

Homily 2 on Galatians

by St. John Chrysostom

Paul defends his Gospel and his relationship with the Apostles, arguing that he was entrusted with the Gospel of the Uncircumcision and that the Apostles gave him the right hands of fellowship.

Topics: "Justification By Faith", "Freedom From Law"

Description

John Chrysostom preaches about Paul's journey to Jerusalem, highlighting his actions by revelation and his communication of the Gospel to the Apostles. Paul's visit aimed to satisfy his accusers and confirm his preaching to the Gentiles without imposing circumcision. He emphasizes the unity between the Apostles and himself, showing that faith in Christ, not works of the Law, justifies. Paul rebukes Peter's dissimulation in Antioch to uphold the truth of the Gospel and the freedom from the Law through Christ's sacrifice. He concludes by affirming that if righteousness came through the Law, Christ's death would be in vain.

Transcript

Verse 1-2

Then after the space of fourteen years, I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, taking Titus also with me. And I went up by revelation.

His first journey was owing to his desire to visit Peter, his second, he says, arose from a revelation of the Spirit.

Ver. 2. And I laid before them the Gospel which I preach among the Gentiles, but privately before them who were of repute, lest by any means I should be running or had run in vain.

What is this, O Paul! You who neither at the beginning nor after three years would confer with the Apostles, do you now confer with them, after fourteen years are past, lest you should be running in vain? Better would it have been to have done so at first, than after so many years; and why did you run at all, if not satisfied that thou were not running in vain? Who would be so senseless as to preach for so many years, without being sure that his preaching was true? And what enhances the difficulty is, that he says he went up by revelation; this difficulty, however, will afford a solution of the former one. Had he gone up of his own accord, it would have been most unreasonable, nor is it possible that this blessed soul should have fallen into such folly; for it is himself who says, I therefore so run, as not uncertainly; so fight I, as not beating the air. 1 Corinthians 9:26 If therefore he runs, not uncertainly, how can he say, lest I should be

running, or had run, in vain? It is evident from this, that if he had gone up without a revelation, he would have committed an act of folly. But the actual case involved no such absurdity; who shall dare to still harbor this suspicion, when it was the grace of the Spirit which drew him? On this account he added the words by revelation, lest, before the question was solved, he should be condemned of folly; well knowing that it was no human occurrence, but a deep Divine Providence concerning the present and future. What then is the reason of this journey of his? As when he went up before from Antioch to Jerusalem, it was not for his own sake, (for he saw clearly that his duty was simply to obey the doctrines of Christ,) but from a desire to reconcile the contentious; so now his object was the complete satisfaction of his accusers, not any wish of his own to learn that he had not run in vain. They conceived that Peter and John, of whom they thought more highly than of Paul, differed from him in that he omitted circumcision in his preaching, while the former allowed it, and they believed that in this he acted unlawfully, and was running in vain. I went up, says he, and communicated unto them my Gospel, not that I might learn anything myself, (as appears more clearly further on,) but that I might convince these suspicious persons that I do not run in vain. The Spirit foreseeing this contention had provided that he should go up and make this communication.

Wherefore he says that he went up by revelation, and, taking Barnabas and Titus as witnesses of his preaching, communicated to them the Gospel which he preached to the Gentiles, that is, with the omission of circumcision. But privately before them who were of repute. What means privately? Rather, he who wishes to reform doctrines held in common, proposes them, not privately, but before all in common; but Paul did this privately, for his object was, not to learn or reform any thing, but to cut off the grounds of those who would fain deceive. All at Jerusalem were offended, if the law was transgressed, or the use of circumcision forbidden; as James says, You see, brother, how many thousands there are among the Jews of them which have believed; and they are informed of you, that you teach to forsake the law. Acts 21:20, et seq Since then they were offended he did not condescend to come forward publicly and declare what his preaching was, but he conferred privately with those who were of reputation before Barnabas and Titus, that they might credibly testify to his accusers, that the Apostles found no discrepancy in his preaching, but confirmed it. The expression, those that were of repute, (τοῖς δοκοῦσιν) does not impugn the reality of their greatness; for he says of himself, And I also seem (δοκῶ) to have the Spirit of God, thereby not denying the fact, but stating it modestly. And here the phrase implies his own assent to the common opinion.

Ver. 3. But not even Titus, who was with me, being a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised.

What means, being a Greek? Of Greek extraction, and not circumcised; for not only did I so preach but Titus so acted, nor did the Apostles compel him to be circumcised. A plain proof this that the Apostles did not condemn Paul's doctrine or his practice. Nay more, even the urgent representations of the adverse party, who were aware of these facts, did not oblige the Apostles to enjoin circumcision, as appears by his own words --

Ver. 4. And that because of the false brethren, privily brought in.

