

MR. D'S NOTES ON GALATIANS



Rev. Stanley L. Derickson Ph.D.

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Paul writes to people that he had established in the Lord to warn them of their falling away from the Gospel that he had taught them and that they had received.

Judaizers had entered into the assembly and were teaching that Paul had it wrong, that he had

misled them in their salvation, and that he had no authority to teach them what he did.

How true it is that an established church can accept in those that will teach them falsely - to their own detriment. This should be a clear warning to the church leadership to be very careful of those that would be members in their church. Indeed, be careful of those that attend your church - they may be leading your people astray in clear view of your oversight.

One of the duties of a shepherd is to protect his sheep from the wolves and all other dangers. If he does not involve himself in this work, then his sheep will suffer injury and he or his master loss.

Acts 20.28 "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. 29 For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. 30 Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. 31 Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears. 32 And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified."

The book was written prior to the Jerusalem Council in 50 A.D. so most date it around 48-49 A.D.

I would suggest as the key verse 5.1, "So Christ has really set us free. Now make sure that you stay free, and don't get tied up again in slavery to the law"

We will see in this brief book a clear authority set forth for Paul's directing the Galatians, we will see a clear clarification of what the law was, we will see a clear restatement of the Gospel, and we will see a clear declaration that we as believers are free from the law and its requirements.

Before we get too far, this book is the solid cure for a malady that has struck the church in recent years. That malady being the labeling of anything smacking of a list of do's and don'ts or anyone that tries to live a godly life with the term legalism, or legalist.

This malady is a catchall phrase to put down anything that makes you uncomfortable. I was in a Sunday school class taught by a man that constantly labeled anyone conservative that lived by a standard that they felt was Biblical as a legalist. He was constantly talking about anyone with a list of do's and don'ts being trapped by legalism.

One day I took a few moments and explained to him (in the class) what Biblical legalism was - that it was any attempt to put someone else under the law for salvation - this being the clear problem of this book we are about to study. I then suggested that if we were to accept his definition of a legalist - one that has a list of do's and don'ts - that God Himself was a huge

legalist, because the Word is full of lists of do's and don'ts.

It wasn't but a few minutes later that the teacher again suggested someone was a legalist because he didn't do certain things. Old habits are hard to break I guess.

If, indeed, anyone is following a list of do's and don'ts so that he can be saved, then yes, that is legalism in a slightly different respect than the book of Galatians points out. In Galatians the problem was that the believers were trying to keep the law to insure their salvation - this is not Grace but is law and not acceptable to God.

To set up a list of any sort that you try to follow to seek righteousness is an adaptation of legalism and must be set aside for the grace that was given by God.

I used the term Judaizers earlier, and should explain that term briefly. It is simply a term that describes one that is trying to put an Old Testament law spin on the Gospel of grace. It is one that would attempt to integrate a keeping of the Mosaic law into the Gospel that Paul so clearly espoused in all of his letters.

This problem cropped up early in the church as the apostles dealt with similar problems in the book of Acts when they dealt with circumcision. This can be seen in Acts 15 when some were attempting to add circumcision as a requirement for salvation.

There is a sense in which anyone adding to the ordinance of baptism is attempting to add to God's requirements. Some suggest that baptism is required for salvation. This is something that we do - a work if you will - something we do in obedience to our God, not something we do to gain access to a God we do not know yet.

Others suggest that if you are not baptized by one of their denomination, then you are not properly baptized and that you cannot be a member of their church. They go on to believe that if you are not a member of their denomination that you cannot partake of the other ordinance - the Lord's table.

Now, think about that for a moment. You can't be a part of their church, nor the Lord's ordinance unless you follow their methodology. Seems quite close to legalism by way of the Biblical definition to me.

How sad to not be able to be a part of a church group that you agree within most areas. You can't partake of the Lord's ordinance of His table because you do not follow their narrow belief concerning baptism. Indeed, you can't be a part of Christ's church if you don't follow their teaching on baptism.

This in essence is saying you can't be a part of the Lord's people unless you follow our plan of baptism.

There is one modern day importance to the book that many need to consider. The Seventh Day Adventist group are considered by most to be "Christian" though by the meaning of Paul in this book one might question whether they are or not.

Paul flatly states that keeping the law is not the way of salvation. The Seventh Day person relates his life quite closely to the law. Now, if they are looking to the law to gain their ultimate salvation then they are lost and most wrong, however if they are trusting Christ for their full and final salvation, then they are with us in brotherhood.

From what I have seen and heard from the few Seventh-Day folks I have met over the years, I believe those individuals to be brothers, though I believe them to be in error relating to security. One individual admitted finally after some amount of pressing that he felt he needed to continue in good works to retain salvation.

The key is whether they are trusting Christ and His work on the cross or their own works of the law to obtain salvation. If Christ is only part of the process then I would believe that they are in error.

Nothing I've said is meant to detract from what they are trying to do in their lives. They live a most godly life, at least from outward appearances, and from what I've seen they are some of the healthier looking folks in the church realm. Their dietary ideas aren't that far from what the doctors are finally getting around to telling us to do.

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Week one: 1.1-9 salvation presented, and questioned by life

Paul is writing to churches in the Roman province of Galatia. The book is identified as Pauline by all but one liberal school of thought. Many identify Galatians as the standard by which all of Paul's writings are judged. The experts use this to compare all his other work to as they study.

I might suggest that there is no indication that this should be the case, however the fact that the Law is past being the basis of the book, this basis is true for the whole of the New Testament as well.

Some identify the people living in this area as Gallic, others as Gauls.

There is much discussion whether the churches were in the north or the south. Chapter four indicates that he was sick while in Galatia originally thus most agree he wouldn't have traveled to the remote north, and it was usually his practice to stay near the well traveled roads and byways.

Since the Scripture is silent on the specific churches we are left to speculate. At any rate the churches would have welcomed news from the man that had founded them in their new spiritual life.

Most see him planting these churches on his second missionary journey and that the letter was written sometime during his third journey.

There also is a lot of discussion on the date of writing, though this is normally linked to whether the letter went to Northern or Southern Galatia. Most conservative people date it at 49-50 A.D.

The opposition to Paul is mentioned in each chapter of the book. (see 1:6-7; 2:4-5; 3:1; 4:17; 5:7-12; 6:12-13) He seems to single out one particular individual (3:1; 5:7, 10), can you imagine being that individual sitting in the church when this letter was read? The tension must have been thick as the earth's surface, and the temperament of the individual must have been that of a stream of lava rushing to the surface!

One must wonder what this individual and his followers went through in the following days after the letter was read.

Dr. Constable in his online commentary quotes a source with a description of the apostle. I include it only for your interest, for it is likely flawed. It comes from the second century so is a hand me down description at best. "The earliest physical description of Paul we have comes from a second-century apocryphal writing. It described Paul as "a man of small stature, with a bald head and crooked legs, in a good state of body, with eyebrows meeting and nose somewhat hooked, full of friendliness; for now he appeared like a man, and now he had the face of an angel." Since Paulus means small, that portion of the description may be accurate.

1 Paul, an apostle, (not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised him from the dead;)

Gee, I wish Paul could be clear about what he means here. He is so vague about why he thinks he is an apostle :-) Well, vague is not the word - VERY CLEAR seems to be the term. He is laying out his apostolic authority immediately and very clearly. He is an apostle by authority of Christ and God the Father, not any mere man. Indeed, he is an apostle by authority of the God that raised Christ from the dead - just in case there is any doubt about the power of this God to make him an apostle.

It seems also that this reference to the resurrection might be a deliberate call of the reader's attention to where we are in the overall plan of God - we are now post cross, operating in the aspect of grace - not the law.

The term "by" indicates a personal face to face relationship to the appointment. The Jamieson Fausset and Brown commentary calls Christ the "immediate operating agent" in the call of the apostle. It is clear in the book of Acts that his call was the idea of God, not the vote of man.

You might want to take a quick look at the first verses of Paul's other books to see how he introduces himself.

2 And all the brethren which are with me, unto the churches of Galatia:

Here we see a departure from Paul's other introductions. In others he names the people that are with him, but here he simply mentions the brethren. It seems that he might want to draw the attention of the reader to him and his authority and not muddy the waters with what others might have taught, while calling attention to the fact that ALL that are with him are in agreement with what he is about to say.

We see that this book was written to the churches in Galatia. We don't know how many churches there were, but to all that are in the area.

We need to remember that we aren't talking about a dozen church buildings where believers gathered on Sunday to worship with four hymns, prayer and a sermon, but these were gatherings of believers meeting where they could. Many most likely met in homes when they had opportunity. Many on Sunday, but I'd guess since some believers were slaves the meeting opportunity may have been limited, and at varied times of day.

Paul was writing to believers that were struggling to make ends meet financially while attempting to raise families in ruff situations - while witnessing for their Lord and Savior. We say we don't have time to witness, but our lives are much less complicated than theirs I'd guess. If our lives are too complicated to share the Gospel, then we are allowing too much into our lives.

One further aspect of this verse is worth exploring. "brethren which are with me" seems to jump out at me in our present day. Here is an apostle, a leader and teacher of the church that is ministering where he can - and he has other men with him assisting him in his ministry.

Some would say, "So what?" Consider the many pastors you have known in your life - how many of them have other men assisting them in the ministry? Many have boards that do some of the work, but there are few that allow other men to "minister" with them. Many pastors will hardly turn their pulpit over to a missionary for twenty minutes, much less turn it over to another man in the church for a series of studies or a few messages.

