

THE GLAD TIDINGS OF CHRIST

by Charles Stanley

Charles Stanley's exposition of Galatians examining the apostle Paul's resistance to false teachings that would bind believers to the law, showing how divine guidance preserved the gospel of grace.

5 Chapters

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2. Galatians 1

Galatians 1

We would now ask the reader's attention to the defence of the gospel of Christ in the Epistle of Paul to the Galatians. It would be difficult to name a subject of greater importance at the present time. It is well for us that God permitted the perverters of that gospel to seek to overthrow the doctrine of the grace of Christ at the very beginning, so that we might have the answer of the Spirit of God in the inspired letters of the apostles. With the apostle that gospel, as revealed to him, was perfect, complete; whatever was added to it disfigured and spoiled it. Christ filled his soul, and all else that man sought to add to it was of Satan. This explains his indignation. What would be the feelings of some master sculptor, who, having finished an exquisite bust or figure, finds others adding to his work an additional eye or hand, and thus for ever spoiling his figure? Picture his indignation. Or a watch manufacturer has finished a most perfect chronometer, made on such principles that it will keep correct time to the decimal of a second in a year. He finds some man, who does not understand the delicacy of the movements, actually adding, say even only one additional wheel; and, behold, the chronometer is spoiled. What would be the feelings of the manufacturer? Far deeper the indignation of Paul, and for a very grave reason. Another beautiful marble bust might be executed; another chronometer might be made; but if the glad tidings of the Christ be perverted, there is no other way of salvation. A marble bust is for this world; a chronometer is for time: but salvation is for a never-ending eternity.

Now the absolute perfection of the gospel of Christ consists in this-that it is wholly of God, and that which is of God must be complete. This is the first point he proves. And in order to do so, he shows that he has not received his apostleship as God's messenger, either from man, or through or by man. Neither had he received the message of the gospel from man. In this he stands in peculiar, but important contrast to many preachers. Many professedly take the place of being of men, and will tell you they have received their message and authority by apostolic succession from Peter, who they say was bishop of Rome. With Paul it was the reverse of all this. "Paul, an apostle (not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised Him from the dead), and all the brethren which are with me."

He had never been ordained by the apostles, nor had he derived anything from them. He was what men now call a layman, yet an apostle by Jesus Christ and God the Father. To him this was enough. We shall see the importance of these facts shortly. His salutation is very beautiful, and contains the foundation of his glad tidings. "Grace be to you, and peace, from God the Father, and from our Lord Jesus Christ." All flows to them, from God as Father, and Jesus as Lord. The free, unmerited favour of the Father, perfect, immutable peace must that be which was made by the blood of the cross, and thus flows to us-the very peace of God. It was from our Lord Jesus Christ also, "who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father: to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen."

It is most important to see these two parts in the atonement of Jesus our Lord, as the Substitute for our sins. Not only did He thus offer Himself, but this was according to the will of God the Father: as it is written in the volume of the book, "Lo, I come to do thy will, o God." Expiation for our sins must be made; but God so loved as to give His beloved Son to be the holy victim. "He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed." Yes, He gave Himself for our sins. "And the Lord [Jehovah] hath laid on him the iniquity of us all," according to the will of God our Father. "Neither was any deceit in his mouth. Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin"- Then did He cry as in the psalm, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" To deny the true atoning sacrifice of our Lord Jesus Christ, according to the will of God, is to deny Christianity; and the crowds that are denying it sadly prove that they are not Christians. No doubt the false gospel, introduced by false brethren in the assemblies of Galatia, has led to this.

Let us, then, hold faster than ever this foundation-truth, that the Lord Jesus Christ offered Himself for our sins, according to the will of God and our Father. Is not this the eternal rock on which our souls rest? The Jews, with all their boasting of the law, were still of the evil world, or age. But through the death of Jesus believers were delivered from it, just as Israel were a figure of this, when, after the killing of the paschal lamb, they were delivered from Egypt. What grace in Christ to become the Lamb! Well might the apostle say, with holy indignation: "I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel, which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ." To alter it was evidently to pervert it; and the least addition to it, or taking from it, was to alter it. Would not a son feel indignant if, after his parent's death, he found some solicitor had been tampering with his father's will? Could there be any addition made to it after the death of the testator? An estate in this world might be, and often would be, lost, if such tampering with wills were allowed after death. But what is this to the momentous issues of perverting the gospel of Christ-the righteousness of God established by the death of Jesus for our sins-the glory of God-the eternal happiness of man, his justification in the sight of God? The apostle, grasping the infinite consequences of such a perversion, says, "But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which ye have received, let him be accursed." So deeply does he feel this that he again repeats it.

Mark, there could be no addition to that gospel which he had preached; it is complete. So much was involved, and such his love to men, that he, with holy indignation, says, Let the perverter who preaches another, which is not another, be accursed. There cannot be any other glad tidings. No doubt, if Paul preached any other, he would please men, as we see at this day; but he would not be the servant of Christ. In faithfulness, then, we must conclude that the vast numbers now who are preaching another gospel than that which Paul preached, are not the servants of Christ.