Here arises a very important question, Who were these false brethren? If the Apostles permitted circumcision at Jerusalem, why are those who enjoined it, in accordance with the Apostolic sentence, to be called false brethren? First; because there is a difference between commanding an act to be done, and allowing it after it is done. He who enjoins an act, does it with zeal as necessary, and of primary importance; but he who, without himself commanding it, allows another to do it who wishes yields not from a sense of its being necessary but in order to subserve some purpose. We have a similar instance, in

Paul's Epistle to the Corinthians, in his command to husbands and wives to come together again. To which, that he might not be thought to be legislating for them, he subjoins, But this I say by way of permission, not of commandment. 1 Corinthians 7:5 For this was not a judgment authoritatively given but an indulgence to their incontinence; as he says, for your incontinency. Would you know Paul's sentence in this matter? Hear his words, I would that all men were even as I myself, 1 Corinthians 7:7 in continence. And so here, the Apostles made this concession, not as vindicating the law, but as condescending to the infirmities of Judaism. Had they been vindicating the law, they would not have preached to the Jews in one way, and to the Gentiles in another. Had the observance been necessary for unbelievers, then indeed it would plainly have likewise been necessary for all the faithful. But by their decision not to harass the Gentiles on this point, they showed that they permitted it by way of condescension to the Jews. Whereas the purpose of the false brethren was to cast them out of grace, and reduce them under the yoke of slavery again. This is the first difference, and a very wide one. The second is, that the Apostles so acted in Judæa, where the Law was in force, but the false brethren, every where, for all the Galatians were influenced by them. Whence it appears that their intention was, not to build up, but entirely to pull down the Gospel, and that the thing was permitted by the Apostles on one ground and zealously practiced by the false brethren on another.

Ver. 4. Who came in privily to spy out our liberty, which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage.

He points out their hostility by calling them spies; for the sole object of a spy is to obtain for himself facilities of devastation and destruction, by becoming acquainted with his adversary's position. And this is what those did, who wished to bring the disciples back to their old servitude. Hence too appears how very contrary their purpose was to that of the Apostles; the latter made concessions that they might gradually extricate them from their servitude, but the former plotted to subject them to one more severe. Therefore they looked round and observed accurately and made themselves busybodies to find out who were uncircumcised; as Paul says, they came in privily to spy out our liberty, thus pointing out their machinations not only by the term spies, but by this expression of a furtive entrance and creeping in.

Ver. 5. To whom we gave place in the way of subjection, no, not for an hour.

Observe the force and emphasis of the phrase; he says not, by argument, but, by subjection, for their object was not to teach good doctrine, but to subjugate and enslave them. Wherefore, says he, we yielded to the Apostles, but not to these.

Ver. 5. That the truth of the Gospel might continue with you.

That we may confirm, says he, by our deeds what we have already declared by words -- namely, that the old things are passed away, behold they have become new; and that if any man is in Christ he is a new creature; 2 Corinthians 5:17 and that if you receive circumcision, Christ will profit you nothing. Galatians 5:2 In maintaining this truth we gave place not even for an hour. Then, as he was directly met by the conduct of the Apostles, and the reason of their enjoining the rite would probably be asked, he proceeds to solve this objection. This he does with great skill, for he does not give the actual reason, which was, that the Apostles acted by way of condescension and in the use of a scheme, (οικονομία) as it were; for otherwise his hearers would have been injured. For those, who are to derive benefit from a scheme should be unacquainted with the design of it; all will be undone, if this appears. Wherefore, he who is to take part in it should know the drift of it; those who are to benefit by it should not. To make my meaning more

evident, I will take an example from our present subject. The blessed Paul himself, who meant to abrogate circumcision, when he was about to send Timothy to teach the Jews, first circumcised him and so sent him. This he did, that his hearers might the more readily receive him; he began by circumcising, that in the end he might abolish it. But this reason he imparted to Timothy only, and told it not to the disciples. Had they known that the very purpose of his circumcision was the abolition of the rite, they would never have listened to his preaching, and the whole benefit would have been lost. But now their ignorance was of the greatest use to them, for their idea that his conduct proceeded from a regard to the Law, led them to receive both him and his doctrine with kindness and courtesy, and having gradually received him, and become instructed, they abandoned their old customs. Now this would not have happened had they known his reasons from the first; for they would have turned away from him, and being turned away would not have given him a hearing, and not hearing, would have continued in their former error. To prevent this, he did not disclose his reasons; here too he does not explain the occasion of the scheme, (ο■κονομ■α,) but shapes his discourse differently; thus:

Ver. 6. But from those who were reputed to be somewhat (whatsoever they were, it makes no matter to me, God accepts no man's person.)

