for him. Nevertheless, it was to provide the BASIS for their eternal salvation that Jesus died for sinners. In contrast, when he returns, mankind will not perpetrate their evil on Jesus, and he will not die for them. Instead, Jesus will judge mankind and then rule them by bringing about eternal salvation and life for those who have authentically fulfilled God’s CONDITION for salvation during their sinful lives.

Jesus as the BASIS of salvation is also summed up by John in his first letter –

1 John 2:1 ...If anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus the Messiah the Righteous One.

2:2 And he himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world.

As Paul draws his letter of Galatians to a close, he writes in vs. 14-16 of chapter 6 –

Galatians 6:14 But may it never be that I would boast, except in the cross of our Lord Jesus the Messiah, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.

6:15 For neither is circumcision anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation.

6:16 And those who will walk by this principle, shalom and mercy be upon them, and upon the Israel of God.

In other words, Jesus and his death, and not Moses and the death of animals in accordance with the Mosaic Covenant (and not outward obedience to the ritual commandments of this covenant) are together the BASIS of our salvation. Plus, this takes effect in those who become changed into a new kind of sinner as the CONDITION of salvation and as the next point in the chart, along with note #8, will explain. Obviously, Jesus' death is something which God accomplishes in His story outside and apart from those who acquire His eternal forgiveness and salvation. Additionally, one of God's intents with Jesus' death on the cross is to shout loudly and clearly that sinful human beings not only deserve death, but also are incapable in and of themselves of doing anything to motivate Him and make Him obligated to grant them anything good—such as His grace, mercy, forgiveness, salvation, and eternal life.

8. I think that Paul is implying this change in Galatians 3:2-5 as that which the Spirit of God initiates and performs –

Galatians 3:2 This is the only thing I want to find out from you: did you receive the Spirit by the works of the Covenant, or by hearing with belief?

3:3 Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now achieving your goal by the flesh?

3:4 Did you experience so many things in vain — if indeed it was in vain?

3:5 So then, does He who provides you with the Spirit and works miracles among you, do it by the works of the Covenant, or by hearing with belief?

Paul's Jewish opponents are trying to convince the Gentile, Galatian Christians that they must perform the commandments of the Mosaic Covenant, especially circumcision for men, in order to be genuine followers of Jesus as the Messiah. Paul does not have to mean here, too, that people actually make themselves worthy of salvation and eternal life. But it certainly seems to be part of the mentality of any sinner who misunderstands God's promises and grace, as well as misunderstanding the depth and problematic nature of his sin. Consequently, in the above verses, Paul is reminding the Galatians that, at the very least, they began their Christian journey by means of the initiating, inward work of the Spirit of God and not by their outward obedience to the Mosaic Covenant. In other words, God caused them to become changed in their hearts that resulted in their authentic belief in Jesus as their propitiatory priest and sacrifice, so that they attained the status of justification before God. They did not obey in an external manner the Mosaic Covenant and then cause God to accept them and justify them. It was the other way around. God caused them to obey Him in the inward manner of His changing their hearts, so that then then He accepted and justified them.

Therefore, does it make sense that these Galatian, Gentile Christians now switch from relying on the continuing inner work of the Spirit of God to relying on themselves and their outward obedience to the Mosaic Covenant to finish their salvation process? Paul is emphatic. No! These Christians (and he!) are still sinners, who cannot make themselves worthy of anything good from God. As Paul emphasizes to the Philippians in chapter 1, verse 6 –

Philippians 1:6 For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will bring it to its goal right up to the day of the Messiah Jesus.

God alone causes the change of heart to occur in a sinner as also indicated by what Paul says in Romans 2:28,29 –

Romans 2:28 For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly. Nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh.

2:29 Instead, he is a Jew who is one inwardly, and circumcision is that which is of the heart, by the Spirit, not according to the letter. And his praise is not from men, but from God.

And Paul was probably thinking of Deuteronomy 30:6 where Moses writes of the Jews who will enjoy the restored Kingdom of Israel when Jesus returns –

Deuteronomy 30:6 And your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your descendants, to love Yahweh your God with all your heart and with all your existence, so that you may live.

While Paul in Romans 2:28-29 (and Moses in Deuteronomy 30:6) is speaking of only the Jews, these statements are relevant for the Gentiles also—that the Spirit of God is the sole, ultimate cause of any sinner’s acquiring a changed heart as part of the required **CONDITION** for obtaining God’s eternal mercy and salvation. Indeed, a changed heart is the foundation and beginning of the **CONDITION**, which is to say that as a result of this change, a sinner genuinely believes, obeys, and perseveres throughout the rest of his life in his belief and obedience to God and His truth.

Paul is also pointing out that it is not a person’s outward actions and appearance that constitute the foundation and origin of the **CONDITION** of his salvation, even though we will see that his outward actions must correspond to the inward change of his heart. In other words, while a sinner can count on and rely on his changed heart to result in God’s granting him forgiveness and eternal life (through Jesus’ death as the **BASIS** of his salvation), he cannot count on strictly his outward actions, even his obedience to the Mosaic Covenant (or to his Christian traditions), to obtain salvation.

Paul also refers to this activity of the Spirit from God in Galatians 4:6 –

Galatians 4:6 Because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, “Abba! Father!”

It is God who “has sent” the Holy Spirit, i.e., His activity within the creation, into sinners’ hearts of His choosing and by His grace in order to change their fundamental desires and to cause them to address God as their “Father,” the one who not only has brought them into physical existence, but also has caused them to become authentic believers who will obey His moral commandments and obtain eternal life.

The apostle John speaks of this same dynamic in John 1:9-13 –

John 1:9 There was the true Light [Jesus] which, coming into the world, enlightens every man.

1:10 He was in the world, and the world was made in the light of him, but the world did not know him.

1:11 He came to his own people [the Jews], and those who were his own did not receive him.

1:12 But as many as embraced him, to them he gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in his name,

1:13 who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.

John is saying that God gives birth, spiritually speaking, to “children,” who are sinners, by changing their hearts and causing them to become authentic believers in Jesus as the Messiah. It is not what these sinners do, or even what their parents do that results in their being born, especially being born as Jews who are members of God’s chosen, ethnic people. Instead, it is strictly what God does by causing them to experience a completely different kind of birth whereby they become His children. But this spiritual birth obviously is metaphorically the same thing as what Paul

describes metaphorically in Romans 2 as obtaining a circumcised heart by means of the Spirit of God.

Paul's letter to Titus also contains this idea of a rebirth that takes place for sinners through the inner work of the Spirit of God –

Titus 3:5 [God] saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration [birthing once more] and renewing [making new] that comes from the Holy Spirit.