We, in our modern church have nearly eliminated lay preachers from our minds. Men that know the word, men that know the Lord, men that love the Lord, men that want to serve the Lord and men that ought to be ministering in our churches.

I had the privilege of filling in as pastor for a Bible church in the mid-west. I talked with one of the men several times about ministry and ideas for running a church. One of the things he told me was that he had a real burden to teach the Word, and to minister to people, but he just didn't feel that he had the talents or abilities to minister to people on a personal level such as visitation, counseling etc.

He was sitting on the side-line in Christ's church because the church has boxed all people into categories. We have closed people out of ministering when God has gifted them to do so.

I personally identified with this man because this is true of my own situation in life. I am gifted as a teacher and helper, but I do not work all that well with people on a personal basis, thus I have basically nowhere to minister in the modern church.

What would be wrong if we had men that ministered the Word from the pulpits and lecterns and others that ministered to the personal needs of the folks? Nothing, in my mind, indeed, it seems from the Word that this is how God set things up in the first place.

3 Grace [be] to you and peace from God the Father, and [from] our Lord Jesus Christ,

The term translated "grace" is the normal term for grace, but many limit it to mean something that is given that is not deserved, and that is a good definition when used of Salvation and a gift, but this is a much broader term. It is Strong's number 5485 if you'd like to look it up for the complete listing. It can mean that which gives pleasure, joy sweetness, charm and delight.

The term here that is translated "peace" has the thought of the lack of turmoil - turmoil of war, of strife of argument, thus we might surmise that there were some heavy feelings about this teaching that Paul is about to embark upon.

Years ago we were in a situation where we were asked to take on a certain ministry. We began

getting advice from some, while others started telling us what to do. We had our own ideas that did not relate to what we were being told.

We were in great turmoil as we knew what God had laid on our hearts, but yet the church people were telling us to do differently. We discussed the situation and of course decided to follow the Lord's leading.

We braced for the fire storm - which never developed - no person came to us to confront us or give further advice - what peace we had knowing that God had given us the ideas and that He had provided the peace to face what would come - even though nothing came - peace - that which the believer needs to find in God rather than the dictates of man.

4 Who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father:

"Who gave himself for our sins" - the term gave is of note - it relates often to the giving of or granting of, thus indicating Christ offered Himself to the crucifiers, He granted them the opportunity to take His life. I Tim. 2.5 "For [there is] one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; 6 Who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time."

The term translated "sin" has the thought of missing the mark. The term is the Greek word "hamartia" which is the term from which we gain the name for the study of sin in theology "Hamartiology." It seems to have the thought also of knowing the mark and aiming for the mark but at the same time missing it. It isn't that man doesn't know God's standard, it is that he decides to reject that standard. We know where the mark is, we know how to hit the mark, but we choose to miss the mark and strike our own mark.

"Deliver us from this present evil world" The term present is in the perfect tense indicating that this was and is and ever will be an evil world right up to the end of it. The world will not have its good days and its bad days, it will always have only bad days. It isn't a good world now and then, it is always and ever will be an evil world.

Now, to apply that to our everyday life, we might consider that the lost world is against God and as a result against believers. We are to understand this so that we can operate in a manner consistent with God's will.

"According to the will of God and our Father" Here we see a great truth. God the Father determined the path of Christ during His time on earth. God willed that Jesus go to the cross for sinful men. This also shows a hierarchy within the Godhead. God planned it and Christ completed it. There is a subservience of Christ to the Father's will - Christ was not less than God, He was equal to, but subservient to the Father.

5 To whom [be] glory for ever and ever. Amen.

I would assume this is one of the passages that would back up the thought that we will be giving God glory for all eternity. Not necessarily will we be verbally glorifying Him constantly, though that will be part of it, but mostly we by our presence with Him will be a glory unto His name forever - we are purchases of His to display for all eternity, we are examples of His grace for all eternity and we are examples of Christian living on earth for all eternity.

6 I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel:

It isn't a large surprise that these new believers were led astray, but that they were persuaded by another gospel. It isn't uncommon for someone to be sidetracked or to take on another life after accepting the Gospel, but to be taken in by a false gospel is not that common.

When first a believer, I was not discipled and for about five years I continued on in my normal course of life not knowing of the Christian life. I entered the Navy and became a typical sailor.

After several years the Lord turned me around and I began to learn of Christianity and its requirements. During this time I was confronted with other spiritual overtures, but none made any sense to me nor did they have any draw.

The word translated "removed" has the idea of something taking the place of another or substituting one for another, thus the thought of leaving Christ and following another gospel. These folks were leaving the gospel of grace, and replacing it with a gospel of another sort - in this case a gospel of works.

Our calling to salvation is shown here to be a one time calling, an aorist tense is used - called at a point in time, not something that continues on and on every time you hear a stirring message, but once and for all time we are called into the gospel that brings us to Christ.

7 Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ.

Paul seems to be confused - he says they are taken away to another gospel, but it is not another gospel. So, how is that? I think what he is saying here is that they thought they were called away from the gospel of grace to another gospel, a gospel of works. However, in truth there is no other gospel than the gospel of grace, so the gospel of works is not really a gospel.

If this is what he is saying, then apply that one to our society today. How many ways are there to heaven? One, through the gospel of grace, and you can label all other gospels as gospels not being gospels - all are false teaching, and false gospels.

He goes on to explain that the people that they are listening to are PERVERTING the gospel of Christ. Their gospel was not true - it was a perversion of the true gospel of Christ. The gospel of

Christ is pure and simple, but these Judaizers were perverting that simple and pure gospel by adding requirements to what God had set for the ages before the foundation of the world.

Humm, does that seem a little arrogant to you - someone looking at the gospel that God set down before the foundation of the world and saying it isn't quite good enough - I think we have to work a little for it as well - in essence, God isn't able to define and institute a gospel that can save, but we - those that need to be saved - know what is lacking and we can supply it - I hope that sounds ludicrous to you for indeed it truly is ludicrous for man to be able to assist God in his own salvation.

These will "trouble" you - or cause commotion within, to disquiet, to strike with fear, or to render anxious or dreadful. This word describes well the emotions of one that has accepted the gospel of Christ, and has been given teaching that brings into question that simple and pure gospel.

One that questions their salvation, is often fearful of loosing their salvation, anxious about how they are living their life - afraid that they are disappointing God. In reality many brought up in the 50-60's Bible belt environment were as described - fearful and anxious about their salvation and their life before God. Many questioned whether they were even saved, many thought they were total failures in their Christian lives.

The cure to all this fear was to stop listening to that inner voice that troubles you - that voice of doubt in the God that said He had saved you. He designed it, He instituted it, and He delivered it to you and you sit in your arrogance and question whether He did it right or not! Please, have confidence in the God that called you unto Himself for His own glory.

Please, also do not allow a mere man or mere book bring total upset to your soul when they try to add to the requirements that have already been met for your salvation - God did it all and no matter what someone tells you, HE DID IT ALL and YOU CAN DO NOTHING TO ASSIST HIM - NOTHING. He did it in the past and it is complete, so how in the world can you do anything to help in the completed process? You simply and unequivocally cannot.

The thought of the word "troubled" is the exact opposite of the term translated peace in the previous verses. They were taking away the peace that the Gospel can give to the soul. They were causing turmoil in the lives of the believers when they should have been enjoying peace and tranquility.

8 But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed.

Oooops, sorry Mormon readers - that was God speaking, not me!

I had a professor in graduate school that loved puns, so he was one of my favorite professors. He read this passage once as follows: "But though we, or an angel, (affectionately called phony

Morony) from heaven, preach any other gospel..." Neither he nor I mean any disrespect to the Mormon follower, but would wish to point out that if you have even an angel from heaven telling you that what is recorded in the Word is not the complete gospel, let HIM BE ACCURSED.

Anyone that adds to the Word of God is accursed. This applies to all that follow traditions, confessions, versions, etc. that are over and above the Word. Many today set tradition, books and teachings above the Word of God - these are accursed according to Paul.

I have seen reformed people that do not really teach that the confessions are above the Word, but they practice it. They speak of teaching their confessions to their families, rather than teaching them the Word of God. Indeed, their gospel at times seems to be another gospel, for they seem to require following of the creeds as the standard of acceptance rather than the obedience to the Word.

The term "heaven" is used of the sky, the universe or the dwelling place of God. In this context it would indicate God's dwelling place, in that the angels have access to all, but dwell in the same place as God Himself.

As a complete side note, take a few moments and contemplate the life of an angel, able to transit from God's throne, through the galaxies, through the atmosphere and to earth - how much like those wonderful dreams when we fly above the ground and go where we will to and fro with little if any effort - this is the normal life of the angel - and just why would an angel turn against God and give all this up to follow Satan - another topic of contemplation!

Some fine points from the verse:

1. The preaching of another gospel is a present tense as opposed to the gospel preached by Paul which is an aorist. The gospel of Christ was preached once and they accepted it, but this false gospel is continually being preached to them.

Once and for all your salvation was sealed at one point in time. To sway you from that truth takes persistence - don't allow persistence of error to rob you of truth.