Here he not only does not defend the Apostles, but even presses hard upon those holy men, for the benefit of the weak. His meaning is this: although they permit circumcision, they shall render an account to God, for God will not accept their persons, because they are great and in station. But he does not speak so plainly, but with caution. He says not, if they vitiate their doctrine, and swerve from the appointed rule of their preaching, they shall be judged with the utmost rigor, and suffer punishment; but he alludes to them more reverently, in the words, of those who were reputed to be somewhat, whatsoever they were. He says not, whatsoever they 'are,' but were, showing that they too had thenceforth ceased so to preach, the doctrine having extended itself universally. The phrase, whatsoever they were, implies, that if they so preached they should render account, for they had to justify themselves before God, not before men. This he said, not as doubtful or ignorant of the rectitude of their procedure, but (as I said before) from a sense of the expediency of so forming his discourse. Then, that he may not seem to take the opposite side and to accuse them, and so create a suspicion of their disagreement, he straightway subjoins this correction: for those who were reputed to be somewhat, in conference imparted nothing to me. This is his meaning; What you may say, I know not; this I know well, that the Apostles did not oppose me, but our sentiments conspired and accorded. This appears from his expression, they gave me the right hand of fellowship; but he does not say this at present, but only that they neither informed or corrected him on any point, nor added to his knowledge.

Ver. 6. For those who were reputed to be somewhat, imparted nothing to me:

That is to say, when told of my proceedings, they added nothing, they corrected nothing, and though aware that the object of my journey was to communicate with them, that I had come by revelation of the Spirit, and that I had Titus with me who was uncircumcised, they neither circumcised him, nor imparted to me any additional knowledge.

Ver. 7. But contrariwise.

Some hold his meaning to be, not only that the Apostles did not instruct him, but that they were instructed by him. But I would not say this, for what could they, each of whom was himself perfectly instructed, have learned from him? He does not therefore intend this by the expression, contrariwise, but that so far were

they from blaming, that they praised him: for praise is the contrary of blame. Some would probably here reply: Why did not the Apostles, if they praised your procedure, as the proper consequence abolish circumcision? Now to assert that they did abolish it Paul considered much too bold, and inconsistent with his own admission. On the other hand, to admit that they had sanctioned circumcision, would necessarily expose him to another objection. For it would be said, if the Apostles praised your preaching, yet sanctioned circumcision, they were inconsistent with themselves. What then is the solution? Is he to say that they acted thus out of condescension to Judaism? To say this would have shaken the very foundation of the economy. Wherefore he leaves the subject in suspense and uncertainty, by the words, but of those who were reputed to be somewhat; it makes no matter to me. Which is in effect to say, I accuse not, nor traduce those holy men; they know what it is they have done; to God must they render their account. What I am desirous to prove is, that they neither reversed nor corrected my procedure, nor added to it as in their opinion defective, but gave it their approbation and assent; and to this Titus and Barnabas bear witness. Then he adds,

Ver. 7. When they saw that I had been entrusted with the Gospel of the Uncircumcision even as Peter with the Gospel of the Circumcision ,--

The Circumcision and Uncircumcision; meaning, not the things themselves, but the nations known by these distinctions; wherefore he adds,

Ver. 8. For He that wrought for Peter unto the Apostleship of the Circumcision wrought for me also unto the Gentiles.

He calls the Gentiles the Uncircumcision and the Jews the Circumcision, and declares his own rank to be equal to that of the Apostles; and, by comparing himself with their Leader not with the others, he shows that the dignity of each was the same. After he had established the proof of their unanimity, he takes courage, and proceeds confidently in his argument, not stopping at the Apostles, but advances to Christ Himself, and to the grace which He had conferred upon him, and calls the Apostles as his witnesses, saying,

Ver. 9. And when they perceived the grace that was given unto me, James and Cephas and John, they who were reputed to be pillars, gave to me and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship.