What gave the apostle this divine certainty? Let him tell us. He says, "But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ." How men do delight to go to the fathers for teaching and authority; and they say, the more ancient, the nearer the truth. But here is a man in direct contact with the Lord Himself after His ascension to glory. He received his gospel by direct revelation from the Lord, without the intervention of a single person. How is it that men do not desire to come, and hear, and believe his words? No doubt the answer is found in John 3 : "And

men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil."

What an immense privilege to have the very words of one taught by the revelation of Jesus Christ! The apostle enlarges on this. He appeals to his own history as a Jew. Beyond measure he had persecuted the church of God, and wasted it. He had been exceeding zealous of the traditions of his fathers. Never was there a more zealous ritualist. But it was the good pleasure of God, who separated him from his mother's womb, and called him by His grace, he says, "To reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen." Did he need to go up to Jerusalem to receive apostolic ordination, or even apostolic instruction? Not for a moment did he dream of such a thing. He says, "Immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood: neither went I up to Jerusalem to them which were apostles before me." Thus he carefully proves that he had nothing to do with apostolic authority, teaching, or succession. Well did the Spirit know all that would come in afterwards through the pretensions of men. Thus went forth this servant and messenger of Christ into Arabia. Then it was three years before he went up to Jerusalem to see Peter, and abode with him fifteen days. He says, "But other of the apostles saw I none, save James, the Lord's brother." So important does he feel the establishing of this matter, that he solemnly asserts, "Now the things which I write unto you, behold, before God, I lie not." Afterwards he departed into Syria and Cilicia. In the next chapter we shall find it was fourteen years after this that he went up to Jerusalem again. Thus, for twenty-one years did he preach the gospel of the grace of Christ, just as he had received it by direct revelation from the Lord. What mighty signs and wonders God had wrought by him during those years! What numbers of souls had been "turned to God from dumb idols, to serve the living and true God; and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come." Had he not witnessed the power of God through the foolishness of preaching the cross of Christ? And now had false brethren introduced something in addition to the gospel of Christ, the perfect, complete glad tidings he had preached? Yes, and they thus trouble these dear souls he so tenderly loved, and evidently they perverted the gospel of Christ.

Let us inquire, then, most diligently what this was they sought to add to the glad tidings revealed to Paul by the Lord. One word before we proceed. Is the grace of Christ, in giving Himself for our sins, a matter of as deep interest to you as it was to Paul? Or are you neither cold nor hot about it, or Him who died, the Just for the unjust? We are deeply impressed with the solemn fact, that, with the crowd of professors, the atoning death of Christ is of so little or no moment. This is the most solemn and striking sign of the times. May the Lord use our meditations on this epistle for the stirring up of our souls to the importance of this great foundation-truth.

3. Galatians 2

Galatians 2

We will now pursue our inquiries as to what it was that the false brethren sought to introduce, so as to mar the glad tidings of Christ. A comparison of this chapter with Acts 15 will greatly help us to understand this deeply important question. Here we see the inward exercise of the apostle's heart, guided, too, by the Holy Ghost, for the safety of the gospel. He says, "Then fourteen, years after I went up again to Jerusalem . and I went up by revelation." There was no uncertainty in his own mind, he well understood the object of these false brethren -"to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage." Paul was so clear, and had the Lord's mind so distinctly, that he declares those at Jerusalem added nothing to him in conference. Yea, so clear was he about it, that he took Titus, uncircumcised as he was, with him; that is, with him the question was decided beforehand, the taking of Titus proved it to be so. In Acts 15 we have the outward facts of the conference. And the conference decides exactly as Paul had decided beforehand, which must be so when guided by the Holy Ghost. The Gentile believers were not to be placed under the bondage of the law - the very bondage the false brethren sought to introduce. Titus was not compelled to be circumcised, and the work of the apostle Paul was fully owned to be of God. Thus did God, by the decision of the assembly, settle the matter in peace, and with one accord.

It did not follow, however, that Satan ceased to seek to destroy the gospel of the grace of God. Nay, in his next attempt (would you have thought it?) he uses the very apostle of the circumcision to compromise the gospel. Paul has to say, "But when Peter was come to Antioch, I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed." What need we have, as he himself says afterwards, to be kept by the power of God! At first Peter acted according to the liberty and grace of God. He did not regard anything as unclean which the Lord had cleansed; he ate with the Gentiles. But when certain came from James-that is, from Jerusalem, where evidently the superiority of Judaism still sadly asserted itself - he withdrew, and separated himself. This led others to dissemble - the gospel was in jeopardy. The Gentile Christians had Christ, but Peter was acting as if that were not enough; there must be something besides Christ, or he could not eat with them. This was terrible. Now mark, Paul did not bow to him as the pope, or chief bishop of the church, but withstands him to the face.