2. The language used here is of interest. Loosely translated it runs along this line: But though we, or an angel from heaven, EVANGELIZE unto you than that which EVANGELIZE unto you let him be accursed. The American Standard version states "But though we, or an angel from heaven, should preach unto you any gospel other than that which we preached unto you, let him be anathema"

The force of this is that these people are attempting to evangelize just as Paul had evangelized them - equal force is the thought - as I evangelized you so they are evangelizing you - even though they appear to be as I - though they seem to be concerned with your spiritual health - let them be accursed. In essence isn't Paul also implying that the Judaizers felt that the people were

lost and in need of their gospel - that without Christ and the Law, they would be lost to hell? I think that is the direct implication.

Now, such language - this Paul ought not be so mean and rude to these people, after all they have my best interest at heart and he is telling me they are accursed. Where does he get off being so judgmental? Does this sound like some you have run into? Paul says these that mislead, these that teach falsely, these that would remove you from your peace, and these that would substitute the gospel of grace are accursed!

I suggest we use the same tactics that Paul used - call these false teachers what they are - accursed. The Mormon's that mislead are accursed, they are not part of Christianity, they are not just another way to God, and they are accursed.

Those that would have you work for your salvation are accursed.

Those that would have you do more than accept Christ are accursed.

Those that would have you replace the work of the cross with works of your own are accursed.

I think that is plain enough for now!

3. The term translated accursed is the Greek word "anathema" which means to put under a great curse. The Net Bible ends this verse with the thought of condemned to hell. A footnote suggests that not only is the curse in view but the result as well. If the person is accursed, they are definitely on their way to eternal punishment.

Paul uses the same term again in the next verse when he restates his curse. The word is also used in the following texts.

Acts 23.14 "And they came to the chief priests and elders, and said, We have bound ourselves under a great curse, that we will eat nothing until we have slain Paul." I won't comment on the priests and elders but this might be a little exaggeration for effect on their part. They had sworn to not eat until they killed Paul. To them a noble effort, to God a foolish effort, but I'm sure they wanted him dead - not just sure they would have starved to death if they couldn't have killed him.

Rom. 9.3 "For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh:" Here we see the word used in the reality that if it were true it would result in hell for the one accursed. Paul would give himself up to hell if his brethren - the Jews - could be saved.

I Cor. 12.3 "Wherefore I give you to understand, that no man speaking by the Spirit of God calleth Jesus accursed: and [that] no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost." Again, we see the thought of the one accursed ending in hell (not that Christ could).

I Cor. 16.22 "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maranatha." Here as in the last three verses the result of the accursed is hell. The word is not translated here, just presented in its original Greek form.

A moment of application if we might. Paul tells them that the Judaizers were accursed - they are trying to live by keeping the law for salvation - they are on their way to hell, so anyone trusting in keeping the law is damned. Remember that. Indeed, it would seem that trusting anything but the blood of Christ for salvation is trusting the wrong thing and places the person on a fast track to eternal damnation.

A sincere warning to anyone trying to keep the law or any list of do's and don'ts to gain salvation - you won't be able to based on Paul's teaching here. Consider carefully what you trust for salvation, since only the blood of Christ will do. If you want to work and/or keep something feel free to do so as a way to please God, but don't you dare expect salvation from it.

4. Even if Paul or the apostles come teaching - don't you believe them. No matter what they say, if they preach another gospel than the one preached originally - don't you believe them.

Application: Question ALL you read and hear and trust nothing unless it lines up squarely with the Word of God. Even if it comes from a trusted friend, a trusted teacher, a trusted preacher, or a trusted acquaintance, don't you accept it unless you first compare it to the Word of God.

9 As we said before, so say I now again, If any [man] preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed.

Ahhhhh, Paul realizes some need to have warnings repeated - some just don't listen carefully when Paul speaks so he adds a little emphasis. I say again! Get it this time if you missed it the last time - let the person that preaches a different gospel be accursed. I don't think there was any doubt in Paul's mind as to what he wanted to say.

APPLICATION:

1. Might one application be along this line? If someone comes to you with another gospel, let them be accursed - it doesn't mean you are to discuss, argue, or coddle them into the gospel - "LET THEM BE ACCURSED." Give them the gospel if you like - that would be good, but drop it at that and allow them your leave - depart - don't encourage - move away from them.

It seems to me that Paul feels these are confirmed in their error and that they will not change from their false doctrine. This false doctrine, by the way, is of their own making, not God's. They chose to reject God's truth and add their own methods to what they retained of the truth. Sound's rather like a cult to me.

2. What a responsibility each of us has, not only for ourselves, but for our families if we have

one. It is our responsibility to watch every moment for false teaching that creeps into the lives of those we love and be assured that they do not retain that false teaching.

Years ago we were in a church that had a young seminarian as pastor. He was a great preacher and we often discussed his good sermon points on the way home.

As time went on, the seminary's effects began to show. Toward the end of our time in that church we found we were talking to the kids more and more about the error that we had heard in the message. I felt that we were undermining the pastor, but it was his own error that required it. It was quite encouraging to see toward the end that the kids were picking out the error and were able to bring them up in our discussions after church.

See to it that you protect those that God has placed in your care.

This requires something from the father/husband - paying attention to what is going on in the service, what is going on in the Sunday school classes, and what is going on in the youth groups. You'd better be discussing all of these areas with your children/wife as you go through life.

Not only in the church setting, but beware what your family is exposed to in their relationships with the lost world.

school

friends

entertainment

social functions

all areas of life

3. We touched slightly on how we glorify God, but let's take a further look at this. Just how, in this life, can we glorify God?

a. Living a separated life so that those around us know that we follow Him and honor Him in our everyday life.

b. Giving of your material blessings - He gave you all you have so why not give a little back to Him to bring glory to Him?

c. Use your spiritual gift. The gifts were given to train the church for the work of the Lord, and through this we glorify Him. We acknowledge that we are gifted by Him and that we want to serve Him in this manner.

d. Children glorify God by being obedient, wives glorify God by submitting to your husbands, and husbands glorify God by loving your wife and raising the children in a proper manner.

e. As a church we glorify Him in all we do - at least that is the plan. In our worship services, in our Bible studies, in our potlucks - all should be done to shine forth upon Him.

f. In our personal relationships with the lost - all we do should reflect upon Him that has saved us, Him that has equipped us, and Him that has blessed us.

4. It seems that Paul is very serious about this - he even exaggerates to emphasize the seriousness of what he is saying. He says, even if an angel comes, even if an apostle comes to you, even if I come to you with another gospel - and then he repeats the end result of the false teacher twice when he brands them as accursed.

If he was this serious about it in the first nine verses, don't you think that it ought to be a very high priority with you in your personal life and/or your family life? If not, then you are to be warned of impending danger to yourself and to your family.

Many are the broken families in the church - families that accepted the standards of the world, families that trusted deficient teachers and preachers for truth in their working with the family.

The church's divorce rate is equal to if not worse than the worlds - we bought what we were hearing in the media and what we weren't hearing in the pulpit. If we are trusting false teachers for our marriages, then surely we are trusting them for our child rearing and our personal spiritual lives.

Indeed, are we not trusting our salvation in some cases to the fluff and muff of the feel good preaching of our day? We have lost people coming into our congregations and hearing how they can fluff and puff their way through the spiritual life - what they aren't being told is that the fluff and puff life usually ends in a big poof or explosion somewhere down the line.

5. There is a term in verse two that in today's society may need some explanation. Church. Today there are some that suggest this term means local assemblies of believers and nothing else. Others suggest that there are local assemblies that are local representations of THE CHURCH the body of Christ or the universal church.

Those that reject the teaching of the universal church are quite serious in their doctrine. So serious as to limit the ordinances to those of their particular local church or at best those that are members of another local church of their persuasion.

I have seen in their writings that they believe that there are other believers, that there are dead believers, and that there are the believers in their particular churches. They do not, however recognize the universal church - that teaching which recognizes all believers, of all faiths, of all

times. Now, realize both sides recognize the existence of all these believers, but one sees this assemblage or faith as the body of Christ and those that reject the universal church teaching do not recognize all believers as belonging to one body or church.

Christ told the people that He would build his church - singular, not plural, thus we know He had a universal concept in mind as well as the local outworking of that one body.

6. It is of note to many that most of Paul's epistles commend the believers he addresses in some way, but the Galatians received none, thus indicating this man was on a serious kick to communicate something quickly and completely.

They say you can take a lot from what isn't said. It would be obvious to most that Paul is not really top notch proud of the way these people are living.

Does that give rise to how a pastor/teacher should communicate with his people - especially when they are living incorrectly? I think the real sin in the church today is due to the lack of the people being told that they ought not be doing what they are and telling them what they ought to be doing when they aren't.

We attended a church for the first time and the pastor really blasted the people for the way they were living their lives in the neighborhood. He ended by mentioning the broken window that the church had experienced that week. He said something to the effect of the following, "Those people that broke out that single window should have broken every window in this church, maybe then you would have gotten the message that things need to change here."

I called him later in the day and asked him if he still had a job. He had laid it on the line - he had called the people up short on their sin. Oh how this is needed in our churches across the country!

7. Consider the false teachers. They know who it was that planted these churches - Paul himself. They may even have known Paul personally. They considered his teaching and found it lacking, they considered his life and found it lacking (else why would they devalue his message), and they considered their own understanding and assumed they were superior in teaching to Paul.

How did they move from knowing a man of God and his message to rejecting that message and dreaming up their own gospel and then teaching that gospel fully knowing that it was counter to what an apostle had taught?

How did they make those decisions? How did they come to such conclusions? How did they justify placing themselves above one that was appointed by the Lord Himself?

Know two things. First there are those today that will set themselves up as above the pastor and church leaders. Secondly, know that there must be a quick reckoning or else false doctrine will spread quickly through your assembly.