Notice that Paul contrasts salvation that occurs “on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness” with “the washing of regeneration and renewing that comes from the Holy Spirit.” He is not using the word “basis” in exactly the way I have been using it when I capitalize it, i.e., BASIS of our salvation. He is using it similarly to what I said a few paragraphs above. In other words, the origin and foundation of the CONDITION of our salvation is not our outward actions. (And Paul's opponents in Galatians have gone so far as to believe that they were actually making themselves worthy of salvation by their performing the moral and ritual commandments of the Mosaic Covenant). Instead, the foundation or source of meeting the CONDITION of salvation is what the Spirit of God does by causing a sinner to be birthed once more, i.e., spiritually, and by renewing the sinner in his heart by enlightening his mind to the truth of his sinfulness and God's grace and mercy through Jesus' death. This is to say that the sinner becomes all too aware that the last thing he can do to obtain God's forgiveness and salvation is to earn it by means of his outward religious and moral actions.

It is this Spirit-caused enlightening to which Paul also refers in Ephesians 1:18-20 –

Ephesians 1:18 I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you will know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints,
1:19 and what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe, in accordance with the working of the strength of His might
1:20 which He brought about in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenlies.

In these verses, Paul is connecting a sinner's knowledge with two important aspects of the sinner's salvation—

- 1) The sinner's eternal destiny, which will be glorious and magnificent both in its never coming to an end and in his being morally perfect, and
- 2) The incomparable, resurrection power that God uses to maintain the sinner's belief in Him and Jesus as the Messiah.

However, the knowledge which Paul mentions is not just an intellectual grasp of these truths. It is a full and complete embracing of them with genuine belief, which we now know comes from only a changed heart. Anybody, including an abject rebel against God and unbeliever, at strictly an intellectual level, can understand that God promises eternal life and forgiveness to sinners with authentic belief. But only those with hearts which have been changed by the Spirit of God can take the next step and embrace these ideas with genuine belief, so that they then goes on to desire to grow in their understanding of them. This is what Paul wants the Ephesians to know.

A passage which provides an interesting juxtaposition of the BASIS of salvation and the CONDITION of salvation is Romans 5:1-10 –

Romans 5:1 Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,

- 5:2 through whom also we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand. And we exult in hope of the glory of God.
- 5:3 And not only this, but we also exult in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance;
- 5:4 and perseverance, clear evidence [of our faith], and the clear evidence [of our faith], hope,
- 5:5 and hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts in the manner of the Holy Spirit who was given to us.
- 5:6 For while we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died for those who are unwilling to worship God properly.
- 5:7 For one will hardly die for a righteous man. Though perhaps for the good man someone would dare even to die.
- 5:8 But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, the Messiah died for us.
- 5:9 Much more then, having now been justified by his blood, we shall be saved from the wrath through him.
- 5:10 For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved into his life.

In v. 5 above, Paul speaks of God's love being poured into Christians' hearts in the manner of the Holy Spirit. Here he is referring to God's fulfilling the CONDITION of salvation which He has placed on sinners, that their hearts be changed, resulting in authentic and persevering belief in Jesus the Messiah (the subject matter of vs. 1-5). In vs. 6-10, Paul speaks of God's love being manifested to sinners through Jesus' death for them. And he lists its important ramifications, the justification and salvation of sinners from God's anger and condemnation, so that they acquire eternal life. Here Paul is referring to the BASIS of salvation. Therefore, Jesus' death as the BASIS of salvation in conjunction with the Spirit's changing and dwelling in a sinner's heart as the CONDITION of salvation together result in his eternal salvation.

9. In Galatians 3:22, Paul mentions the first part of this statement about the Jews' belief in Jesus –

Galatians 3:22 But the Scripture has made a prisoner of everyone under sin, so that the promise by virtue of belief in Jesus the Messiah may be given to those who believe.

The “everyone” in this verse is every sinful human being, and Paul is saying in the context that the Mosaic Covenant makes it clear that every Jew and every Gentile is so overwhelmed by the sinfulness within him that God must miraculously and supernaturally change his inner being, which results in his belief in Jesus as the Messiah. Then, the effect of such belief is to obtain what God has promised to Abraham and those sinners who imitate his belief—eternal life. Therefore, again, it is a person's belief in Jesus and not his self-actuated obedience to the Mosaic Covenant which brings him salvation and is the fulfillment of the CONDITION of his salvation—a changed heart by the Spirit of God.

Another example of the importance of this kind of belief is in John's first letter where he writes –

1 John 3:23 This is [God's] teaching, that we believe in the name of His Son Jesus the Messiah, and love one another [as fellow Christians], just as he gave this instruction to us.

And “this instruction” that Jesus gave to his apostles is in John 13:34-35 –

John 13:34 A new instruction I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another.

13:35 By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.

The newness of this instruction and commandment, as being different from the old commandment in the Mosaic Covenant, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself” (Leviticus 19:18), is in the fact that first, Jesus willingly sacrificed his life for his apostles (and, by extrapolation, for all ordinary believers and Christians throughout history) as an example for all Christians, and second, his apostles and those who become believers in Jesus through hearing their message should likewise be willing to sacrifice their lives for one another if necessary.

John also writes in his first letter –

1 John 3:16 We know love by this, that he [Jesus] laid down his life for us, and we are morally obligated to lay down our lives for the brothers [our fellow Christians].

Another way to say what all these verses are communicating is that the Mosaic Covenant with its 613 commandments is not the ultimate moral standard, even for a Jew. Instead, the gospel of Jesus the Messiah is—with his instructions of both belief in him as the Messiah and love for one’s fellow Christians. Therefore, a Jewish Christian can “violate” a ceremonial or ritual commandment of the Mosaic Covenant while loving a Gentile believer and still be performing the “new instruction” of Jesus and biblical morality. For example, Peter can eat non-kosher food with non-kosher Gentile Christians in Syrian Antioch in “disobedience” to the Mosaic Covenant and still be obeying God, Jesus, and the New Covenant, because Jesus with his death and intercession at the judgment, not the Mosaic Covenant, is the BASIS of salvation. In note #13 we will take a closer look at this implication as Paul describes it in Galatians 2:11-21.

In addition, Paul sums up the CONDITION of salvation in 2 Thessalonians 1:3-4 –

2 Thessalonians 1:3 We ought always to give thanks to God for you, brothers, as is only fitting, because your belief [in Jesus] is greatly enlarged, and the love of each one of you toward one another grows ever greater.