He says not when they heard, but when they perceived, that is, were assured by the facts themselves, they gave to me and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship. Observe how he gradually proves that his doctrine was ratified both by Christ and by the Apostles. For grace would neither have been implanted, nor been operative in him, had not his preaching been approved by Christ. Where it was for the purpose of comparison with himself, he mentioned Peter alone; here, when he calls them as witnesses, he names the three together, Cephas, James, John, and with an encomium, who were reputed to be pillars. Here again the expression who were reputed does not impugn the reality of the fact, but adopts the estimate of others, and implies that these great and distinguished men, whose fame was universal, bore witness that his preaching was ratified by Christ, that they were practically informed and convinced by experience concerning it. Therefore they gave the right hands of fellowship to me, and not to me only, but also to Barnabas, that we should go unto the Gentiles, and they unto the Circumcision. Here indeed is exceeding prudence as well as an incontrovertible proof of their concord. For it shows that his and their doctrine was interchangeable, and that both approved the same thing, that they should so preach to the Jews, and he to the Gentiles. Wherefore he adds,

Ver. 9. That we should go unto the Gentiles and they unto the Circumcision.

Observe that here also he means by the Circumcision, not the rite, but the Jews; whenever he speaks of the rite, and wishes to contrast it, he adds the word uncircumcision; as when he says, For circumcision indeed profits, if you be a doer of the law; but if you be a transgressor of the law, your circumcision has become uncircumcision. Romans 2:25 And again, Neither circumcision avails any thing, nor uncircumcision. But when it is to the Jews and not to the deed that he gives this name, and wishes to signify the nation, he opposes to it not uncircumcision in its literal sense, but the Gentiles. For the Jews are the contradistinction to the Gentiles, the Circumcision to the Uncircumcision. Thus when he says above, For He that wrought for Peter into the Apostleship of the Circumcision, wrought for me also unto the Gentiles; and again, We unto the Gentiles and they unto the Circumcision, he means not the rite itself, but the Jewish nation, thus distinguishing them from the Gentiles.

Ver. 10. Only they would that we should remember the poor; which very thing I was also zealous to do.

This is his meaning: In our preaching we divided the world between us, I took the Gentiles and they the Jews, according to the Divine decree; but to the sustenance of the poor among the Jews I also contributed my share, which, had there been any dissension between us, they would not have accepted. Next, who were these poor persons? Many of the believing Jews in Palestine had been deprived of all their goods, and scattered over the world, as he mentions in the Epistle to the Hebrews, For you took joyfully the spoiling of your possessions; and in writing to the Thessalonians, 1 Thessalonians 2:14 he extols their fortitude, You became imitators of the Churches of God which are in Judæa,...for you also suffered the same thing of your own countrymen, even as they did of the Jews. And he shows throughout that those Greeks who believed were not under persecution from the rest, such as the believing Jews were suffering from their own kindred, for there is no nation of a temper so cruel. Wherefore he exercises much zeal, as appears in the Epistles to the Romans Romans 15:25-27 and Corinthians 1 Corinthians 16:1-3 that these persons should meet with much attention; and Paul not only collects money for them, but himself conveys it, as he says, But now I go unto Jerusalem ministering unto the saints, Romans 15:25 for they were without the necessaries of life. And he here shows that in this instance having resolved to assist them, he had undertaken and would not abandon it.

Having by these means declared the unanimity and harmony between the Apostles and himself, he is obliged to proceed to mention his debate with Peter at Antioch.

Ver. 11, 12. But when Cephas came to Antioch, I resisted him to the face, because he stood condemned. For before that certain came from James, he did eat with the Gentiles: but when they came, he drew back and separated himself, fearing them that were of the circumcision.

Many, on a superficial reading of this part of the Epistle, suppose that Paul accused Peter of hypocrisy. But this is not so, indeed it is not, far from it; we shall discover great wisdom, both of Paul and Peter, concealed herein for the benefit of their hearers. But first a word must be said about Peter's freedom in speech, and how it was ever his way to outstrip the other disciples. Indeed it was upon one such occasion that he gained his name from the unbending and impregnable character of his faith. For when all were interrogated in common, he stepped before the others and answered, You are the Christ, the Son of the living God. Matthew 16:16 This was when the keys of heaven were committed to him. So too, he appears to have been the only speaker on the Mount; Matthew 17:4 and when Christ spoke of His crucifixion, and the others kept silence, he said, Be it far from You. Matthew 16:22 These words evince, if not a cautious

temper, at least a fervent love; and in all instances we find him more vehement than the others, and rushing forward into danger. So when Christ was seen on the beach, and the others were pushing the boat in, he was too impatient to wait for its coming to land. John 21:7 And after the Resurrection, when the Jews were murderous and maddened, and sought to tear the Apostles in pieces, he first dared to come forward, and to declare, that the Crucified was taken up into heaven. Acts 2:14, 36 It is a greater thing to open a closed door, and to commence an action, than to be free-spoken afterwards. How could he ever dissemble who had exposed his life to such a populace? He who when scourged and bound would not bate a jot of his courage, and this at the beginning of his mission, and in the heart of the chief city where there was so much danger -- how could he, long afterwards in Antioch, where no danger was at hand, and his character had received lustre from the testimony of his actions, feel any apprehension of the believing Jews? How could he, I say, who at the very first and in their chief city feared not the Jews while Jews, after a long time and in a foreign city, fear those of them who had been converted? Paul therefore does not speak this against Peter, but with the same meaning in which he said, for they who were reputed to be somewhat, whatsoever they were, it makes no matter to me. But to remove any doubt on this point, we must unfold the reason of these expressions.