Know one more thing. In our society, be very careful to consider the claims of one that questions pastoral leadership. Many pastors in our country need to be questioned. Don't reject a detractor just because they are detracting, but consider what is being set forth and compare it to the Word - then make a decision based on the Word.

8. To conclude this section I would like to share some information that I found in a commentary by Robert Deffinbaugh where he quotes Harold Bussell and his book *Unholy Devotion: Why Cults Lure Christians*. (Galatians: The Gospel of God's Grace; Robert L. Deffinbaugh, Th.M.; Deffinbaugh@bible.org; Biblical Studies Press; 1998)

Deffinbaugh via Bussell relates a truth that is not uncommonly held by many others that cults often are spawned by the orthodox protestant community. This is true via observable facts of history.

Bussell lists some of the men that had roots in normative Christianity that found themselves leaders of cults. Sun Myung Moon of the Unification Church was raised in a Presbyterian home. Jim Jones of the People's Temple, the group that committed mass suicide in South America was not only a pastor of a Disciples of Christ church and had at one time attended a Nazarene church. David Berg, the head of the Children of God was raised as a believer and was associated with a Christian and Missionary Alliance church. Paul Wierwille the founder of The Way came from reformed roots. He goes on to tell that Mary Baker Eddy and Charles Taze Russell of the Jehovah's Witnesses were both reared in Christian homes.

There are other minor cults that have leaders with similar backgrounds.

I trust that the church realizes the urgency of excising these aberrant teachings immediately before they spawn other isms and cults. The church can't stop all of it, but stopping it in the early stages and warning the believers will be a good start to stopping the growth of false teaching.

This atmosphere of acceptance of all the philosophies of our day into the church has had its detrimental effects to be sure. Humanism is strongly entrenched in the church's thinking even though we on the surface say we abhor its teaching. Indeed, it has replaced Godly principles in many cases.

Bussell suggests that though doctrine is usually critically different between truth and a cult, that the practice is often similar. I would go a step further and suggest that most of the cults, in their living, are more Scriptural than most churches. They are loving, caring and accepting communities that want to minister to the needs of those they contact.

Yes, you can say my church is that way, but really, is it? I have observed so many churches today that are closed to any outsiders coming into their midst. They may be tooth baring greeters, and they may even have their greeting times, but seldom is there any further contact with one that might wander into their midst.

There are others that push away new people with their hobby horse doctrines that don't really assist anyone that might want to fellowship with them. If you don't buy their hobby horse, you will certainly hear about it every service, and you might even get a double dose of it if you attend two services.

To finish this study I would suggest that Deffinbaugh has a seriously long study of Acts 15 and its relation to Galatians if you are interested. It can be found at <http://www.bible.org> in the Bible study section.

I might suggest that if you haven't been to this site you should give them a visit. It is a real work of love and a work that is outstanding in its effort to make information available to the believer. Some of the studies are geared to pastors but there is much to be gleaned by the layman as well.

He draws from this passage a definition and the characteristics of a cult. In short the cult is a group that thinks that they are truth and the only truth, usually brought to them by the leader. All others are damned. This is quite true. Most also from my experience are defective in the deity of Christ and/or the Trinity.

9. I would that we understand something about the Roman Catholic church. They seem to be part of our Christianity, or so our leaders are telling us, but as you consider what relationship the Roman church has with Protestants in general remember some of the following information. Also as you see great comings together of the Romans and the evangelicals, remember some of the following information. (Comings together as THE PASSION movie by Mel Gibson, a truly Catholic movie that was seized upon by millions of evangelicals and put millions of dollars in Gibson's pockets - nothing against him - great marketing!)

Many popes have reaffirmed in one way or another the declarations of Trent, or as we should view them the anathemas against us by the Catholic church. Gibson, during the turmoil over the movie admitted that he agreed with the issues of Trent.

The current Pope declared at the commemoration of the 450th anniversary of Trent that all their declarations were of value.

In 1566 the church listed the approved doctrines of Trent and they included the rejection of salvation by faith alone, the teaching that Christ's presence was in the Eucharist, that the elements of communion were symbolic only, that the host is not to be adored and praised, and that the only requirement for salvation is faith in the work of Christ.

Pope Pius IV (1559-1565) declared a summary of the Council's findings and declarations.

In this summary he restated that one must adhere to the seven sacraments, one must believe that the sacrifice in the Eucharist is propitiatory for the living and the dead, that the body and blood are substantially within the Eucharist elements as well as the soul and divinity of Christ. One

must also believe in purgatory and the assistance of the faithful to those contained there in.

If this isn't enough to suggest evangelicals ought not buy the flurry of catholic ecumenism, one must also believe that the saints that are reigning with Christ are to be prayed to and that their relics must be venerated. Humm, if you want to venerate my hair you'd better get some quickly :-)

You must hold to the ever virginity of Mary and that images of Mary and Christ are to be honored and venerated. You must hold to the whole system of indulgences, as well as swear obedience to the Roman Pope. (This rather tightly relates to the supremacy of the Roman church over all other churches.)

The acceptance of the findings of councils is to be considered truth and all other teaching is to be anathematized as heresy and rejected.

I don't know how we are to relate to a church that teaches that the basis of salvation is other than faith in Christ work. I don't know how we can CO-OPERATIVELY work with a system that rejects the basics of our faith, in any form whether to evangelize or any other work.

Some work with the Roman church on the anti abortion plain - this even seems to be a disgusting union that is based on mutual disrespect and disagreement - how does this look to the lost that knows that the Roman church has anathematized the Protestants - how foolish can they think the Protestants are?

Week two: 1.10-24 Paul's account of his qualifications to present truth

If you will remember in the pervious study, we saw that Paul was rather put out at the people for setting aside the gospel plainly given to them, for one that would call them unto and under the law. He is not particularly appreciative of the false teachers either, as he says let them be damned.

In this section he continues on by being rather plain of tongue as he reminds them that this gospel that he had taught was not of his making, but that it was the simple truth from God Himself - not an arrogant statement of who he was, but rather a plain and simple statement that they hadn't forsaken his gospel, but that they had forsaken God's gospel.

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

A simple statement that if Paul made people happy he then would not be serving Christ. Now, that is a mouth full from the man that should know. This man spent time with Christ, this man spent time walking the earth preaching Christ, and this man served only Christ.

What is the truth he conveys? If you are pleasing the lost, you aren't serving Christ. Another way is to say if you are pleasing the lost you aren't pleasing Christ.

My, how I would shudder if I were one of those pastors that had poled his community to see what they liked in a church and then designed a church to meet the "likes" of his community. They are pleasing the lost, thus one must wonder how they are pleasing Christ.

Ought we not see what Christ says about doing church and pattern our ministry after his thoughts rather than the thoughts of the lost? Do you think? This is not to say that these pastors don't have numerical success, financial success, and at times even seemingly spiritual success, but how successful are you if you please not Christ?

I might make further comment - the term translated "please" relates to make excitement, and another phrase the Lexicon suggests is "to accommodate oneself to the opinions, desires and interests of others" - now if that doesn't describe many today I don't know what would. They mold themselves into whatever they think the lost might respond to so that the lost will feel comfortable in the church.

I think enough is said to make it clear that we ought to please and serve Christ and not our community. Many try to make their worship service palatable for the unbeliever. I suggested to one congregation that was only a few blocks from a large Catholic church and was surrounded by many Catholic families, that if we used this concept we would have to have mass on Sunday mornings - not an option that would please God, so why would having church the way pagans feel comfortable please Him?

Well, maybe just one more observation from this verse before we move on. It is obvious that pleasing men is in stark contrast to being the servant of Christ. The term translated "servant" has a very interesting contrast to be added to our discussion. It means to give up ones interest to another, or devoted to another to the disregard of one's own interest. In relation to Christ, it is placing oneself to naught and doing all for Him. The contrast here is that these pastors are giving up their own interest to the lost, instead of to the Lord.

11 But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man.

Paul certifies that the gospel he preached was not from man. Certify has the thought of make known the fact. It relates to assuring others of a fact. There is the idea of guarantee as well. When a company certifies something in relation to their product, they are desirous of your trust in what they say. One usually assumes some amount of guarantee with this certification.

Paul uses the term in Eph. 1.9 in his introduction of his letter. He tells the Ephesian believers that God has made His will KNOWN to us - a revelation based on truth. The Greek word does not imply the certification idea, but does have the thought of a complete knowledge, thus certification is implied.

12 For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught [it], but by the revelation of Jesus Christ.

Imagine, if you will, anyone thinking that Paul had heard a gospel from the talk around the fire, accepted it and gone out into the world preaching it. That is what the people would have had to have believed of him to leave his gospel, the one that he declared from Christ Himself, for a gospel that had been substituted by the Judaizers.

He declares that he didn't gain his gospel from the teachings of men, but by the revelation of Christ. The term translated "taught" is the same thought of the gift of teaching - the communication through discourse of information - the emphasis is on the teaching of man to man. This is held in stark contrast to the revelation or revealing of information from God Himself to Paul personally. The term translated "revelation" is "apokalupsis" a related term to the title of the Revelation of John - indeed, the very same word is used in Revelation 1.1 "The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to shew unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass; and he sent and signified [it] by his angel unto his servant John:"

The book of Galatians was probably the first book Paul wrote, so predates the Revelation to John by many years, but we can know that the gospel Paul taught was received from the same Christ that revealed the future to John many years later.