Thus the gospel is not of man; it is not of Peter; it is not of Paul: it is of God. And God greatly overruled this fault of Peter, in bringing out for us this blessed defence of His truth. The place of the Jew who had been under law is thus fully examined: "Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified." The Jews had been seeking righteousness by works for many centuries. They could not find it; they could not acquire it. They were still guilty, under death and condemnation. They had had to give up that by which they could not be justified. They had

believed in Jesus Christ that they might be justified-accounted righteous in Him. How simple this is; but is it also true of the reader? Very likely you have been brought up as a Jew, that is, seeking to acquire righteousness by works of law. Have you not? Have you not hoped to do this or that, and at last hoped you might be justified? Have you found this cannot be, that you are still guilty, nothing but sin, and according to the holy law of God, He must condemn you? Is there no escape for your soul on the ground of the law-guilty and condemned? Now this is just what the believing Jews had found to be their case. And they had given up all hope of ever being saved or justified by the law; they believed in Christ, they had found righteousness in Him. Have you? Can you say, "Having been justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ"? Now they had thus been led to give up the law, even the Jews, who had been under it as a means of attaining unto righteousness. They were accounted righteous by faith in Jesus Christ. But if they were still accounted, found sinners-as Peter's conduct implied-not fit to eat with, it was really making Christ a minister of sin; for it was through Christ they had given up the law as a means of seeking to be righteous. For if we preach again the law, or build it again, we make it appear that we have been sad transgressors in destroying it as a means of righteousness, even by preaching Christ. Was it not, then, a serious thing to thus mar and corrupt the glad tidings of salvation through Jesus Christ, by seeking to introduce the law again, as something additional or superior to Christ? But now the apostle calls attention to one thing, as to the law, which is greatly overlooked. He says, "For I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God." The claims-the most holy claims-of God had come upon him with such force and power, that they overwhelmed him with death. As a responsible man there was nothing but death for him, and to him. God so holy, and I so bad-not an atom of good in me as a responsible man. Oh, what needed distress and death this brings! Paul accepted this fully, death to himself, that he might live to God. Now, apart from Christ this could not be, he could not live; there could only be death, no life. Hence he says, "I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." Can you say, "I am crucified with Christ"? Every claim on me as a responsible man has been met in that death. I am dead with Him. There is an end of 'I'. Yes, the claims of a holy God have been fully met; yet I live; yet not I, Christ liveth in me. Oh, have we learnt this end of the abominable old 'I' in the cross of Christ? It is also blessedly true that He bare our sins in His own body on the tree. But here the great point is the end of old self, the vile old man; and the new 'I', the new life in Christ. Death has had its full power according to the claims of God, and yet I live in Christ. Have you thus come to the end of yourself? Is it now, "not I, but Christ"? This is not only so as to judgment due to us, but the same precious Son of God is the blessed object of sustaining faith. "I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me."

Oh, how unspeakably blessed! We have passed through death with Him into a life where all of the vile old self is reckoned behind, and where Christ is now our life, our all. And now He is the one object of our hearts-the living, loving Jesus, "who loved me, and gave himself for me." May we thus individually know Him, and feed on His matchless, infinite love!

All this is the true grace of God. We do not set it aside, surely. Is it not all the free favour, the grace of God? Do you say, But now, having Christ, must I not seek righteousness by the law, as a rule of that life which I now have? The answer is very plain. "If righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain." Is it not clear that if we are seeking righteousness by law, or by any means, we

evidently have not found it? Did you ever see a person seeking a thing he had found? If I have found both the righteous judgment due to me, and complete justification, acceptance in perfect righteousness in Christ, how can I seek it in the law, where we have seen it never could be found? The soul, then, that seeks righteousness by works of law has given up Christ; for if he has Christ, he is justified from, all things, is accounted righteous before God, through the redemption in Christ Jesus. Hence there are thousands who, whilst they profess to believe in Christ, yet have no peace, no rest of soul and heart, by faith in God. If they are seeking righteousness by works of law, it must be thus. If a man supposes he can attain to righteousness by the law, he has neither learnt his own vileness, nor yet the overwhelming claims of the holy law of God. It has never come with death to his conscience; neither has he, as even the believing Jews who had been under it did, given it up entirely as a means of ever attaining to righteousness. And if he has not given it up, but is still under it-still seeking righteousness by works of law-then to him Christ has died in vain. If such should be the state of the reader, may the Lord use this paper in awakening him to these solemn, eternal realities.

Well, another says, I have known what it was for the holy claims of God to overwhelm me as a sinner. I long sought righteousness by trying to keep the law. I found it all in vain. At last the Holy Spirit opened my eyes to see Jesus, and to believe on Jesus Christ. I am justified by faith, and have peace with God. I would just ask you this question: Must there not be a holy walk now? Ah, that is another matter, and just the point we shall find brought out in this epistle. Indeed, let us remember the opening statement as to our Lord Jesus Christ. It is, that He not only gave Himself for our sins, but also that He might deliver us from this present evil age, according to the will of God our Father. Whilst there is the gracious provision, "If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous;"-yes, He is still our righteousness- "and he is the propitiation for our sins." (1 John 2:1-2.) Yet the very mark of a true child of God is, that he doth not practise sin, for he that is born of God cannot sin; that is his very nature as born of God. (1 John 3:1-9.) Let it, however, be well understood that this cannot be accomplished by being under law, for the law finds nothing in the flesh but sin.