The Apostles, as I said before, permitted circumcision at Jerusalem, an abrupt severance from the law not being practicable; but when they come to Antioch, they no longer continued this observance, but lived indiscriminately with the believing Gentiles which thing Peter also was at that time doing. But when some came from Jerusalem who had heard the doctrine he delivered there, he no longer did so fearing to perplex them, but he changed his course, with two objects secretly in view, both to avoid offending those Jews, and to give Paul a reasonable pretext for rebuking him. For had he, having allowed circumcision when preaching at Jerusalem, changed his course at Antioch, his conduct would have appeared to those Jews to proceed from fear of Paul, and his disciples would have condemned his excess of pliancy. And this would have created no small offense; but in Paul, who was well acquainted with all the facts, his withdrawal would have raised no such suspicion, as knowing the intention with which he acted. Wherefore Paul rebukes, and Peter submits, that when the master is blamed, yet keeps silence, the disciples may more readily come over. Without this occurrence Paul's exhortation would have had little effect, but the occasion hereby afforded of delivering a severe reproof, impressed Peter's disciples with a more lively fear. Had Peter disputed Paul's sentence, he might justly have been blamed as upsetting the plan, but now that the one reproves and the other keeps silence, the Jewish party are filled with serious alarm; and this is why he used Peter so severely. Observe too Paul's careful choice of expressions, whereby he points out to the discerning, that he uses them in pursuance of the plan, (ο■κονομ■αζ) and not from anger.

His words are, When Cephas came to Antioch, I resisted him to the face, because he stood condemned; that is, not by me but by others; had he himself condemned him, he would not have shrunk from saying so. And the words, I resisted him to the face, imply a scheme for had their discussion been real, they would not have rebuked each other in the presence of the disciples, for it would have been a great stumblingblock to them. But now this apparent contest was much to their advantage; as Paul had yielded to the Apostles at Jerusalem, so in turn they yield to him at Antioch. The cause of censure is this, For before that certain came from James, who was the teacher at Jerusalem, he did eat with the Gentiles, but when they came he drew back and separated himself, fearing them that were of the Circumcision: his cause of fear was not his own danger, (for if he feared not in the beginning, much less would he do so then,) but their defection. As Paul himself says to the Galatians, I am afraid of you, lest by any means I have bestowed labor upon you in vain: Galatians 4:11 and again, I fear lest by any means as the serpent

beguiled Eve,...so your minds should be corrupted. 2 Corinthians 11:3 Thus the fear of death they knew not, but the fear lest their disciples should perish, agitated their inmost soul.

Ver. 13. Inasmuch that even Barnabas was carried away with their dissimulation.

Be not surprised at his giving this proceeding the name of dissimulation, for he is unwilling, as I said before, to disclose the true state of the case, in order to the correction of his disciples. On account of their vehement attachment to the Law, he calls the present proceeding dissimulation, and severely rebukes it, in order effectually to eradicate their prejudice. And Peter too, hearing this joins in the feint, as if he had erred, that they might be corrected by means of the rebuke administered to him. Had Paul reproved these Jews, they would have spurned at it with indignation, for they held him in slight esteem; but now, when they saw their Teacher silent under rebuke, they were unable to despise or resist Paul's sentence.

Ver. 14. But when I saw that they walked not uprightly according to the truth of the Gospel.

Neither let this phrase disturb you, for in using it he does not condemn Peter, but so expresses himself for the benefit of those who were to be reformed by the reproof of Peter.

Ver. 14. I said to Cephas before them all.

Observe his mode of correcting the others; he speaks before them all, that the hearers might be alarmed thereby. And this is what he says --

Ver. 14. If you, being a Jew, livest as do the Gentiles, and not as do the Jews, how do you compel the Gentiles to live as do the Jews?