1:4 Therefore, we ourselves speak proudly of you among the churches of God in regard to your perseverance and belief in the midst of all your persecutions and afflictions which you endure.

In these two verses, Paul mentions both persevering in a growing belief in Jesus and increasing in love for other believers. These characteristics, in particular, demonstrate a heart which has been changed by God through His Spirit as a fulfillment of the CONDITION of salvation.

Paul’s opponents in Galatians are completely overlooking these important characteristics of a follower of Jesus by emphasizing circumcision and the ritual commandments of the Mosaic Covenant. This is Paul’s point in Galatians 5:2-4 –

Galatians 5:2 Behold I, Paul, say to you that if you receive circumcision, the Messiah will be of no benefit to you.

5:3 And I testify again to every man who receives circumcision, that he is under obligation to keep the whole Covenant.

5:4 You have been severed from the Messiah, you who are seeking to be justified by the Covenant. You have fallen from grace.

It is certainly not that circumcision is an act of disobedience to God, because God gave it as a commandment to Abraham and the Jews. What Paul has a problem with is that his opponents and the Galatians, whom they are influencing, believe that circumcision is the BASIS of their salvation from God and receiving the promises of Abraham. No, only Jesus and his death is the BASIS (along with God’s predestination). Therefore, to see circumcision the way Paul’s

opponents are is to pit oneself against God and His message of grace and justification through Jesus and his death, which is what unbelievers, not believers, do. They rebel against God by making a religious system (such as the Mosaic Covenant) the BASIS of salvation, thereby demonstrating the hardness of their hearts and the fact that they deserve God's eternal condemnation and punishment.

But when the Spirit of God causes sinners to fulfill the CONDITION of salvation by changing their hearts, they will not (even cannot!) be obsessed with rituals such as circumcision, dietary laws, etc. Instead, they will fundamentally desire more to do authentic, biblical morality. And they will! This is the spiritual dynamic which Paul describes in Galatians 5:22-23 –

Galatians 5:22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, belief.
5:23 gentleness, self-control. The Covenant is not against such things.

By saying that these things are the “fruit of the Spirit,” Paul means that genuine Christians will choose to be and do what is loving, joyful, peaceful, patient, kind, good, believing, and gentle. And they will do these with self-control. It is not that they will do all these perfectly and all the time. But they will engage in these activities as a result of what the Spirit of God supernaturally produces within them and for them, because this simply is how God has designed reality to work for Christians. Paul means the same thing in Ephesians 2:8-10 –

Ephesians 2:8 For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God.

2:9 not as a result of works, so that no one may boast.

2:10 For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.

Indeed, God has “prepared beforehand,” which is the same as His predestining, “good works,” which Christians will unavoidably perform according to His sovereign rule. Certainly, as the way existence in this world works for sinful human beings, these good works may involve a genuine struggle within them to make the choice to do them. Nevertheless, their life's story, as a whole and as composed by God, requires that they perform them. In this way, God causes Jews, whom He has chosen, to believe in Jesus as their ultimate king and priest, and He causes them at times to do what is good and right. And these elements of their human existence are what He brings about in them and through them through the inner work of His Holy Spirit as they fulfill the CONDITION of their salvation.

10. Paul uses the phrase “by works of the Covenant” (ἐξ ἔργων νόμου) six times in Galatians, and once in Romans. He also uses “apart from the works of the Covenant” (χωρὶς ἔργων νόμου) once in Romans. In each instance, Paul is saying that a sinner cannot be justified and delivered from God's condemnation “by works of the Covenant.” Depending upon the context, there would seem to be two possibilities for what Paul means –

1) If Paul is emphasizing the word “Covenant,” then he is saying that the Mosaic Covenant is not the BASIS of salvation. Instead, Jesus is.

2) If Paul is emphasizing the word “works,” then he is saying that an unbelieving sinner cannot fulfill the CONDITION that God places on him that would make himself acceptable to God *by his own efforts to obey the Mosaic Covenant*, because his efforts are completely rebellious and hostile to God. And this is because he lacks a changed heart that only the inward work of the Spirit of God can bring about.

However, we can also imagine a third possibility for the meaning of this phrase in an appropriate context when we take into account Leviticus 18:5 –

Leviticus 18:5 So you shall guard My statutes and My judgments, by which a man may live if he does them. I am Yahweh.

3) In line with Leviticus 18:5, a believing [Jewish] sinner, who both has a heart which has been circumcised by the inward work of the Spirit of God and seeks to obey the Mosaic Covenant, does what is good and right according to the necessary **CONDITION** of salvation, so that he is actually justified before God by properly obeying the Mosaic Covenant. Nevertheless, it will be because of Jesus and his death, not because of his obedience to the Mosaic Covenant, that the believing [Jewish] sinner will acquire God's complete forgiveness and eternal life. This is because Jesus, his death, and his intercession, not the Mosaic Covenant, are the **BASIS** of salvation. Therefore, after Jesus' first appearance, any believing Jew is required by the gospel to segue from simply pursuing the Mosaic Covenant as the **CONDITION** of salvation to believing in and obeying Jesus as the more current, correct, and ultimate **CONDITION**. In other words, the believing [Jewish] sinner has a changed heart which manifests itself through authentic belief in God and obeying the Mosaic Covenant, but this Jew should recognize that obeying the commandments of the Mosaic Covenant is not the primary manner in which he reveals his changed heart and belief. Instead, belief in Jesus and following his commandments is how he reveals them.

It is this third meaning, which Paul in his letters does not describe as extensively as I have, that I am assuming is correct in my **Explanation** of the **CONDITION** of salvation for the Jew when I state "and pursuing obedience to the Mosaic Covenant in an appropriate manner." The entire nation of Israel has always had a moral obligation to obey the Mosaic Covenant with changed hearts, and this obligation continues to this day and into the future millennial kingdom (see below at the end of this note).

However, as I state in the **Implications** box in the chart, when Christian Jews are in the presence of believing Gentiles, this obligation is reduced in the light of their more important obligation to the New Covenant, especially when they live outside the land of Israel and before the millennial kingdom. In other words, believing Jews can set aside the Mosaic Covenant's religious requirements whenever they are engaging in fellowship with Christian Gentiles—particularly in foreign lands, where they have been dispersed, and before Jesus institutes the millennial kingdom when he returns.