Now, as this is such a practical and deeply important question, and as both sides of it are fully opened out in this Epistle of the Galatians, we propose to examine how there cannot be, and how there can be, a walk of holiness. We shall consider in our next, if the Lord will, why the Galatians were so foolish, so senseless, in listening to those who would teach them to seek righteousness by works of law.

4. Galatians 3

Galatians 3

"O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified, among you?" Every word of scripture is important. "Who hath bewitched you?" How little they had been aware that those false brethren who had turned their eyes from Jesus Christ crucified, to something else, were under the power of witchcraft. That is, that they were the ministers of Satan, under the power and guidance of a false, evil spirit. To Paul it was either this witchcraft or the Spirit of God. Is it not the same thing at this day? If we test every religious movement around, it will be found to be either witchcraft, that is, the power and leading of an evil spirit-a demon; or the power and guidance of the Holy Spirit. Is not everything around of Satan, or of God? Whatever takes the eye from Jesus crucified for us, however highly esteemed among men, is the work of a demon. How much then is there that is the direct work of Satan in Christendom! What infidelity and what superstition!

If then the believing Jews had given up the law as a means of justification, or righteousness, and found all in a dead and risen Christ, was it not utterly senseless for the Galatian Christians, who never had been under the law, to allow demons to use men to take away Christ crucified from them? In applying this, however, to the present day, we must remember, that the great mass of professing Christians are under much of the direct influence of these evil spirits, through false teaching. If men knew it, they would shrink in alarm from many who profess to be ministers of Christ. Is not the law put in the place of Christ for righteousness, instead of souls rejoicing in eternal redemption? Is not the law portrayed before their eyes, and they kept in continued bondage, crying for mercy? "O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you?"

"This only would I learn of you, Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?" Thus could Paul speak to them. But can he thus speak to you? Professing Christians, have ye received the Spirit? If so, why those continued repetitions that ye may receive the Holy Ghost? Now as the ministration of the Spirit, the indwelling of the Holy Ghost, is the power for a holy walk-that by which a holy walk can be, in contrast with the ministration of the law by which a holy life and walk cannot be-it will be seen that this point is of the very greatest importance. Christ crucified had been set before the Galatians. They had by faith in that sacrifice received the Holy Ghost; whilst all persons now who have the law set before them, are invariably uncertain as to having received the Spirit at all. The vast numbers who even say they have received the Spirit when baptised, yet declare their uncertainty as to this by continuing to utter prayers that they may do so. We therefore solemnly ask, Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed? If you have, assuredly you cannot say it was by ordinances, or works of law; but as the apostle says, "by the hearing of faith." We now go a step farther to such as have received the Spirit by the hearing of faith: "Are ye so foolish, having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?" Have ye found complete ruin in sin, and nothing but condemnation in law, and now complete righteousness in the accomplished crucifixion of Jesus Christ? And by faith in Him have ye

received the Spirit, and thus infinite power for a holy walk? What! will ye be so foolish as to turn back from Christ, and the Spirit, and be made perfect by the law-that by which those under it could never attain to righteousness? But is not this the folly of the mass around? If it is not your case, reader, it is a marvel of mercy. It was this eternal redemption through the cross of Christ that was then and is now the offence. Give that up, and go back to ordinances or the law, to perfect that which is begun, and immediately the effect of the cross ceases. For this they had suffered much. The witness of the Spirit, too, both in ministry and miracles, was not by works of law, but by the hearing of faith.

Now be it observed that it is God who is thus speaking to us, by the apostle. We are assured the Galatians had not received the Spirit by sacramental ordinances, or by works of law, but by the hearing of faith. He appeals to this as a fact.

He now goes back long before the law or any ordinances were given, and appeals to the way God justified Abraham. "Even as Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him for righteousness." And this was the very principle in which God promised, and purposed to justify the heathen. "And the scripture foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed. So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham."

Most assuredly Abraham was not justified by the ordinance of circumcision, for it was given afterwards as a seal of the righteousness he had, being uncircumcised. (Romans 6:11 .) Neither could it be by works of law, for the law was not then given. No, he believed God, and righteousness was reckoned unto him. If we believe God, that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead, who was delivered for our offences and was raised again for our justification-righteousness is reckoned unto us. We are justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. "So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham." Does it not follow then that the great numbers in this day who are not of faith, but seeking righteousness by ordinances, and works of law, are not blessed? are not saved? Think of the great preachers who are rejecting justification by faith in God, and putting ordinances, sacraments, ritual, works of law, in the place of Christ, for righteousness. What is the answer of the word of God as to such, and all they deceive? Is the blessing of justification limited to those who believe God as Abraham did? Yes. "For as many as are of the works of the law, are under the curse;" and the proof is self-evident: "for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things written in the law to do them." To be on that principle, "of the works of the law," is of necessity to be under the curse; for we are guilty. Now God has intervened in the gift of His Son, and presented Him as the object of faith; to go back to ordinances, and law, is thoroughly to disbelieve God, and seek to stand on a ground before Him, on which it is impossible to be justified, and have peace with God.