But it was the Jews and not the Gentiles who were carried away together with Peter; why then does Paul impute what was not done, instead of directing his remarks, not against the Gentiles, but against the dissembling Jews? And why does he accuse Peter alone, when the rest also dissembled together with him? Let us consider the terms of his charge; If you, being a Jew, livest as do the Gentiles, and not as do the Jews, how do you compel the Gentiles to live as do the Jews? for in fact Peter alone had withdrawn himself. His object then is to remove suspicion from his rebuke; had he blamed Peter for observing the Law, the Jews would have censured him for his boldness towards their Teacher. But now arraighing him in behalf of his own peculiar disciples, I mean the Gentiles, he facilitates thereby the reception of what he has to say which he also does by abstaining from reproof of the others, and addressing it all to the Apostle. If you, he says, being a Jew, livest as do the Gentiles, and not as do the Jews; which almost amounts to an explicit exhortation to imitate their Teacher, who, himself a Jew, lived after the manner of the Gentiles. This however he says not, for they could not have received such advice, but under color of reproving him in behalf of the Gentiles, he discloses Peter's real sentiments. On the other hand, if he had said, Wherefore do you compel these Jews to Judaize? His language would have been too severe. But now he effects their correction by appearing to espouse the part, not of the Jewish, but of the Gentile, disciples; for rebukes, which are moderately severe, secure the readiest reception. And none of the Gentiles could object to Paul that he took up the defense of the Jews. The whole difficulty was removed by Peter's submitting in silence to the imputation of dissimulation, in order that he might deliver the Jews from its reality. At first Paul directs his argument to the character which Peter wore, If you, being a Jew: but he generalizes as he goes on, and includes himself in the phrase,

Ver. 15. We being Jews by nature, and not sinners of the Gentiles.

These words are hortatory, but are couched in the form of a reproof, on account of those Jews. So elsewhere, under cover of one meaning he conveys another; as where he says in his Epistle to the Romans, But now I go unto Jerusalem, ministering unto the saints. Romans 15:25 Here his object was not simply to inform them of the motive of his journey to Jerusalem, but to excite them to emulation in the giving of alms. Had he merely wished to explain his motive, it would have sufficed to say, I go to ministering unto the saints; but now observe what he says in addition; For it has been the good pleasure of Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor among the saints that are at Jerusalem. Yea, it has been their good pleasure and their debtors they are. And again, For if the Gentiles have been made partakers of their spiritual things, they owe it to them, also to minister unto them in carnal things. Romans 15:26-27

Observe how he represses the high thoughts of the Jews; preparing for one thing by means of another, and his language is authoritative. We being Jews by nature, and not sinners of the Gentiles. The phrase, Jews by nature, implies that we, who are not proselytes, but educated from early youth in the Law, have relinquished our habitual mode of life, and be taken ourselves to the faith which is in Christ.

Ver. 16. Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the Law, save through faith, in Jesus Christ, even we believed on Christ Jesus.

Observe here too how cautiously he expresses himself; he does not say that they had abandoned the Law as evil, but as weak. If the law cannot confer righteousness, it follows that circumcision is superfluous; and so far he now proves; but he proceeds to show that it is not only superfluous but dangerous. It deserves special notice, how at the outset he says that a man is not justified by the works of the Law; but as he proceeds he speaks more strongly;

Ver. 17. But if, while we sought to be justified in Christ, we ourselves also were found sinners is Christ a minister of sin?

If faith in Him, says he, avail not for our justification, but it be necessary again to embrace the Law, and if, having forsaken the Law for Christ's sake, we are not justified but condemned for such abandonment -- then shall we find Him, for whose sake we forsook the Law and went over to faith the author of our condemnation. Observe how, he has resolved the matter to a necessary absurdity. And mark how earnestly and strongly he argues. For if, he says, it behooved us not to abandon the Law, and we have so abandoned it for Christ's sake, we shall be judged.

Wherefore do you urge this upon Peter, who is more intimately acquainted with it than any one? Hath not God declared to him, that an uncircumcised man ought not to be judged by circumcision; and did he not in his discussion with the Jews rest his bold opposition upon the vision which he saw? Did he not send from Jerusalem unequivocal decrees upon this subject? Paul's object is not therefore to correct Peter, but his animadversion required to be addressed to him, though it was pointed at the disciples; and not only at the Galatians, but also at others who labor under the same error with them.

For though few are now circumcised, yet, by fasting and observing the sabbath with the Jews, they equally exclude themselves from grace. If Christ avails not to those who are only circumcised, much more is peril to be feared where fasting and sabbatizing are observed, and thus two commandments of the Law are kept in the place of one. And this is aggravated by a consideration of time: for they so acted at first while the city and temple and other institutions yet existed; but these who with the punishment of the Jews, and the destruction of the city before their eyes, observe more precepts of the Law than the others did, what

apology can they find for such observance, at the very time when the Jews themselves, in spite of their strong desire, cannot keep it?