However, Isaiah 56 mentions that when God restores the Davidic Kingdom through the Messiah, any Gentile, as part of his own allegiance to God and while living on the land of Israel, must keep the Mosaic Covenant in collaboration with the Jews, all of whose hearts have been changed by the Spirit of God. In regard to God's requirement for the Jews to keep the Mosaic Covenant, including during the millennial kingdom, Moses states in Deuteronomy 10:12-16 –

Deuteronomy 10:12 "Now, Israel, what does Yahweh your God require from you, but to fear Yahweh your God, to walk in all His ways and love Him, and to serve Yahweh your God with all your heart and with all your soul,

10:13 and to guard Yahweh's commandments and His statutes which I am commanding you today for your good?

10:14 Behold, to Yahweh your God belong heaven and the highest heavens, the earth and all that is in it.

10:15 Yet on your fathers did Yahweh set His affection to love them, and He chose their descendants after them, even you above all peoples, as it is this day.

10:16 Therefore, circumcise your heart, and stiffen your neck no longer."

These verses demonstrate that God requires of the Jews not only that they guard the Mosaic Covenant commandments in their hearts and minds and do them, but also that they accomplish this responsibility with the proper inwardness, i.e., with circumcised hearts (just as we saw in note #8, that Paul indicates this in Romans 2:28-29). In other words, the Mosaic Covenant and the gospel of Jesus the Messiah require exactly the same kind of spirituality for a Jew—that he be a sinner whose heart and inwardness has been changed by the Spirit of God. However, during the approximate 1,500-year interval between God’s making the Mosaic Covenant with the Israelites in the desert and Jesus’ first appearance, the Jewish changed-of-heart sinner manifests this Spirit-caused inwardness through properly keeping the Mosaic Covenant.

The Covenant itself expresses this fact in Leviticus 18:5 –

Leviticus 18:5 “So you shall keep My statutes and My judgments, by which a man may live if he does them. I am Yahweh.”

And God speaks with the same meaning through the prophet Ezekiel around 600 B.C. –

Ezekiel 18:1 Then the word of Yahweh came to me, saying,

18:2 “What do you mean by using this proverb concerning the land of Israel, saying,

‘The fathers eat the sour grapes,

But the children’s teeth are set on edge’?

18:3 “As I live,” declares Adonai Yahweh, “you are surely not going to use this proverb in Israel anymore.

18:4 “Behold, all personal existences are Mine. The personal existence of the father as well as the personal existence of the son is Mine. The personal existence who sins will die.

18:5 “But if a man is righteous and practices justice and righteousness,

18:6 and does not eat at the mountain shrines or lift up his eyes to the idols of the house of Israel, or defile his neighbor’s wife or approach a woman during her menstrual period —

18:7 if a man does not oppress anyone, but restores to the debtor his pledge, does not commit robbery, but gives his bread to the hungry and covers the naked with clothing,

18:8 if he does not lend money on interest or take increase, if he keeps his hand from iniquity and executes true justice between man and man,

18:9 if he walks in My statutes and My ordinances so as to deal faithfully — he is justified and will surely live,” declares the Adonai Yahweh.

God is speaking in Ezekiel of the time after Jesus appears again on earth and restores the Kingdom of Israel. The Jew who is an authentic believer reveals his changed heart primarily through belief in and obedience to Jesus and secondarily through obedience to the Mosaic Covenant. In addition, it will definitely be both these ways of demonstrating their changed hearts that all the Jews of the millennial kingdom will practice once they have been restored to the land of Israel and are living securely there with Jesus’ ruling over them and exercising dominion over the entire rest of the world. The Jews will manifest their common humanity with sinful Gentiles by believing in and obeying Jesus as their king and eternal priest (as a result of their changed hearts), and they will demonstrate their separate Jewishness by following the commandments of the Mosaic Covenant as God’s earthly, chosen people, the nation of Israel (also as a result of their changed hearts).

- 11.** This is Paul’s main argument in Galatians, that Jesus and his death are the only earthly BASIS of salvation, while belief in God (and now in Jesus) with obedience to His moral commandments (that comes from a heart which has been changed by God’s Spirit) is the only CONDITION which Gentiles have ever had to fulfill in order to obtain God’s salvation. And this CONDITION

is the same belief and obedience that Abraham, the first Jew, demonstrated before God gave him the outward, ritual commandment of circumcision in Genesis 17. Paul describes this CONDITION for Gentiles in Galatians 3:6-9 –

Galatians 3:6 Even so Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him as justification

<Genesis 15:6>.

3:7 Therefore, be sure that it is those who are of belief who are sons of Abraham.

3:8 And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by belief, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, “All the nations will be blessed in you” <Genesis 12:3>.

3:9 So then those who are of belief are blessed with Abraham, the believer.

In other words, God states clearly in Genesis 12 that both Abraham and any other sinful person who imitates his faith and belief will obtain God’s blessing of eternal life, thus implying that this blessing is fundamentally more important and, in a critical way, separate from obeying the ritual commandment of circumcision which God gives Abraham later in Genesis 17. As a result, God declares in Genesis 15:6, before He gives him the circumcision commandment, that Abraham will obtain eternal life because he has met the CONDITION of genuinely believing in Him –

Genesis 15:6 Then he believed in Yahweh, and He accounted it to him as justification.

Therefore, we know that Abraham fulfilled God’s CONDITION for salvation, because He “accounted” his belief “to him as justification.” Therefore, we also assume that God had earlier changed his heart, so that his fulfilling the CONDITION did not involve either obedience to the external requirement of circumcision that God gives to Abraham in Genesis 17 or external obedience to the Mosaic Covenant, which God made with his physical descendants, the Israelites, approximately five hundred years later.

Paul states the point of Genesis 15:6 more explicitly in Romans 4:9-12 –

Romans 4:9 Is this blessing [of eternal life] then on the circumcised [Jews], or on the uncircumcised [Gentiles] also? For we say [from Genesis 15:6], “Belief was credited to Abraham as justification.”

4:10 How then was it credited? While he was circumcised, or uncircumcised? Not while circumcised, but while uncircumcised.

4:11 And he received the sign of circumcision [in Genesis 17], a seal of the justification of the belief which he had while uncircumcised, so that he could be the father of all who believe without being circumcised [Gentiles], that justification may be credited to them,

4:12 and the father of circumcision to those who not only are of the circumcision [Jews], but who also follow in the steps of the belief of our father Abraham which he had while uncircumcised.

Briefly, Paul is saying that Abraham, by means of his authentic belief alone, found complete justification before God so that he would receive eternal life. And this was before he was circumcised and obeyed the particular ritual commandment in Genesis 17. Therefore, whether someone is a Jew or a Gentile, he too receives eternal life by imitating Abraham’s belief alone, not by imitating his external circumcision or obeying any other ritual commandment which God gave to the Jews through the Mosaic Covenant. This is also to say that the inward condition of a changed heart that results in the inward act of authentic belief indicates that a sinner has satisfied the CONDITION of salvation before he performs any outward act that God has stipulated in the Bible. Consequently, as much as Paul’s opponents want to make their outward obedience to the Mosaic Covenant the CONDITION of their salvation, he is unequivocally declaring that genuine

belief that arises from a changed heart was the **CONDITION** which Abraham fulfilled and which both Jews and Gentiles are required to fulfill.