Now all this must be important even for a holy walk, or it would not be so fully opened up and explained to us. Yes, God by the Spirit explains to us, "That no man is justified by the law in the sight of God , it is evident: for The just shall live by faith." Now we have seen that Christ crucified is the object of faith. Men would put the law as the object of faith; would hang it up before your eyes as such, "And the law is not of faith : but the man that doeth them shall live in them." The law knows nothing of believing, but doing. Its demands are most just, but man is a guilty sinner, and therefore it can only curse him. Could there be a greater proof than this? "Christ hath redeemed us

from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree." Would you pay a thousand pounds for a poor Turkish slave in order immediately after to put him into that bondage again? Think then of the price of the redemption, of the Jews, who had been under the curse of the law. Could that redemption possibly be in order to put either them back again under law, or to put us Gentiles there who had never been under its curse, though under sin and condemnation? No. That blessed eternal redemption was that we might be made partakers of the blessing of Abraham, "That we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith." Nothing can be more clear than that the Spirit, who is the power of a holy walk, was not received by the works of law, but by the hearing of faith. This leads us to the all-important distinction between promise and law. "Now to Abraham and to his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ." It was God Himself that first promised unconditionally to Abraham, "I will bless thee. and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed," It was God Himself who confirmed this absolute promise when Isaac had been received in figure from the dead. "By myself have I sworn, saith the Lord,. that in blessing I will bless thee. And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed" (Genesis 12; Genesis 22). Not only did the receiving of Isaac from the dead point to Christ raised from the dead, but we have the inspired words, "And to thy seed, which is Christ." Since then it is the promise and oath of God, nothing can possibly disannul it or set it aside. Has God spoken and shall He not make it good? Nay, we shall soon see that God has made the promise good and steadfast to all who believe.

It is clear then that the law which was given 430 years after the promise, "cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect." The inheritance cannot be of both; if it be of law, then it is no more of promise: "but God gave it to Abraham by promise." Mark, beloved reader, your salvation cannot be partly by the promise of God, confirmed in Christ, and partly by your own works of law. It must be by faith, or works; it cannot be by both. You might ask then why was it given, "Wherefore then serveth the law? It was added, because of [or, for the sake of] transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made." The whole question of sin and righteousness must be fully brought out. There was sin and death before; but the true character of God's righteous claims and man's sin, manifested in all its rebellion against God, must be manifested as transgression. This was the actual effect of the law. Righteousness was required, but never found in man until the Seed came. So that your salvation must be absolutely of grace, free unmerited favour, "that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe." What a gospel this is, so suited to lost and ruined man. Now think of that promise of God; think how it has been confirmed in Christ Jesus; and if you are a believer it is given to you: yes, to all who believe. Oh, beware of evil spirits and ministers of Satan, that would rob you of this precious gospel of Christ. The law had brought out sin in open transgression; all are now concluded under sin, that they should be condemned for ever? No, that the very steadfast promise of God, by faith of Jesus Christ, might be given to them that believe.

5. Galatians 4

Galatians 4

"But the scripture has concluded all under sin." Yes, all, both those who were not under the law, and those who were under it, but who never kept it. All are concluded under sin, and there is no further need to test man. God hath announced in the scriptures His conclusion about all men. All are guilty, all are under sin. Is this, then, that all may be justly condemned? Oh, wondrous grace! the very opposite. "That the promise, by faith of Jesus Christ, might be given to them that believe." Man had failed, whether under law, or not, but the promise can never fail, as we have seen; that depends, not on man, but on God-yea, God hath confirmed the promise in Christ.

We must just here notice a very common mistake. Frequently this scripture is misquoted, as though it said that the law is our schoolmaster, to bring us unto Christ. (Galatians 3:23-25 .) Bear in mind that the word "we" refers to the Jews; and "ye" is as distinctly applied to the Gentiles, who had never been under the law. Thus, as to the Jews, "before faith came we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed. Wherefore the law was [not is] our schoolmaster unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster." Now, to alter all this, and apply it now to us, the Gentiles, is to deny that faith is come-yea, in effect to deny that Christ is come, and to go back to the schoolmaster, as if Christ had still to come, and deliver us from him. It is to set aside the true gospel altogether; and yet how many do it! It was the state of the Jews before Christ came, and until He came; and after He came they could be no longer on that ground. There was no further need to be there, for the law had only proved them guilty, and now they were shewn the need they had of redemption. Can we, then, as believers be in that condition of bondage and guilt? No! for, turning now to the believers in Galatia, and surely to us, he says, "For ye are all the children of God, by faith in Christ Jesus." Children are not slaves in bondage.