You have put on Christ, you have become a member of the Lord, and been enrolled in the heavenly city, and do you still grovel in the Law? How is it possible for you to obtain the kingdom? Listen to Paul's words, that the observance of the Law overthrows the Gospel, and learn, if you will, how this comes to pass, and tremble, and shun this pitfall. Wherefore do you keep the sabbath, and fast with the Jews? Is it that you fear the Law and abandonment of its letter? But you would not entertain this fear, did you not disparage faith as weak, and by itself powerless to save.

A fear to omit the sabbath plainly shows that you fear the Law as still in force; and if the Law is needful, it is so as a whole, not in part, nor in one commandment only; and if as a whole, the righteousness which is by faith is little by little shut out. If you keep the sabbath, why not also be circumcised? And if circumcised, why not also offer sacrifices? If the Law is to be observed, it must be observed as a whole, or not at all. If omitting one part makes you fear condemnation, this fear attaches equally to all the parts.

If a transgression of the whole is not punishable, much less is the transgression of a part; on the other hand, if the latter be punishable, much more is the former. But if we are bound to keep the whole, we are bound to disobey Christ, or by obedience to Him become transgressors of the Law. If it ought to be kept, those who keep it not are transgressors, and Christ will be found to be the cause of this transgression, for He annulled the Law as regards these things Himself, and bid others annul it.

Do you not understand what these Judaizers are compassing? They would make Christ, who is to us the Author of righteousness, the Author of sin, as Paul says, Therefore Christ is the minister of sin. Having thus reduced the proposition to an absurdity, he had nothing further to do by way of overthrowing it, but was satisfied with the simple protestation,

Ver. 17. God forbid: for shamelessness and irreverence need not be met by processes of reasoning, but a mere protest is enough.

Ver. 18. For if I build up again those things which I destroyed, I prove myself a transgressor.

Observe the Apostle's discernment; his opponents endeavored to show, that he who kept not the Law was a transgressor, but he retorts the argument upon them, and shows that he who did keep the Law was a transgressor, not merely of faith, but of the Law itself. I build up again the things which I destroyed, that is, the Law; he means as follows: the Law has confessedly ceased, and we have abandoned it, and betaken ourselves to the salvation which comes of faith. But if we make a point of setting it up again, we become by that very act transgressors, striving to keep what God has annulled. Next he shows how it has been annulled.

Ver. 19. For I through the Law died unto the Law.

This may be viewed in two ways; it is either the law of grace which he speaks of, for he is wont to call this a law, as in the words, For the law of the Spirit of life made me free: Romans 8:2 or it is the old Law, of which he says, that by the Law itself he has become dead to the Law. That is to say, the Law itself has taught me no longer to obey itself, and therefore if I do so, I shall be transgressing even its teaching. How, in what way has it so taught? Moses says, speaking of Christ, The Lord God will raise up unto you a Prophet from the midst of you of your brethren, like me; unto Him shall you hearken. Deuteronomy 18:15

Therefore they who do not obey Him, transgress the Law. Again, the expression, I through the Law died unto the Law, may be understood in another sense: the Law commands all its precepts to be performed, and punishes the transgressor; therefore we are all dead to it, for no man has fulfilled it. Here observe, how guardedly he assails it; he says not, the Law is dead to me; but, I am dead to the Law; the meaning of which is, that, as it is impossible for a dead corpse to obey the commands of the Law, so also is it for me who have perished by its curse, for by its word am I slain. Let it not therefore lay commands on the dead, dead by its own act, dead not in body only, but in soul, which has involved the death of the body. This he shows in what follows:

Ver. 19, 20. That I might live unto God, I have been crucified with Christ.

Having said, I am dead, lest it should be objected, how then do you live? He adds the cause of his living, and shows that when alive the Law slew him, but that when dead Christ through death restored him to life. He shows the wonder to be twofold; that by Christ both the dead was begotten into life, and that by means of death. He here means the immortal life, for this is the meaning of the words, That I might live unto God I am crucified with Christ. How, it is asked, can a man now living and breathing have been crucified? That Christ has been crucified is manifest, but how can you have been crucified, and yet live? He explains it thus;

Ver. 20. Yet I live; and yet no longer I, but Christ lives in me.