Plus, Paul is clarifying the fact that God made the Mosaic Covenant with only the Jews, thereby exempting the Gentiles from keeping it. God requires that Gentiles only believe in Jesus as the Messiah and pursue genuine morality, especially by loving their fellow Christians. As Paul says, Abraham as a genuine believer is the “father” of Gentiles because of their changed hearts and authentic belief outside the Mosaic Covenant and the commandment of circumcision, while he also is the “father” of Jews because of their changed hearts and authentic belief within the Mosaic Covenant.

While Gentiles have no obligation to this Covenant, God has always required the Jews to guard and obey the it with changed hearts *as a national covenant* for the sake of being the kind of people who will obtain His promise of their becoming the greatest nation on earth at the end of history (cf. Genesis 12:1-3). This will occur when Jesus returns and restores the Kingdom of Israel, so that God will grant all living Jews both the inner **CONDITION** of changed hearts and the outward status of being a “great nation” on the land of Israel.

The result is that the Mosaic Covenant is not the **BASIS** of salvation for the Jew and that it is not applicable to Gentiles, and outward obedience to it alone is not the **CONDITION** of salvation, both of which we will discuss more in the following notes pertaining to the **Implications** of the **BASIS** and **CONDITION** of salvation. Instead, Jesus and his death remain the sole earthly **BASIS** of salvation for both Jews and Gentiles, while a changed heart by the Spirit of God is the fundamental inward **CONDITION** of salvation for both Jews and Gentiles and which demonstrates itself through belief and moral obedience.

12. I essentially covered this implication in note #6. But Romans 8:28-30 is worthy quoting again so as to remind ourselves of this point –

Romans 8:28 And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.

8:29 For those whom He foreknew [chose], He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that he would be the firstborn among many brothers;

8:30 and these whom He predestined, He also calls. And these whom He calls, He also justifies. And these whom He justifies, He also glorifies.

The degree to which God has truly guaranteed that those whom He chooses, before He brings the creation into existence, obtain eternal salvation and life is **absolute!** Indeed, Paul means the same thing when he says a little later in Romans 8:38-39 –

Romans 8:38 For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers,

8:39 nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

After, in eternity past, God chooses particular sinners to experience His love during their lives on this earth so as to be changed in their hearts and minds by Him and to become authentic believers in Him and in Jesus the Messiah, literally nothing within the creation can detach or “separate” these sinners from God, from His love, and from achieving their eternal destiny of life in the Kingdom of God to which He has predestined them.

13. In note #7, we looked at many passages which pertain to this implication. In note #9 we also considered Galatians 5:2, that Paul’s opponents are emphasizing circumcision and the ritual

commandments of the Mosaic Covenant (thus making the religious system of circumcision and the Mosaic Covenant the BASIS of salvation) –

Galatians 5:2 Behold I, Paul, say to you that if you receive circumcision, the Messiah will be of no benefit to you.

We can now add that, in the above verse, Paul is implying that Jesus as the crucified Messiah is the only means or “benefit” for obtaining God’s mercy. He is the only advocate who can intercede on behalf of sinners in order to obtain God’s eternal mercy and forgiveness. Moses, the Mosaic Covenant, and *certainly not a sinful human being himself*, even if he is outwardly doing all the right things either in the Mosaic Covenant (including physical circumcision) or within his own religious tradition of Christianity, are all completely inadequate to intervene between God and the sinner for the purpose of acquiring His eternal forgiveness.

Another good example of this kind of passage is in John 14. Jesus is explaining to his apostles that he will soon leave in order to prepare a place for them. Then, he will return and lead them to this place. He also says that they know the way to the place. Thomas responds to him by saying that they do not know the way. Jesus’ answer to Thomas is in John 14:6 –

John 14:6 Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father but through me.”

Even though Jesus is speaking to only his apostles, we can infer that no changed-of-heart believer throughout human history, whether Abraham, Moses, David, the apostle Paul, or ourselves, can enter into eternal life apart from Jesus’ interceding for him at the judgment after the first resurrection of sinful human beings when he returns. Therefore, Jesus is truly the only earthly BASIS of salvation and the only means (other than God’s pre-creation choice of the sinner) for anyone’s obtaining God’s mercy and His promises of the “great nation” of Israel and of eternal life. No other religious person, no other religion, and not even the Mosaic Covenant that God gave to the Jews is an adequate and acceptable BASIS or means for entering in the eternal Kingdom of God.

14. This is Paul’s point regarding Peter in Galatians 2:11-21, part of which we looked at in note #3 –

Galatians 2:11 But when Cephas [Peter] came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he was acting like someone who would be condemned.

2:12 For prior to the coming of certain men from James, he used to eat with the Gentiles. But when they came, he began to withdraw and hold himself aloof, being intimidated by those from the circumcision.

2:13 And the rest of the Jews joined him in hypocrisy, with the result that even Barnabas was carried away by their hypocrisy.

2:14 But when I saw that they were not straightforward about the truth of the gospel, I said to Cephas in the presence of all,

“If you, being a Jew, live like the Gentiles and not like the Jews, how is it that you compel the Gentiles to live like Jews?

2:15 We are Jews by nature and not sinners from among the Gentiles.

2:16 Nevertheless, knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the Covenant but through belief in the Messiah Jesus, even we have believed in the Messiah Jesus, so that we may be justified by belief in the Messiah and not by the works of the Covenant, because by the works of the Covenant no flesh will be justified.

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- 2:17 But if, while seeking to be justified in the Messiah, we ourselves [Jews who follow the Mosaic Covenant] have also been found sinners, is the Messiah then a minister of sin? May it never be!
- 2:18 For if I rebuild what I have once destroyed, then I prove myself to be a transgressor.
- 2:19 For through the Covenant I died to the Covenant, so that I might live to God.
- 2:20 I have been crucified with the Messiah. And it is no longer I who live, but the Messiah lives in me, and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself up for me.
- 2:21 I do not nullify the grace of God, for if justification comes through the Covenant, then the Messiah died needlessly.”

Stated vs. actual belief in note #3.