Paul now launches off into his resume, as he lays ground work for his authority to preach the gospel that he preached. He tells them that he is an example of the Grace that he so clearly preached, that he was chief of all sinners and yet God reached down and touched his life in salvation. He continues to illustrate what he has just said, that he was preaching a gospel from

Christ Himself, not men.

13 For ye have heard of my conversation in time past in the Jews' religion, how that beyond measure I persecuted the church of God, and wasted it:

Conversation has the thought of way of life. It is used of the wife that might win her husband by her conversation. They knew what he was like when he was out arresting Christians and hauling them off to prison. They knew of the hate that he had for believers, for Christ and Christianity.

It is not a misuse of terms when he says "in the Jews' religion" - he seems to contrast a "religion" with his present gospel. He divorces completely the "Jews' religion" from his belief in Christ. This would be a direct dig at the core of the teaching of the Judaizers. They were teaching that you had to mix the Old Testament Jewish concepts with the new teaching of the Messiah.

Note also for the purpose of application - Judaism is a religion in contrast to true Christianity which is a life style and relationship with Christ. We need this distinction in our witness to the world in our day. We aren't sharing the Baptist religion, the evangelical religion or some other "religion" we are sharing the gospel that Paul shared with the Galatian people, the shed blood of Christ on the cross and his resurrection.

You can go to the early part of Acts to see the persecution that he mentions. Acts 7:58 pictures Stephen's clothes being laid at the feet of Saul when Stephen was stoned. In 8:1 it states that he consented or agreed with Stephen's death. In 8:3 we read "As for Saul, he made havock of the church, entering into every house, and haling men and women committed [them] to prison." Then in 9:1 just before his conversion we read. "And Saul, yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, went unto the high priest, 2 And desired of him letters to Damascus to the synagogues, that if he found any of this way, whether they were men or women, he might bring them bound unto Jerusalem."

14 And profited in the Jews' religion above many my equals in mine own nation, being more exceedingly zealous of the traditions of my fathers.

He doesn't leave the former life alone - he continues to lay out what kind of a Jew he was - a good one - one that was "exceedingly zealous" of the teachings of the Jewish fathers. He followed the traditions of his sect most zealously and profited in the religion - he prospered in what he was doing, even over and above his equals in the sect.

He was a Pharisee according to Ac 23:6 "But when Paul perceived that the one part were Sadducees, and the other Pharisees, he cried out in the council, Men [and] brethren, I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee: of the hope and resurrection of the dead I am called in question." and in 26:5 "Which knew me from the beginning, if they would testify, that after the most straitest sect of our religion I lived a Pharisee."

Again we see this strong statement of "the Jews' religion" as if he is driving home a point a second time.

I would be remiss if I did not point out the obvious point here that some make profit in religion. We know that some of the media hucksters do quite well with their efforts, some more than their equals on the air. We also know that many in the liberal isms of Christianity do the same, but we might take a moment to seek application closer to home.

Some preachers today make a killing at the work of the pastorate. I don't say these words lightly. They are taking more home than many big executives. I saw an article on the pay packages of preachers in the evangelical camp and while there were many being abused by their churches in the lack of the support given, there were many that were abusing the Lord's treasury by what they were giving to tickle their itching ears.

Pay package to many seeking a church is the prime information they seek when considering a church. They want to be sure the pay package is sufficient to their desires before going into what the needs of the church might be or the desires of the leadership.

True, finances must be a part of the equation, but when someone finds a friend has gotten a better pay package than he and becomes down in the pockets about it I think there is something askew and it isn't the price of eggs in China.

Yes, I am biased, yes, I have had a unique situation in my life, but I don't think I have ever decided on a ministry because of the finances. I don't even recall considering finances except for one situation where we were going on missionary support - we knew we would have a certain pledged support and if it all came every month we thought we would be able to make ends meet with the Lord's help - based on that assurance of mind we considered all other details having set finances out of our minds.

We have never relied on the giving of the people we ministered to for support, we have always relied on God to supply the needs via work, and the giving of the saints. Usually my full time work was adequate to the need though God certainly supplied extra along the way from His people which made our life much easier.

15 But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called [me] by his grace,

The term translated "pleased" is used in Matt 3.17 at the baptism of Christ "And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." This must indicate that God was pleased - well pleased in relation to His Son.

When? When it pleased God. Not before, not after, but when - God has a plan, and it is on schedule no matter what we do, no matter what the world does, no matter what the Devil does -

God is on track with His desire and plan for the ages. What a comfort that ought to be when things aren't going well, when we seem out of control, when all the world is against us - we have Him on our side and His plan for us is steady and on course.

Years ago I found a little greeting card with a haggard little man with the whole world on his back, and he is saying to his bedraggled wife "I guess it's you and me against the world!" At that time it was quite fitting for our life. It continued to say something like "And personally I think we are going to get creamed!"

Those days were long, haggard and lonely, but we knew God was on our side and that all would come to pass in His time.

Note. The time of God being pleased wasn't when Paul was born, not when he was converted, and not when he was in the wilderness with Christ, but while he was yet in his mother's womb. A note of realization might be in your mind. From the womb Paul was called, but it was after he was mature that he was actually called, it was after he was high up in the Jewish religion that he was actually called, and it was after he was a persecutor of Christians that he was actually called - think of the implications here.

God had His mark on Paul in the womb, but he allowed Paul to go his natural course by himself for many years before marking him with salvation. He allowed sin to run its course in Paul's life so that he would truly and fully understand the grace that he was receiving in salvation.

So it is with many believers - He allows sin to have its reign over them, but ultimately saves them for His own glorious use. I have met many that were saved late in life and all were bent on following God to the best of their ability. Not, that people saved in their childhood or their youth can't be just as dedicated, but many are not.

When a person sees sin running rampant in their life, it is easier to see grace when it is coming down the road and it is easier to be open to yielding your life to the Lord and His plan.

"Separated" has the thought of divide off, one way to translate it is to divide off from others with boundaries. There is not only the thought of separation, but also a thought of isolation from. God had separated this man from the womb - had isolated him for His own purpose.

This was a separation that Paul did not know about, nor sense in any way. This is obvious from his reaction on the road to Damascus when he met the Lord. He didn't act as if he expected any of this apostle stuff - he was out persecuting Christians with a vengeance, why would he think forward to the time that he would be one of them.

He was separated for the purpose of God and when it was time to go to work for God his sin was stopped in its place and he became the servant of God that he had previously been destined to be.

God "called" the apostle to His service in the womb. God not only calls, but he separates his ministers to the ministry that He has planned for them. The passage mentions the purpose of this separation and calling - to reveal His Son to the world.

The person called to the ministry is to reveal Christ through his/her life - not make big bucks, not make a big name, and not make a huge church --- reveal Christ in your life - that is what you are called to do and nothing more. What God does with that revelation in people's lives is His business - it is your business to do it.

This believer must admit that in later life the pulpit filling and interim pastorates had stopped coming his way. There was a long time when great question was in mind. Why have you stopped using me Lord? Then one day a light bulb moment awakened stupid from his stupor. All my life I have said if I had my perfect choice of things to do in life it would be to study and research for others.

The dawn enlightened a foggy mind to the reality that with all this retirement time on the hands of one trained to study and research that it might be that God has changed His methodology and wanted some study and research put down in writing to assist others in their ministries.

A number of books have come forth from this minor redirection. Be open to what God might want to do in your life, maybe you can connect with His best a little quicker than slow one did.

16 To reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen; immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood:

Preach to the heathen or the gentiles. Preach is a term to show the giving forth of good tidings - the preaching of the good news. He was separated to this ministry, he was called to this ministry and as soon as he knew of this calling, and the good news, he went forth to do as he was directed.

He didn't seek out man for guidance, he sought out God. What a truth for those called today - so many are out there seeking council from man when they should be in their prayer closet holding audience with the Person that can really direct them, for it is only He that knows the direction the person is going.

How outrageous for a man to attempt to direct another man in his coming ministry, when only God Himself knows what He wants the man to do! How out of step with reality is that?

Yes, seek the counsel of godly men, but see to it that it is just counsel, not direction. Seek knowledge of situations and seek knowledge from the wise men that have gone before, but seek your direction from God and only God.

(The term flesh can relate to the meat on your bones, or it can relate to the type of spiritual person that you were before salvation. I think Paul was relating to the meat side of the term since it is

related also to blood. Dr. Thomas L. Constable suggests, and quite possibly rightly so, that it relates to more than just flesh and blood, but also to the wider concept of humanity. Paul did not go to mankind would be his thought. He suggests the following references to back up his line of thinking. (Gal. 2:16; Rom. 3:20; 1 Cor. 1:29)

The phrase "reveal his son in me" can also be stated "reveal his son to me" since the preposition can be translated either way. The context is the determining factor. Most translations go with "in." "To" seems to be the better easy reading, though I don't know that it makes a lot of difference. Both are equally Biblical in concept in my mind.

17 Neither went I up to Jerusalem to them which were apostles before me; but I went into Arabia, and returned again unto Damascus.

Paul did not go to man for direction, and he did not go to the apostles. It would seem from that statement that he realized the apostle's importance, and possibly even their authority, but did not seek that option of direction but went into Arabia. I suspect that this was a twofold decision. I suspect that he knew this confrontation with Christ was a life altering deal and that if he was going to do this he had better get the best information possible - from the Lord - and I rather think that the Lord was directing him in a very real way - directing him in his everyday steps toward his ministry future.