Let us dwell a little on this part of the glad tidings: the relationship of children. We will take the scripture just as we find it. Mark, we are not children of God by baptism, but by faith in Christ Jesus. This is important, as men do so love to teach whatever is contrary to scripture. Never does the scripture teach that we are children of God by baptism, but by faith in Christ Jesus.

"For as many of you as have been baptised into Christ, have put on Christ." This is a remarkable confirmation of his doctrine. "As many of you"-that is, you Gentiles who are the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus-"as have been baptised into [or unto] Christ." In baptism, Judaism or heathenism had been given up, and the eye of faith directed solely to the privileges in Christ, to Christ Himself. Did not this shew the folly of going back to that which had been so solemnly given up? Take a case: a Jew, or say a Mohammedan, believes on the Lord Jesus Christ. He is baptised unto Christ. Would he not thus give up Mohammedanism? Could he be a Christian and a Mohammedan at the same time? No, as many believers as have been baptised, whether they were Jews, heathens, or Mohammedans, have left all behind, and "have put on Christ." All this shews the folly of going back to any of these; for "there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither

bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus." This is the most wondrous conclusion possible. All believers are one in Him to whom the promise is confirmed, on the ground of His resurrection from the dead, as seen in the figure of Isaac received from the dead. Oh, then, let us for ever renounce the great delusion that we are children of God by baptism, and hold fast the truth, that if we are believers, we are children of God by faith in Christ Jesus ; and that all believers have given up for ever the religions of the flesh, whether as Jews or Gentiles, and are baptised unto Christ; that all believers are one in Christ Jesus. And further, as the promise was confirmed to Christ, "if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise."

We must remember that nothing can change or set aside heirship according to promise, because the promise is entirely of God. This is wholly of grace, the free favour of God. But then there must be righteousness as well as grace, and the law had proved man a sinner, even those who were under it. Then could man, whilst under the law, and proved guilty, be brought into the relationship of heir of God? No, as is plainly said, "Even so we [Jews], when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world." They could not be brought to enjoy communion with the Father. Redemption was needed to bring them, as to bring us, into the enjoyment of sonship, as is now explained. "But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons." Here we get the very opposite of the law. The law demanded obedience from man; but here all is of, and from, God. Man under law required redemption, and God sent His Son to redeem them that were under the law. Then this proves that if man could be placed under law again, he would again require a Redeemer, or something to take that Redeemer's place: a human priesthood, with its oft-repeated sacrifices, that really cannot help man, if under law, for righteousness. Oh, that our hearts may be bowed to this stupendous fact, that "God sent his Son." How different this is from the law! Not in judgment enforcing the curse of the law, but to bear it in infinite love. It is altogether a new revelation of God. It is God's reply to Satan's lie in paradise. When man had listened to the woman's voice, when he had eaten of the forbidden tree-yea, when the whole world was sunk in sin, Jew and Gentile, through Adam's sin and their own-then what was the end of it all? "God sent forth His Son." Had sin come in by the woman? He was made of a woman. Had man utterly failed to keep the law? He was made under the law. The Holy One of God thus took the sinner's place, and as the sinless One, there He glorified God. For what did God send Him forth? "To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons." Thus the Jews, who had the law, and were under it, and were the natural seed of Abraham, needed the expiatory death of the Son of God as much as we Gentiles; -and God sent forth His Son for that very purpose-to redeem them. They could by no other means receive the adoption of sons. Was not this wholly of God? And has not the Son accomplished the blessed, eternal will of the Father? Thus believers, whether Jews or Gentiles, are by redemption brought into this new but eternal relationship of sons of God.

"And because ye [believing Gentiles] are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father." Still all of God. God sent forth His Son to redeem. "God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father." Thus the new relationship is entirely of God. The poor blind heart of man will not believe this. No, it takes away all credit from man. He hopes to be able to do something, or that God will do something, to take away his sins,

and make him His child, and he will pray for God to give him His Holy Spirit; but what is already done never enters his mind. The unbelief of Christendom is in direct contradiction of these two truths: God sent forth His Son; God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son. Yes, God hath sent forth His Son. That blessed One, as made of a woman, made under the law, has accomplished redemption. He has done the will of God in our eternal redemption. And God, having received Him up to glory, He hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts as believers, and hence the blessed cry, Abba, Father. Yes, "because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father." And how did we become children? "By faith in Christ Jesus."