In note #3, we considered the difference between the stated belief of the Jews with an erroneous understanding of the message of Jesus as the Messiah and their actual belief. In the same passage above, Paul indicates that, while visiting Antioch, Peter had allowed himself to be intimidated by the Jews from the Christian community in Jerusalem, whose stated belief was the same as the apostles. However, these Jews had a different actual belief, whereby they were still concluding (like other Jews who were following an *erroneous* Judaism) not only that the Mosaic Covenant was the BASIS of salvation, but also that outwardly obeying its commandments was the CONDITION of salvation. Their conclusion also was that Gentile believers in Jesus as the Messiah were obligated to keep the Mosaic Covenant in the same way as they were in order to obtain forgiveness and salvation from God.

Thus, by separating themselves from Gentile Christians while eating their meal, Peter and his fellow Jews (including Barnabas!) were sending the message to the Gentile believers that they were more obligated to keep the Mosaic Covenant and separate themselves physically from the Gentiles than to engage in close, Christian fellowship with them. In addition, the Jews were implying that, if the Gentile Christians wanted to fellowship with them and thereby retain their status as bona fide Jesus followers who will acquire eternal life, they too must follow the Mosaic Covenant, including circumcision and its ritual and dietary laws. But Paul corrects Peter individually, and his argument is that by counting on Jesus to be the BASIS of their salvation from God (as the Gentiles are actually doing!), they as Jewish Christians can interact with the Gentile Christians without having to follow the ritual commandments of the Mosaic Covenant. Indeed, this would be to obey the Mosaic Covenant appropriately as I pointed out in note #10.

Additionally, Paul indicates in 1 Corinthians 9:19-23 that he is not only free to act like a Jew who is following the ritual commandments of the Mosaic Covenant when he is with Jews and to act like a Gentile who is ignoring the ritual commandments of the Mosaic Covenant when he is with Gentiles, but he is also a slave to all people for the sake of the gospel of Jesus as the Messiah and sole earthly BASIS of salvation.

This means that he is free to act like a ceremony-**abiding** Jew when with Jews and he is free to act like a ceremony-**free** Gentile when with Gentiles –

- 1 Corinthians 9:19 For though I am free from all men, I have made myself a slave to all, so that I may win more.
- 9:20 To the Jews I become as a Jew, so that I might win Jews. To those who are under the Covenant, as under the Covenant though not being myself under the Covenant [as the BASIS of my salvation], so that I might win those who are under the Covenant.
- 9:21 To those who are without the Covenant [Gentiles who are not obligated to the Mosaic Covenant and its ceremonial commandments], as without the Covenant [not seeing the Mosaic Covenant as the BASIS of my salvation], though not being without the law of God [the Mosaic Covenant’s moral commandments] but under the law of Christ [which calls all Christians to pursue biblical morality], so that I might win those who are without law [who

are currently rejecting biblical morality and are unwilling to repent and pursue biblical morality].

9:22 To the weak [in faith and who think that the ritual commandments of the Mosaic Covenant are actually moral commandments] I became weak [by performing the Mosaic Covenant's rituals with them], that I might win the weak [to a stronger belief and understanding of the Mosaic Covenant in the light of Jesus and the New Covenant]. I have become all things [except immoral!] to all men, so that I may by all means save some.

9:23 I do all things for the sake of the gospel, so that I may become a fellow partaker of it.

15. This is also Paul's point throughout the letter of Galatians—that the Mosaic Covenant is specific to the Jewish people, so that Gentile Christians have no obligation to keep it. He comes closest to saying this in Galatians 3:16-19 –

Galatians 3:16 Now the promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. He does not say, "And to seeds," as referring to many, but rather to one, "And to your seed," that is, the Messiah.

3:17 What I am saying is this: the Covenant, which came four hundred and thirty years later, does not invalidate a covenant previously ratified by God, so as to nullify the promise.

3:18 For if the inheritance is based on the Covenant, it is no longer based on a promise. But God has granted it to Abraham by means of a promise.

3:19 Why the Covenant then? It was added because of transgressions, having been ordained through angels by the agency of a mediator, until the seed would come to whom the promise had been made.

Paul is arguing that the "seed," i.e., the descendants, of Abraham, who obtain the fulfillment of God's promises, are those who are associated with the Messiah by believing in him as the BASIS of their salvation. Therefore, God keeps His promise to Abraham that his physical descendants, the Jews of *genuine* belief, will become the most powerful nation in history and no longer oppressed by their earthly enemies by their being associated with Jesus as their Messiah who died for them and qualified to become their permanent king when he returns and restores the Kingdom of Israel. And God keeps His promise to Abraham that his descendants, both Jews and Gentiles of *genuine* belief, will acquire eternal life by their being associated with Jesus as their Messiah who died for them and qualified to intercede before God for His forgiveness when he returns.

This means that, while the Jews have a national obligation to perform the Mosaic Covenant, especially after Jesus returns and establishes the millennial kingdom on the land of Israel, Gentiles have no obligation to keep it. Therefore, both Jews and Gentiles of authentic belief in Jesus have as their primary obligation to pursue the effects of the Spirit of God within them, which Paul describes in Galatians 5:22-23 –

Galatians 5:22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, belief, 5:23 gentleness, self-control.

As I mentioned in note #9, Paul is saying that the "fruit of the Spirit" is not only what the Spirit of God commands believers in Jesus to do, but also what the Spirit actually produces in their lives, because they cannot achieve these qualities either internally or externally themselves. Therefore, while Paul's opponents are erroneously convinced that they can obey God sufficiently by performing the Mosaic Covenant in and of themselves, the truth is that only God through His grace can cause sinners to obey Him appropriately. Thus, God produces these qualities and actions in both Jewish and Gentile believers' lives, and Gentile believers have no obligation to keep the Mosaic Covenant, especially its ritual commandments such as circumcision.

However, as I pointed out in a note #10, Isaiah 56 does mention that when God restores the Davidic Kingdom through the Messiah when he returns, any Gentile living on the land of Israel must keep the Mosaic Covenant in collaboration with the Jews as part of his own allegiance to God. And this is because this specific covenant goes hand in glove with this specific land. The two are inextricably tied together for any human being of *authentic* belief living on the land during the millennial kingdom.

16. My sense from the New Testament of what was happening within Jews who called themselves Christians but who placed all their hope for salvation on their obedience to the Mosaic Covenant was that they were willing to believe that Jesus would return to establish the final and complete Kingdom of Israel along with the eternal Kingdom of God. However, they also believed that even he would say that no human being, whether Jew or Gentile, could qualify to enter into his kingdom without making himself worthy by outwardly obeying the Mosaic Covenant.