Now, I am a firm believer in the authority of the local church over missionaries - not that this is the method used today in most of evangelicalism. A missionary should be under the authority of a local church for accountability, wise council and support, but when it comes to direction of ministry, the missionary must come under the authority of the one that called him - God. Yes, seek the help of your church but if the church seems to be running counter to God, be careful to follow God. Local churches have been known to falter in their direction finding for themselves and this often translates to erroneous direction for a missionary.

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

Acts 9.26 mentions this visit "And when Saul was come to Jerusalem, he assayed to join himself to the disciples: but they were all afraid of him, and believed not that he was a disciple."

The Greek suggests the idea of getting to know Peter rather than to just see him. The word is "historeo" and relates to examine, to find out and to know, thus get to know Peter. The Net Bible notes suggest an even stronger usage of the word here and it is well within the meaning - to gain information. This would indicate more than a social, get to know visit and would suggest that he was there to gain some information of some sort.

Acts 22.17 was also a part of the trip to Jerusalem. " And it came to pass, that, when I was come again to Jerusalem, even while I prayed in the temple, I was in a trance; 18 And saw him saying

unto me, Make haste, and get thee quickly out of Jerusalem: for they will not receive thy testimony concerning me. 19 And I said, Lord, they know that I imprisoned and beat in every synagogue them that believed on thee: 20 And when the blood of thy martyr Stephen was shed, I also was standing by, and consenting unto his death, and kept the raiment of them that slew him. 21 And he said unto me, Depart: for I will send thee far hence unto the Gentiles."

Just some historical facts that again picture the fact that he was not seeking out the apostles for the sake of gaining information or direction. It seems he had direction from the Lord. He may have been consulting with Peter about what the Lord had told him, indeed, may have been relaying a message from the Lord, or at least informing Peter of his plans to evangelize.

One might draw application from the disciples standing afar off from this former persecutor of the brethren. One might say that you should be questioning of people, but others in hind sight would suggest that the disciples might have missed great blessing by not talking and welcoming Paul - not that they did not have reason to be standoffish. We should greet all comers, and allow time and the Lord to show us whether there is danger or not.

20 Now the things which I write unto you, behold, before God, I lie not.

A clear declaration of his honesty as he lays groundwork for the authority of what he had been teaching and what he was going to teach.

Picture this for a moment - standing before God Himself, the One that is truth, the One that lies not, the One that cannot lie, the One against which all knowledge is compared for truth -- what kind of idiot would lie in such a situation :-) and Paul declares that even in that situation he would tell the truth. I would have added, especially in that situation I would not lie.

In a sense he is swearing before God that he speaks the truth.

Oh, that all Christians would have this attitude toward truth. Many today lie at the drop of a hat - they lie as if it was an integrated part of their nature. I have seen believers lie when the truth would have been a better course.

The term "behold" calls a special attention to what he is going to say. He really wants them to get this message and get it as clearly as possible.

Let that phrase ring loudly in your ears the next time you are tempted to lie, tempted to deceive another person, or even God.

21 Afterwards I came into the regions of Syria and Cilicia; 22 And was unknown by face unto the churches of Judaea which were in Christ: 23 But they had heard only, That he which persecuted us in times past now preacheth the faith which once he destroyed. 24 And they glorified God in me.

He was not recognized by the believers of Judea - since he had evidently not been there. The believers in the churches had heard of his conversion and of his preaching and gave God the glory for the transformation in his life.

My what an encouragement that must have been to the apostle, to know that some of the churches that knew well of his persecution of believers were now accepting of his conversion and his preaching and were giving God the glory for this wonderful change in a not so nice man.

Now, if I understand the sequence of things here we have him several years after conversion visiting Jerusalem and Peter - we see that the apostles don't trust him, yet when he goes out into the world believers have heard of him and glorify God due to what they have heard. Now, one must wonder what the church folk had heard that the apostles hadn't. There must have been a bit of a communication gap between the two geographical areas or the apostles weren't as trusting as the common believer.

APPLICATION:

1. Consider the statement of Paul's where he declared that his gospel was not according to man. Can you imagine someone preaching something of his own rather than the message of God? Consciously deciding that he is not going to teach the truth of Scripture and setting about to assemble his own method of saving their soul.

What arrogance to think your attempts to gain salvation are better than those laid out in the Scripture.

Just imagine for a moment that you decide the Bible is wrong, that you believe there is a God and you want to please him and find salvation. What would you set to paper as worthy to accomplish these goals? How would you begin? What steps might you take? What works might you include?

Take a few moments and consider what you might decide your way of salvation might be.

My, how frustrating that would be to try to set a format toward salvation. An added frustration would be to try to communicate this format to others, to attempt to convince others that what YOU say is TRUTH.

Of course no one is going to sit down and make a list and start preaching it as truth as is implied above, but they are going to gradually grow into believing their interpretation of the Bible is the proper one.

This makes the point very clearly that we need to be a part of a local assembly that is going to be watchful over us. The pastor needs to be watched over as well as the people. Both need the common goal of seeking what the Scriptures say. Not to say that the church has final authority over your interpretation, but that they keep you straight in what you do with it.

Where is that line between my interpretation of the Bible and the churches interpretation of the Bible? We know what has been taught through the centuries, thus if we start to come up counter to that we need to seriously consider where we are going in our use of the Word.

Those that have gone off into cult mode surely gave some indication as to their deviation from truth before they were wholly gone off into error. If they had been part of a church that was watching over the sheep maybe someone would have seen this and could have changed the thinking that caused heresy.

On the other hand when you come to feel you are Biblically counter to the norm, how long do you stay within the norm? It is a difficult road to travel to remove yourself from what has been the norm and go elsewhere to find a comfortable church to fellowship in.

I've run into many on the internet that have gone through this struggle - they are changing from where they once were to another line of thought. These normally were changing in some are of doctrine to another line of thinking such as from Dispensationalism to reform or vice versa. If they are going in a different direction than any norm of the centuries of church history then something needs to be done.

2. The fact that the believers were accepting of Paul's conversion and preaching is good indication of how believers should react to similar situations in the church today. They were accepting of sinners born into the church, rather than standoffish and cliquish.

They not only accepted him but gave God the glory for the change in Paul's life.

3. The fact that he was preaching in three years is of note as well - it doesn't necessarily take seven years of college and seminary to be prepared to preach. Anyone that knows the gospel can go forth preaching it, you don't have to have a degree to do so. Oft times the "clergy" of our churches look down upon those that would preach and teach at a very young spiritual age.

Yes, be careful of what they are preaching/teaching, but if God has called someone in salvation and called them to a ministry, allow them freedom to exercise that call and ministry.

I have said before that often is the time that I have been blessed spiritually by men that were teaching that had no formal education. They had been digging in the Word for years and their pastors saw that the depth of their plowing was more than adequate for teaching. Indeed, I have seen these men fill a pulpit better than some "trained" preachers.

There is a growing elitism in the graduates of our seminaries. They see little use for anyone that has not gone the route that they have gone. They have little use for anyone that attends a school that is not accredited by their pet accrediting association. They often are quite critical of anything but the very "best" - in their eyes of course.

Secular elitism is to be expected, the people are lost and totally self centered, while the religious elite out to know better. They act as the lost in their condemnation of all but "their" track to educated nirvana.

4. When I was in high school a pastor of a little Bible church took an interest in my worthless, hoodish, soul and saw to it that I heard the gospel. I accepted the Lord, but went into the Navy shortly after. The pastor did not explain the Christian life, nor did he disciple me in anyway - not that I would have allowed it most likely, had he asked.

I went off to the Navy for the four year enlistment and lived as if nothing had changed. I had no idea what I should be doing as a believer, so went on with my life of sin. I often wondered why God had allowed all this in my life, why save me and leave me in sin several years before tapping me on the shoulder and saying - I want you!

Reading this passage concerning Paul seems to answer that question. He was allowing me the time I needed to learn those things which would make me open to His will and His direction. Had God called me into the ministry in high school, I shudder to think what would have happened. The shock of my friends several years later when I told them I was going into the ministry was bad enough - I am not sure they could have taken it had I told them in high school. Further, I doubt that I would have answered a call at that point in my life. A call must land on fertile ears, not barren rock.

5. What was Paul doing all this time between his conversion and meeting with Peter? I am sure there may have been direct training from the Lord Himself, but I have to wonder if he wasn't spending a lot of time reading through the Old Testament to glean the Messianic information from it - the prophecies about Messiah and what He would be like, what he would do and the result of His coming.

6. See Acts 9:1-7; 22:6-10; 26:12-16; 1 Cor. 9:1-2; 15:3-11 for the rest of Paul's life as well as the rest of Galatians. Also you might find a study of the call of Jeremiah and its similarities to Paul of interest.

7. In verse nineteen Paul mentions James the Lord's brother. There are three main positions on this. There is the orthodox churches position that it was a son of Joseph and his previous wife, while the Roman church holds that the brothers mentioned in Scripture are children of Mary's sister. Most Protestants feel that these siblings were just that - brothers and sisters of Christ - children of Mary and Joseph.

There is no need for the "perpetual virginity" of Mary - the fact that she had children following Christ does not detract in any way from the Lord's virgin birth.

Mark 6.3 seems to be quite clear on the subject of Christ's family. "Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, the brother of James, and Joses, and of Juda, and Simon? and are not his sisters here

with us? And they were offended at him."