All is thus of God, and all so real. The Holy Ghost is sent forth into our hearts, the proof that God has accepted the redemption-price, and also the proof that we are the children of God: "because ye are sons." Yes, this is at once the relationship in which the believer stands—a relationship that never can end, because so entirely of God. "Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ." Wherefore "thou art" that is, it is now a personal relationship in which the individual believer stands. Oh, reader, is it true that thou art no more a servant—no more on the ground of probation under law—but a son, an heir of God through Christ? Hath God sent forth the Spirit of His Son into thy heart? Canst thou say, Abba, Father? Do dwell on these two facts; God sent forth His Son; God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son. We surely had nothing to do with either of these acts. But what a revelation of God! Just when man was utterly lost, shut up under sin, no power to deliver himself, then God sent forth His Son to redeem the lost, and to bring us from bondage to the happy position of sons. And then, because sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, Abba, Father. And are we to deny all this, and put ourselves under law or bondage? Are we to return back to the beggarly elements of the world, to do even as the heathen do, observe days, and months, and years? When the Galatians did this, it made the apostle stand in doubt whether they were Christians. And what shall we say in this day, when these very beggarly elements, these very heathen festive days, under new names, mingled with unbelief and doubts, and striving to get saved by works of law—when these things have taken the place of pure Christianity? Do not all these things leave the soul wretched and uncertain? It is then no longer the love of God in sending His Son to redeem us; no longer the sweet certainty that we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins. Instead of the Spirit of His Son sent down, and dwelling in our hearts, and the holy enjoyment of our known relation as sons, a long life is spent in unbelieving prayer for the Spirit, just as though He had not been sent; and instead of liberty, bondage and unbelief. Is not this the state of thousands? Reader, is it yours? This must be the case where law and grace are mingled together. Nay, it is not to mingle merely, it is to deny, to lose, the standing of one justified by Christ. As is shewn in our chapter, the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the freewoman. It cannot be both—of the flesh and of the Spirit. It must be either what we are to God (but then, all is lost, for man has been tested, and found guilty); or it must be entirely what God is to us in grace—grace that sent forth His Son to accomplish our eternal redemption. That redemption is accomplished; God hath sent forth the witness of it even into our hearts, the Spirit of His Son, crying, Abba, Father.

Oh, let us, then, hold fast the glad tidings of the gospel of Christ. There will be hatred and persecution, "as then, he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the

Spirit, even so is it now." In our next we hope to notice the importance of standing fast in this liberty, and its effect on, our walk.

6. Galatians 5-6

Galatians 5; Galatians 6

Believers, then, are to "stand fast, therefore, in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage." The believing Jew stood thus delivered from the curse of the law, accounted righteous before God, by the faith of Jesus Christ: no longer a bond slave, but now a son, an heir of God. The believing Gentiles are brought into the same blessed relationship of children of God. And because sons, God had sent forth the Spirit of his Son into their hearts, crying, Abba, Father. Both were to stand in this happy liberty, where all was of God, on the principle of promise. Now, to go back to seek righteousness by the law, was to be entangled again in bondage. Paul assured them, "that if ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing. For I testify again to every man that is circumcised, that he is a debtor to do the whole law." Does not this, then, shew the fearful danger of seeking to mingle Christ and law together? And yet what is more commonly done? We have seen man fully tested under law for fifteen centuries, and found only guilty, whilst the law demanded perfect obedience; man a debtor to do the whole law, yet none righteous, no, not one. The scripture hath concluded all under sin.

Nothing, then, but pure grace, the free favour of God in Jesus Christ, could suit and meet man's condition. How fully the claims of law, of God, and the deepest needs of man, have been met by Christ. Is it not so, beloved reader, in your case? Have you not in vain sought righteousness by trying to meet the holy claims of God? Now if God takes you up on this ground, and asks, What about those sins, can you answer Him for one in a thousand? No; if you try to wash yourself in snow water; if you try to be clear by ordinances, let the light of God shine into your conscience, and you are like a man coming out of a dirty ditch. The more you compare yourself by the holy law of God, the more you bow down your head in shame.

Now look at Christ. Look back, and see that full, infinite atonement for your sins. Look in the sepulchre-it is empty. Look up above the highest heavens; He is there, raised from among the dead for your justification. God hath raised Him from the dead. It is quite true you could not acquire righteousness by the law, but Christ Jesus of God "is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption." (1 Corinthians 1:30 .) Oh, weigh these words; they are God's words. It is of God that Christ Jesus is made unto us all we need, and all that God could bestow upon us in Christ. Have you found that you cannot make your peace with God by works of law? He has made peace by the blood of the cross. And mark, what He has done is as eternal as it is perfect-eternal life, eternal salvation, eternal redemption. And, believer, all is yours.

But, mere professor, beware! Are you still seeking righteousness by works of law? Then hearken: "Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace." The proclamation of grace is this: "Be it known unto you, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: and by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses." Have you, as a lost sinner, believed this message from God? Then plainly your sins are forgiven, you are justified.

And as clearly, if you are still seeking to be justified by the law of Moses, you do not believe God, and thus Christ shall profit you nothing. And mark farther, if you are justified, accounted righteous before God, by faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, then, as to practical righteousness, it is not through the law you wait for the hope of righteousness, but "we through the Spirit wait for the hope of righteousness by faith"-the coming glory. This brings us now to the two distinct principles of righteousness of walk-the walk of the justified. The one principle, so strongly denounced here, would place the believer "under the Law," as is said, as the rule of life, or walk. The other, according to this scripture, declares, "But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law." Now this is a most serious question, as every true Christian earnestly desires a righteous, holy walk before God and man-not that he may become a child of God, justified from all things, but because he is one.