In these words, I am crucified with Christ, he alludes to Baptism and in the words nevertheless I live, yet not I, our subsequent manner of life whereby our members are mortified. By saying Christ lives in me, he means nothing is done by me, which Christ disapproves; for as by death he signifies not what is commonly understood, but a death to sin; so by life, he signifies a delivery from sin. For a man cannot live to God, otherwise than by dying to sin; and as Christ suffered bodily death, so does Paul a death to sin. Mortify, says he, your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, passion; Colossians 3:5, and again, our old man was crucified, Romans 6:6 which took place in the Bath. After which, if you remain dead to sin, you live to God, but if you let it live again, you are the ruin of your new life. This however did not Paul, but continued wholly dead; if then, he says, I live to God a life other than that in the Law, and am dead to the Law, I cannot possibly keep any part of the Law. Consider how perfect was his walk, and you will be transported with admiration of this blessed soul. He says not, I live, but, Christ lives in me; who is bold enough to utter such words? Paul indeed, who had harnessed himself to Christ's yoke, and cast away all worldly things, and was paying universal obedience to His will, says not, I live to Christ, but what is far higher, Christ lives in me. As sin, when it has the mastery, is itself the vital principle, and leads the soul whither it will, so, when it is slain and the will of Christ obeyed, this life is no longer earthly, but Christ lives, that is, works, has mastery within us. His saying, I am crucified with Him I no longer live, but am dead, seeming incredible to many, he adds,

Ver. 20. And that life which I now live in the flesh, I live in faith, the faith which is in the Son of God.

The foregoing, says he, relates to our spiritual life, but this life of sense too, if considered, will be found owing to my faith in Christ. For as regards the former Dispensation and Law, I had incurred the severest punishment, and had long ago perished, for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God. Romans 3:23 And we, who lay under sentence, have been liberated by Christ, for all of us are dead, if not in fact, at least by sentence; and He has delivered us from the expected blow. When the Law had accused, and God condemned us, Christ came, and by giving Himself up to death, rescued us all from death. So that the life

which I now live in the flesh, I live in faith. Had not this been, nothing could have averted a destruction as general as that which took place at the flood, but His advent arrested the wrath of God, and caused us to live by faith. That such is his meaning appears from what follows. After saying, that the life which I now live in the flesh, I live in faith, he adds,

Ver. 20. In the Son of God, Who loved me, and gave Himself up for me.

How is this, O Paul! Why do you appropriate a general benefit, and make your own what was done for the whole world's sake? For he says not, Who loved us, but, Who loved me. And besides the Evangelist says, God so loved the world; John 3:16 and Paul himself, He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up, not for Paul only, but, for us all; Romans 8:32 and again, that He might purify unto himself a people for his own possession, Titus 2:14 But considering the desperate condition of human nature, and the ineffably tender solicitude of Christ, in what He delivered us from, and what He freely gave us, and kindled by the yearning of affection towards Him, he thus expresses himself. Thus the Prophets often appropriate to themselves Him who is God of all, as in the words, O God, you are my God, early will I seek You. Psalm 63:1 Moreover, this language teaches that each individual justly owes as a great debt of gratitude to Christ, as if He had come for his sake alone, for He would not have grudged this His condescension though but for one, so that the measure of His love to each is as great as to the whole world. Truly the Sacrifice was offered for all mankind, and was sufficient to save all, but those who enjoy the blessing are the believing only. Nevertheless it did not deter Him from His so great condescension, that not all would come; but He acted after the pattern of the supper in the Gospel, which He prepared for all, Luke 14:16 yet when the guests came not, instead of withdrawing the viands, He called in others. So too He did not despise that sheep, though one only, which had strayed from the ninety and nine. Matthew 18:12 This too in like manner St. Paul intimates, when he says, speaking about the Jews, For what if some were without faith, shall their want of faith make of none effect the faithfulness of God? God forbid: yea let God be found true, but every man a liar. Romans 3:3-4 When He so loved you as to give Himself up to bring you who wast without hope to a life so great and blessed, can you, thus gifted, have recourse to things gone by? His reasoning being completed, he concludes with a vehement asseveration, saying,

Ver. 21. I do not make void the grace of God.

Let those, who even now Judaize and adhere to the Law, listen to this, for it applies to them.

Ver. 21. For if righteousness is through the Law, then Christ died for naught.

What can be more heinous than this sin? what more fit to put one to shame than these words? Christ's death is a plain proof of the inability of the Law to justify us; and if it does justify, then is His death superfluous. Yet how could it be reasonable to say that has been done heedlessly and in vain which is so awful, so surpassing human reason, a mystery so ineffable, with which Patriarchs travailed, which Prophets foretold, which Angels gazed on with consternation, which all men confess as the summit of the Divine tenderness? Reflecting how utterly out of place it would be if they should say that so great and high a deed had been done superfluously, (for this is what their conduct came to,) he even uses violent language against them, as we find in the words which follow.

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