Therefore, in these Jews' opinion, the sole, necessary BASIS for any human being's obtaining the "blessing" of the Abrahamic Covenant from God was the Mosaic Covenant and the sole, necessary CONDITION for taking advantage of this BASIS was performing externally the Mosaic Covenant, including its ritual commandments such as circumcision, thereby becoming thoroughly "Jewish" as it stipulates. The Jews would complete their individual Jewishness through circumcision (for the men) and diligently following the commandments of the Mosaic Covenant, and Gentiles would properly convert their Gentileness to Jewishness by doing the same. In other words, the God of the Jews would not be pleased with any sinful human being who did not obey the covenantal requirements that He gave to the Jews at Mt. Sinai through Moses.

However, as I have shown and explained in the chart and notes above, Paul argues in Galatians that the sole, necessary earthly BASIS of salvation is Jesus and his death, while the sole, necessary CONDITION of salvation is a heart which has been changed by God and from which issue the "fruit of the Spirit," including belief in Jesus as the Messiah.

Paul says the same thing in Titus 3:3-8 –

Titus 3:3 For we also once were foolish ourselves, disobedient, deceived, enslaved to various evil desires and pleasures, spending our life in malice and envy, repulsive [to God], hating one another.

3:4 But when the kindness of God our Savior and His love for mankind appeared, **3:5** He saved us, **not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit,**

3:6 whom He poured out upon us richly through Jesus the Messiah, our Savior,

3:7 so that being justified by His grace we would be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.

3:8 This is a trustworthy statement. And concerning these things I want you to speak confidently, **so that those who have believed God will be careful to engage in good deeds.** These things are good and profitable for men. [emphasis mine]

By associating the words and ideas in the above passage with other comments in the New Testament, Paul is referring to the circumcision of the heart by the Spirit of God in Romans 2:28-29 when he speaks of "the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit." And he is referring to doing good by perseverance in Romans 2:7 and to applying all diligence so as to provide moral excellence, knowledge, self-restraint, perseverance, proper worship of God, loving one's fellow Christian, and loving God in 2 Peter 1:5-7 when he speaks of being "careful to engage in good deeds."

Paul also comments about himself to the same effect in Philippians 3:2-11 –

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- Philippians 3:2** Beware of the dogs, beware of the evil workers, beware of the false circumcision [Jews who do not believe Jesus is central to a sinner's salvation];
- 3:3** for we are the true circumcision, **who worship in the Spirit of God and glory in the Messiah Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh,**
- 3:4** although I myself might have confidence even in the flesh. If anyone else has a mind to put confidence in the flesh, I far more:
- 3:5** circumcised the eighth day, of the nation of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the [Mosaic] Covenant, a Pharisee,
- 3:6** as to zeal, a persecutor of the church, as to the righteousness which is [apparently] in the Covenant, found blameless.
- 3:7** However, whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of the Messiah.
- 3:8** More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing the Messiah Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but dung so that I may gain the Messiah,
- 3:9** and may be found in him, **not having a justification of my own derived from the Covenant, but that which is through belief in the Messiah, the justification which comes from God on the basis of belief,**
- 3:10** that I may know him and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of his sufferings, being conformed to his death,
- 3:11** in order that I may reach the resurrection from the dead. [emphasis mine]

Similar to the passage in Titus, Paul is referring to setting one's mind on the work of the Holy Spirit within him through having had one's heart changed by the Spirit and through pursuing biblical morality as a result of this change in Romans 8:5-17 when he speaks of those "who worship in the Spirit of God." And he is referring to being justified as a gift of God's grace through Jesus' death in Romans 3:24-26 when he speaks of those who "glory in the Messiah Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh," while also "having a justification" that is "through belief in the Messiah" and which "comes from God on the basis of belief."

- 17.** This is the mindset of all human beings who have not experienced a changed heart by God through His Spirit. They would never deny that God's grace is a vital component of their obtaining any blessing from God, including His eternal mercy and life. Indeed, they strongly affirm that they believe in God's grace as that which saves us from His condemnation and that preserves our belief in Jesus. However, they act (and speak) as though He has created us to be independent of Him, so that, now that He has made the first move by offering us the gift of salvation, we must reach out on our own and embrace the gift. God certainly cannot and would not cause us to receive the gift. Only we by ourselves can open the gift in order to receive it. Otherwise, He will not choose to bless us with salvation and eternal life. In other words, all God can do is offer us the gift. Then we must receive it *in and of ourselves* and *out of our own creaturely self-reliance*.

Plus, even if these human beings, who lack a changed heart, do not explicitly say that they must make themselves worthy of God's blessings, this also is at the center of their belief. They correctly define God's grace as His gift to sinful human beings, but they nevertheless believe that they have the responsibility to prove to God that they are worthy of any gift He might grant them. As a result, their stated belief, which is the same as authentic Christians, is different from their actual belief, which essentially denies the BASIS of Jesus' death and the correct CONDITION of God's supernaturally changing a person's heart for their salvation. They state and say one thing, but the way they live indicates that they deny what they say. Instead, they make their *religious system* and *outward behavior* the BASIS and CONDITION of their salvation respectively.

However, the Bible says otherwise, starting with a passage from the Mosaic Covenant, which Paul's opponents believe is what they must perform in and of themselves for the purpose of obtaining God's blessings. But notice how Moses speaks within the Mosaic Covenant in Deuteronomy 30:1-8 –

Deuteronomy 30:1 “Thus it shall be when all of these things have come upon you, the blessing and the curse which I have set before you, and you call them to mind in all nations where Yahweh your God has banished you,
30:2 and you return to Yahweh your God and obey Him with all your heart and existence according to all that I command you today, you and your sons,
30:3 then Yahweh your God will restore you from captivity, and have compassion on you, and will gather you again from all the peoples where Yahweh your God has scattered you.
30:4 If your outcasts are at the ends of the earth, from there Yahweh your God will gather you, and from there He will bring you back.
30:5 Yahweh your God will bring you into the land which your fathers possessed, and you shall possess it; and He will prosper you and multiply you more than your fathers.
30:6 And your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your descendants, to love Yahweh your God with all your heart and with all your existence, so that you may live.
30:7 Yahweh your God will inflict all these curses on your enemies and on those who hate you, who persecuted you.
30:8 And you shall again obey Yahweh, and observe all His commandments which I command you today.

Around 1500 B.C., Moses is saying that, many years later, after God has first driven His chosen people, the Jews, off their land because of their disobedience, He will gather them back from all the various parts of the earth where He has scattered them. Plus, He will make them prosperous and numerous, which is obviously in line with His promise to Abraham in Genesis 12 to shape them into the most powerful nation in history. But what will this also require? That God circumcises their hearts. And it makes the most sense to interpret Him as indicating that He will circumcise and change the hearts of all Jews who be living on the land of Israel during the millennial kingdom of Revelation 20 after Jesus returns (cf. v. 6).