Now, what will avail, what will really serve us for a holy walk? Will the law help us? No; "For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision, but faith which worketh by love." If, then, we take the law as the rule of life, it cannot help us, as, in that case, we take the responsibility of keeping it perfectly. We fail, and it must curse us. If, on the other hand, we say we are not under it, and therefore at liberty to sin, surely that will not help us; and the flesh may take even such license. What will avail, then, for a holy walk? "Faith which worketh by love." But the law is not of faith, but on the principle of, "Do this." Just here the apostle thinks of the Galatians, and in the depths of his heart's love, he says, "Ye did run well; who did hinder you, that ye should not obey the truth?" How deeply he felt this! What would he feel now? This persuasion to put themselves under law was not of God, who had called them in grace. And how those words are fulfilled now. "A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump." Is not this leaven the established religion of Christendom? Yea, the whole lump! He would they were even cut off which troubled the Galatians. He looks up to the Lord, and has confidence. And now he returns to the subject, and warns them against license. "Brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another. For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this-"Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." To love one's neighbour is the very opposite of all lust or self-seeking.

Here, then, are the two antagonistic principles as to walk-the Spirit and the flesh. "This I say, then, walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh." The flesh is still there, and nothing can be more contrary the one to the other. "For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh, and these are contrary the one to the other; so that ye cannot [or, should not] do the things that ye would." They had received the Spirit, not by the works of law, but by the hearing of faith. They were now to walk in the Spirit. It was thus faith would work by love. The Spirit would set Christ before them. The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Spirit. It is not the flesh under law, but God the Spirit dwelling in us, bringing forth fruits that no law can condemn. The apostle does not fully develop this great truth here, as in Romans. He is chiefly occupied with their serious danger of getting under law, hence he says, "But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law." And mark, this is not now in reference to justification, but of walk. The whole question here is walk. That teaching, then, which would lead the believer under law as a rule of life, or for walk, is not of the Spirit of God, and therefore can only be of Satan. This is very solemn, and accounts for the vehemence of the apostle. It is to go back from Christ and from the Spirit to Judaism. The works of the flesh are manifest; a sad list of them is given. What a picture of the

human heart, of yours, and of the writer's! And "they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God ." And how is all this to be overcome-by being under the law? No, by walking in the Spirit; and then the fruit of the Spirit is also given. Yes, these are not the fruits of improved flesh, the old "I"; but fruits of the Spirit-"love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance." There is no law against these, surely, for they are of the Spirit.

They that are Christ's have not put the flesh under law to be tested again, but crucified it, accepted the judgment of the cross upon it, as utterly and irremediably corrupt. They do no longer reckon the old "I" to live. They have the new life, and "If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit." This deep sense of grace will avoid all vain-glory, and provoking one another, and envying one another. We are then exhorted to seek the restoration of one, should he fall, considering ourselves, lest we fall also.

There is also another principle of great moment, and that forbids all carelessness. "Be not deceived, God is not mocked; for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit, shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting." To the Christian, then, how great the privilege and the power-to walk in the Spirit, to sow to the Spirit. "As we have, therefore, opportunity, let us do good unto all, especially unto them who are of the household of faith." Precious privileges! These Judaizing teachers only wished to make a fair show in the flesh, in seeking to constrain believers to be circumcised. They did not keep the law themselves, but they delighted in persons being converted to their religion. To give up their ancient religion, and accept the cross of Christ, then, and always, brought persecution.

"But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world." The cross had fully revealed what man is. There needed no further test. It had proved what the whole world was. But it had also revealed what God is, and God is love. That cross was the end of all man's religion. It was the end of the law. But such as cling to man's religion must, and do, persecute those who have found accomplished righteousness and eternal redemption by that work on the cross. It is the greatest foolishness to the world, and especially man's religious world, to have found all I need in that One crucified between two thieves. But so it is. Surely it is well to be baptised, it is well to break bread, it is well to do the will of the Lord: "but God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." Let us behold the Lamb of God, and glory alone in Him. "For in Christ Jesus," again he repeats, "neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision"-but now mark another and important statement-" but A new creature." This is what the Christian is. "Therefore, if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new, and all things are of God." (2 Corinthians 5:17). "Created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained, that we should walk in them." (Ephesians 2:10). The divine nature, as born of God, cannot practise sin. (1 John 3:9). The flesh is not now under law, but set aside by the cross. There is no good in it under law, or not under law; neither availeth anything, "but a new creature." "And as many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God."

Thus the question for walk is this: Are we walking by the rule of the law, the flesh still being tested; or by the rule of the new creation? If the latter, it is by the power of the Holy Ghost, and according

to the gospel of Christ, the cross having utterly condemned all that is of the flesh. Thus we can truly say, "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." From Things New and Old vol.26 [1883]

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