8. The calling and ministering of Paul is not the same as that experience that other believers go through. His calling was to be an apostle, but each and every believer does have a calling and a message that we are to be availing ourselves of. Matt. 28.19-20 is a clear message to preach and disciple the lost. "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: 20 Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, [even] unto the end of the world. Amen."

While we see our call in Matthew, we see further indication of our work in 2 Cor. 5.20 "Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech [you] by us: we pray [you] in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God." Our message is salvation by faith in the work of Jesus Christ, completed and finished. I Cor. 15.1 ff pictures for us the simple gospel and relates somewhat to this discussion of Paul versus the other apostles.

9. In verse ten there is a little three-letter word that is of interest "For do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ." The word "yet" is a bold declaration of Paul against his accusers. He is no longer a men-pleaser which he had been in the past as he was persecuting the church, but NOW he is pleasing God. The Judaizers seemingly had accused him of trying to please men but giving a gospel that would be acceptable to those that he was preaching to - this was as far removed from the truth as possible. Paul was a man preaching Christ, for Christ's glory and with no thought to his own gain or popularity.

10. Verse fourteen mentions that Paul was zealous relating to his persecution of the church. Most anyone would admit that he was later zealous of his preaching of the gospel. Zealousness is not a four-letter word. Many today suggest that anyone that is totally committed to his ministry is too zealous. God views zealousness in a positive way when it is related to serving him. There is a study on zeal online at my site if you are interested (<http://www.thedericksons.com>)

Paul's life should be a challenge to our personal spiritual lives. He was totally lost and about as against the gospel as he could get, but when converted, he became just as committed to the gospel. He committed his entire life to serving God and spreading His message.

11. Not only is Paul's conversion and following lifestyle important as an example to us, it seems to be relating as well to the argument against the Judaizers. This Paul, the man that lived and persecuted FOR the law, was converted and was preaching freedom from the law. What a picture of the difference that salvation brings to lost man. We, in our flesh, attempt to gain favor with God, but in our salvation realize that it is His grace that does the trick not our sweat and efforts.

Additionally, the Judaism of Paul's day was about as "men pleasing" as is possible - they were doing all they did to show off to their peers. A further contrast is that Judaism did not produce

righteousness of soul - it could only produce works.

I trust that some of our associations and movements today will learn this lesson. It seems that to be used in these groups you must please the men of the groups. You must agree with them, you must act like them, and you must follow them. If you fail in some of these areas, you will find that you will never pastor a church in their particular group. You will be an outsider until you conform.

This ought not be so. Even among the apostles there was a wide variety of men. Educated, uneducated, finished and unfinished, great speakers and others that are not held forth as great speakers, and yet they got along as a group.

12. The thought that believers in the churches accepted this change in Paul and accepted his preaching is proof of His authority as well. This passage just screams to the authority of Paul and seems to scream about as loud of the falseness of the Judaizers.

Week three: 2.1-10 Paul's backing from the apostles

To begin, this passage tends to contradict the previous chapter. Here we see Paul going to see the apostles, seemingly to check his message with them. In the previous chapter he was strong to the point that he did not seek out the apostles, and that the message he had was from God.

We will see that in the first chapter he was concentrating on the source of his message that was from God and here he will concentrate on the content of the message of the gospel. Evidently he knew his gospel was from the Lord, but that he wanted to check the content of the message with what the apostles were teaching.

I have a suspicion that he wanted more to check their message with the one he had received from the Lord rather than to check his message with the message of the apostles.

1 Then fourteen years after I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, and took Titus with [me] also.

We see an old mind set of the Jews in this passage. Paul mentions that he went "up" to Jerusalem. All Jews felt that Jerusalem was the center of the universe, that all roads led to Jerusalem. Anywhere in the world away from Jerusalem was down and when you went to Jerusalem you went up to the city.

Jerusalem was not only a special spot for the Jew but if you study the Bible you will find that it is a very special spot for the Lord as well. There is a study on my site relating to the location of the Garden of Eden. I conclude that it was Jerusalem, or more specifically the temple area in Jerusalem.

Why this spot is so important to God is not clear from the Scriptures, though it probably relates to the fact that this is where He created man, where He walked with man, and where He confronted man with his sin. It is also where the Kingdom will be centered and possibly the final judgment. It is the center of all of God's working with man. All His relationships with man seem to begin and end with Jerusalem, even in the Revelation an integrated part of the eternal scene will be a new Jerusalem.

"Barnabas" means "son of rest" and "Titus" means "nurse." Barnabas was a companion of Paul's on some of his excursions and seemed quite useful to Paul in his ministry. His name is of Aramaic origin and is mentioned numerous times in the book of Acts.

We know Titus from his letter from Paul. His name is from Latin, and the Lexicon lists him as a gentle companion of Paul's on his journeys.

He was evidently an apostolic delegate of Paul's to the island of Crete (Titus 1.4ff) since Paul left him in Crete to set things in order.

This visit is the one mentioned in Acts 15.1ff I suspect since the topic seems to be the same. Some suggest that Acts 11.27-30 is the visit mentioned in Galatians two, because it is a private visit. Upon reading the chapter eleven passage I am left with the impression that this was not an apostle to apostle meeting, but a messenger delivering something to the elders, not the apostles.

2 And I went up by revelation, and communicated unto them that gospel which I preach among the Gentiles, but privately to them which were of reputation, lest by any means I should run, or had run, in vain.

This verse indicates that the apostle might have been having some doubts about the gospel that he had been preaching. I have to wonder if he had run into some Judaizers that were attempting to change his mind as to the simplicity of the gospel.

He went by revelation. In other words God had directed him to do this by a vision or revelation of some sort. He seemed to be sharing with them what he had been preaching to be sure he wasn't running the course in vain.

Vain has the thought of empty. It is used of vessels that are empty. I would assume that he speaks of being empty handed at the judgment when he is evaluated by the Lord as to his works.

This idea of whether he was doubting what he had been preaching interests me. Why else would he phrase it this way if he did not want to double check what he had been doing for some time. Actually something that he seemed to have a real confidence in earlier in the book.

He went to great length to show that his message was from above, not from man, and here he seems to be double checking with man.

The answer is clear as you take a moment and read Acts 15.1ff. Some had come from Judea (area of Jerusalem) preaching circumcision as an integrated part of salvation. Paul and Barnabus had some serious discussions with these men and all decided to go to the apostles to discern the matter.

Wouldn't it be great to have the apostles to go to to find out if the socks women wear under long skirts should be black or white, and other catastrophic church problems? All the problems that seem to come to fester and split churches could be handled by the apostles. Humm, maybe that is one reason the apostles died off so quickly - so we would go to the Word for our decision making rather than other men.

3 But neither Titus, who was with me, being a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised: 4 And that because of false brethren unawares brought in, who came in privily to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage:

Here we see evidence of the correctness of our assumption about Paul's wanting confirmation as

well as the implication of some Judaizers.

Imagine, having preached the same simple gospel for a long time then run into men that say you have to be circumcised to be saved. I think we see Paul being open to these men, but I think we also see a strong belief that he was right. The next verses seems to bear this out.

5 To whom we gave place by subjection, no, not for an hour; that the truth of the gospel might continue with you. 6 But of these who seemed to be somewhat, (whatsoever they were, it maketh no matter to me: God accepteth no man's person:) for they who seemed [to be somewhat] in conference added nothing to me: 7 But contrariwise, when they saw that the gospel of the uncircumcision was committed unto me, as [the gospel] of the circumcision [was] unto Peter; 8 (For he that wrought effectually in Peter to the apostleship of the circumcision, the same was mighty in me toward the Gentiles:) 9 And when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given unto me, they gave to me and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship; that we [should go] unto the heathen, and they unto the circumcision. 10 Only [they would] that we should remember the poor; the same which I also was forward to do.

This seems straight forward, but I would like to add some thoughts about this passage.

1. Paul recognized the authority of the apostles, not exactly that he was under it, for he seems to go to lengths in the first of the book to specify he wasn't. He does view them as pillars of the church - or that which holds the church up.

2. He paid little attention to these Judaizers other than to confront their error. He doesn't seem to sit and worry about the situation for a week before acting, he just takes the bull by the horns and throws it to the ground and walks on through history preaching the gospel he knew to be true.

Many are the times that I have wished that I had the confidence of Paul in similar situations. I have found myself with people that disagree with me on a doctrinal issue and I normally sit and worry my way through those situations. If you have studied through a certain doctrine, be confident in what God has taught you. As with Paul, if there is a way to seek assistance from "Pillars" (which we will discuss next) do so, but be confident in what God has shown you.

Worry is an interesting thing. Someone once said, I know worry works. Look at all those things I have worried about - none of them came true so worry must help. Well, not so, God is the answer we need to seek.

3. There is a certain authority of the apostles. How does this relate to the church today? What authority is there for those that God calls to minister for Him?

Who is that authority today, since the apostles are long gone?

At the outset of this point I want to make it clear that I believe in the independence and autonomy

of the local church, however there seems that there ought to be some sort of authority over that church. That authority is not to be men selected in any way from other churches, it is not to be a selected few that are set up to be pillars.

This authority in my mind must be made up of two things. Tradition and the Word. By tradition I am not suggesting the papal traditions of the Roman church nor the visions of some leader, but I am suggesting that the teachings of great men of God through the ages should have SOME weight in our running of the local church.

The ultimate authority must be the Word itself, and no preaching of man, but the preaching of the past and present can be a guide. Warning, warning, this is a guide, and a possible guide only. Today if you took the current preaching you would have to mold your church around the current craze of doing church like the lost like it. This is not acceptable.