In point #8 we saw Paul talk about the same thing in Romans 2:28,29—

Romans 2:28 For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh.
2:29 But he is a Jew who is one inwardly, and circumcision is that which is of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter. Plus, his praise is not from men, but from God.

Consequently, the Old Testament is just as clear as the New Testament that only God can change a sinful human being's heart and cause him to fulfill His required CONDITION of salvation. It is God and God alone who makes people both receive His truth and believe it. As a result, God causes them to love and obey Him authentically, even while they remain sinners within the present realm. No sinful human being, whether Jew or Gentile, can fulfill the necessary CONDITION of salvation by changing his own heart. Only God can do this and will do this without fail for those whom He chose and predestined to salvation before He brought the creation into existence.

18. As I said in note #16, people without changed hearts will naturally believe that they can and must perform external, religious actions that satisfy God's CONDITION of salvation by also making themselves worthy of God's gift of grace and eternal life—even if they explicitly declare

otherwise. Their actual belief is different from their stated belief. The flip side of this coin is that they fail to comprehend appropriately the depth of their sinfulness. Rather than concluding that they are evil with the potential (through God's independent grace) to acquire a level of goodness that is still far short of moral perfection this side of the eternal Kingdom of God, they believe that they are foundationally good with the potential to do evil. Therefore, they conclude that, if they *outwardly* perform goodness such as that defined by the Mosaic Covenant, including and maybe most especially its ritual commandments, then they can impress God and acquire His acceptance, approval, and the gifts of His blessings, which is ultimately eternal life—even as they earn these from God. However, they are ignoring a vital truth in the Bible—that the level of our sin renders us completely unwilling to submit authentically to God. As I explained in note #9, Paul is referring to this truth in Galatians 3:22 by saying that all of us as sinful human beings are “under sin” –

Galatians 3:22 But the Scripture has made a prisoner of everyone under sin, so that the promise by virtue of belief in Jesus the Messiah may be given to those who believe.

People who lack an understanding of the depth of their sin also typically consider it a violation of their free will if God has to cause them to believe His truth and to make choices that are in line with His moral commandments, i.e., if God has to change their inwardness in order for them to do what is good as the **CONDITION** of their obtaining His blessing. But this is exactly what the Bible is teaching, as I indicated in note #16. Like Deuteronomy 30:1-8 and Romans 2:28-29, Jesus declares to the Jewish leader Nicodemus in John 3:3 –

John 3:3 Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again from above, he cannot see the Kingdom of God.

By using the analogy of birth, which no human being controls in regard to his own coming into this world, Jesus is clearly saying that God must cause a sinner to go through a spiritual change before he can become qualified for eternal life in the Kingdom of God. This is the same as the “washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit” of Titus 3:5, which we looked at in notes #8 and #15. And because God is the constant transcendent Creator of all reality, He does not violate a person's free-will when he brings about this inward change. Instead, God causes it as the very Producer and Maker of not only the person's will, but also his choices and the entirety of his existential experience as a creature and character within the story which God is telling for His own honor and glory.

19. It is this harsh and oppressive attitude to which Paul refers in three verses in Galatians—2:3, 2:14, and 6:12 –

Galatians 2:3 But not even Titus, who was with me, though he was a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised.

Galatians 2:14 But when I saw that they were not straightforward about the truth of the gospel, I said to Cephas in the presence of all, “If you, being a Jew, live like the Gentiles and not like the Jews, how is it that you compel the Gentiles to live like Jews?”

Galatians 6:12 Those who desire to make a good showing in the flesh try to compel you to be circumcised, simply so that they will not be persecuted for the cross of Christ.

We could translate the verb “compel” just as easily with “force.” The “false brethren,” against whom Paul is writing in this letter, are seeking to “force” the male, Gentile believers in the Galatian Christian communities to become circumcised in order to obey God adequately for the purpose of obtaining eternal life. As I have mentioned, they think that belief in Jesus is fine, but following the religious system of the Mosaic Covenant is the only adequate ticket into the Kingdom of God. Thus, any Gentile, who does not become circumcised, will also lose his right to attend church and worship God and Jesus with these Jewish Christians.

This is why Paul characterizes these Jewish Christians the way he does in Galatians 4:17 –

[Galatians 4:17](#) They eagerly seek you, not commendably, but they wish to shut you out so that you will seek them.

The goal of the false Christians is to “shut [people] out” of the worldwide community of believers and to intimate them into “seek[ing]” to be with only them in their exclusive club of living according to the delusion that they are worshiping God properly, when they actually are committed to rebelling against God and will incur His eternal condemnation.

This is similar to the Roman Catholic Church, which forbids non-Catholics from taking communion within their church buildings. Unless a person obeys the religious system of Roman Catholicism, this organization does not consider him qualified to worship God properly. Paul would vehemently object to this mentality just as much as he is to that of the Jews who consider their outward, religious actions in the same way.

Consequently, an unfortunate consequence of not honestly and completely facing into our sinfulness (and therefore into the truth of God’s grace) is that we are so insecure that we demand that other people become just like us in our beliefs, values, goals, purposes, and actions. This is the only way that we can feel good about ourselves. We are so discontented with ourselves that we can find no fulfillment in our own personal strengths and abilities as God has designed us and grants us by His initiating and independent grace. Therefore, we will not allow other people to be different from us, and we will not allow them to be their own persons. We do not respect their individuality, design, and purpose as their Creator has granted them, even as we might claim to worship God.

As a result, if people do not embrace our beliefs and religious actions, we treat them with anger, scorn, and contempt. They are clearly not worthy of our respect, and we feel entitled to force them into submission to our beliefs, values, and conduct by intimidating and browbeating them. Plus, we try to stop them from expressing their ideas, and we threaten to eliminate and ostracize them from our social and/or religious gatherings and communities, even from our families. This is the classic behavior of narcissistic and self-righteous people, such as those whom Paul is opposing in his letter to the Galatians, who make themselves the measure of their reality and of their morality. Whatever they believe is absolutely correct, and anyone who differs is absolutely wrong. And whatever they do is absolutely good, and anyone who disagrees is absolutely evil.

No wonder Paul exhorts his Christian readers in Ephesians 4:32 –

[Ephesians 4:32](#) Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in the Messiah also has forgiven you.

And Peter urges Christians in 1 Peter 3:15 –

[1 Peter 3:15](#) ...always to be ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and fear [of God].