We must look to two thousand years of preaching to see how the church worshiped. Even within this guide we should overshadow anything we glean from tradition with what the Word tells us of worship. Both must be our information giver, with emphasis on the Word.

Some examples. Some today require that baptismal services be segregated by sex. There are no men with the women and vice versa. They base this not on anything in the Word that I know of but rather on the fact that in the early church some observed this protocol.

Some today do not allow pianos and organs in their services, due to the fact that the Bible never states that there are pianos and organs in the church service. It is of note that they don't allow any instruments in the church. This to me seems to be adding to the Scripture in that just because the Bible doesn't state something, then it is wrong.

It could be suggested that automobiles, pa systems, stereos, and televisions are not mentioned in the Bible so are wrong, yet many of these church parking lots are full of cars and their preachers utilize PA systems on a weekly basis.

Now, relating to how we might use tradition and the Word as our authority. I received a letter from a man that wanted advice about a problem in his church. The church leadership had instituted the normal contemporary music/praise team concept in the church. There were many older people in the church that were not accepting of the change and wanted to meet with the leadership to discuss the situation.

The discussion did not call the Word nor tradition in for clarification for what they were doing, the leaders only quoted the music policy, which the leaders had drawn up, as proof of their authority to make the changes. They ignored the "congregational" form of government that they supposedly had in their constitution, they ignored the desires of over half their congregation and they basically ignored everything that was against what they wanted to do.

Had the leaders gone to the Word to see what it has to say about worship, had they considered what the church in the past has done for worship there is no way that they could come to the decision they made. I am not condemning contemporary music, but I think churches should consider the Word rather than what their fellow pastors are doing. (For further on the subject of Contemporary music I would suggest the book WORSHIP IN THE MELTING POT. this book is written by a reformed man, but he has many Biblical principles that should be considered in our churches today.

Authority? The Word of God must be our authority. By looking to tradition we can see how the church has done things and how it has believed.

Is there any other authority? I do not believe there is, however gatherings of pastors/laymen to fellowship and discuss issues can be very helpful in seeing all sides of an issue, as long as you go to the Word for final authority.

I trust I have not dug myself into a bottomless pit on this issue.

4. Some tried to add circumcision to faith in Christ for salvation. Are there any today that seek to "ADD" to the simple gospel? Yes, there are.

The Christian church movement or at least many in the groups require baptism for salvation. They often base their belief in this exact false error of Galatians. They view circumcision as part of salvation in the Old Testament and then they falsely transfer the male circumcision of the Old to the men AND women of the New Testament. I have asked these people on the internet how they make that jump from male only to male and female and I have never received an adequate answer.

I must admit that some of the people in this movement have reconsidered their position and have come to a slightly altered position. Some I have discussed this with will ultimately admit that baptism is not required for one to be saved, but that baptism is the natural response to true salvation. In other words, if a person is truly saved, they will go on to be baptized.

I tend to agree with this in principle - if a person is saved they will want to be obedient to the Lord's desire for them to be saved.

5. Note should be taken that Paul went to extended lengths to assure his correctness. Some today would suggest he was fixated on being right, but I think there is a principle to be seen here. If you know God has said thus and so, then you should do your best to show that to be fact, not just your opinion.

If pressed, you should take actions that are needed to assure you do all that you can to show God's way. If this requires your leaving an organization, then do it, if it means being the only one in a group believing a certain way, then believe what is right. If you find that you have

opportunity to show the correctness of your belief then do so.

It would seem from this text that the other side may have been forcing the issue so that Paul was required to prove his point. I am not sure in my own mind that he would have gone to Jerusalem had he not been forced to prove these men to be in error.

This may also be indication of why he often declared clearly his apostleship and authority. Many writers mention his need to declare these items to counter the detractors and this may be the incident that was the center of that need.

We should note also that this is an issue of just what the gospel is, not the color of stockings women wear. Leaving a group over minor doctrine is not right, nor is making a fuss over it in the assembly.

It is of note to me today that we have some that make EXTRA-BIBLICAL items into issues over which you can and cannot be members of churches. The King James Only issue is an issue that exists outside the Bible itself and it is a basis for membership/fellowship in some churches.

Be careful what you decide to make an issue.

6. In verse six it isn't that Paul is setting himself above the other apostles, not that they detract from him, only that they add nothing to the message he had been given by God nor the authority of that message or its giver.

7. It is good to note that he recognizes their prominence, their importance and their authority, he just makes it clear that they have no superior authority over him, nor his message.

One might wonder at the feelings of the apostles over this issue. How did they accept this former persecutor of Christians that was now declaring that he was equal to them? I'm sure each of them had to deal with these items in their own minds.

APPLICATION:

1. As I have studied Paul's letters I have noticed the wide divergence of people he worked with. He did not surround himself with clones, he surrounded himself with those God brought into his path. Many churches when looking for pastors look for a certain type of person, while they ought to be seeking a man that is qualified and able to teach the word.

Another item that can be observed is when a church has multiple staff and the head pastor is replaced. Often he will literally run off the other staff because they aren't just like him. This is a travesty of God's leading of men. If God has lead other staffers to a work, then a new man ought not "redo" God's planning for the church.

2. We saw that Paul did not want to be empty handed at the judgment. How are you doing? Are you doing good works, works that will count for something when you see the Lord?

Many preachers equate good works with soul winning, in other words if you aren't out winning souls with the church on Saturday visitation day, then you aren't doing good works and you will not be a pleasing servant to God.

This is not true. We are all to be witnessing, but there are also other good works that we can do as well. God will be viewing ALL good works, not just the soul winning. Paul speaks of wanting to see fruit in the believers and the context is not soul winning only.

Phil. 4.16-17 mentions "For even in Thessalonica ye sent once and again unto my necessity.

17 Not because I desire a gift: but I desire fruit that may abound to your account." Here we see that giving is a fruit and it also shows that there is accounting for our good works.

If you have no good works then you ought to evaluate your life and make changes that will allow good works to flow from you to serve God.

3. Let's recap the trips to Jerusalem.

a. After leaving Damascus he made his first trip. Acts 9:26-30; Gal. 1:18-20

b. Later when there was a famine he took gifts Acts 11:27-30; Gal. 2:1-10

c. The Council at Jerusalem Acts 15:1-29

d. A stop at the end of his second missionary journey Acts 18:22)

e. and his final visit just prior to being jailed Acts 21:15-23:35

The thinking that this is the second trip rather than the third is based on the revelation of a famine through Agabus, as well as the fact that this was a subdued visit as opposed to the "council" of the third trip. Both Barnabus and Paul are mentioned on the second so many feel this is proof enough.

There is one major problem with this in my mind, since Paul is talking about Judaizers in Galatians, why would he go to Jerusalem and talk to the apostles, and settle this law being part of salvation business, then a while later go a second time with the same Judaizers problems.

I don't know that the "council" was all that huge a meeting that it couldn't fit into the Galatians text. Actually I am not sure that it matters either way to our understanding of the text. It is clear that he went to declare that his gospel was truth and that it came from God and not man, and to

be assured that the apostles were in agreement with it and its source.

4. The section is ended with an admonition and challenge. The apostles told him not to neglect the poor, and he made it clear that he was already doing his part in that area of life.

I guess in our own society the obvious question is what do we do about the poor? How do we interact with the pan-handlers, how do we help the homeless, how do we assist the poor?

This is quite an issue of our day so possibly some principles would be appropriate here.

a. Help the poor in your family first, if there are any. Help, but not to hindrance. Most of the problems of welfare and homelessness today are caused by the enablement of the welfare system that advertises to gain clients and enables them to continue on living off the backs of the taxpayer.

Yes, help those that are in need, but many times those in need are the ones the system will not help.

If you have a family member that has need, give them assistance. Do not enable them to live off the family however - require responsibility.

b. Help the pan-handler - offer to take him into a nearby restaurant for a meal. That normally will tell you of his need for help or need for booze money.

Be careful, they often know how to work people as well as the system. Most can get free medical so they don't need money for meds, most can get free meals at a mission, so no real need for cash. Many have income - they just want to add to it.

We often go out for Sunday morning breakfast. It is the only entertainment we afford ourselves. We are amused as we sit and watch the homeless people passing by with their Starbucks coffee and a Sunday newspaper under their arms, on their way to free breakfast at the rescue mission.

c. Help the poor in your church. Help the church help those in need. You can give cash - many have a deacon's fund collection for such purposes. You can donate good clothing, food, household articles, cars etc.

I have often thought a clothing/household article exchange room would assist many in the church. Take all your outgrown kids clothes in, all those unused articles to the room and leave them for others to use - if they do the same you may find things that you can use.

d. Help those you come in contact with. I'd guess many come into contact with people through their jobs that have needs, help as you can.

e. Help by giving knowledge assistance. If you know someone in your church is barely making it and you are a mechanic, fix their car, if you are a lawyer, assist them if they have need, if you are good with electronics, fix their equipment that is in need. The church is supposed to be a place where we get all our needs supported.

f. Some would suggest, but what if I get ripped off? Don't worry about it because you most likely will, but that is the rippers problem when he meets God and I don't think I want to be him.

A young man came to our door one day telling me he had just moved into a house around the corner, which I didn't think was true. He gave me a long story and I gave him a twenty for gas, which he promised to return the next day (ya, right), I was fairly sure it was a scam, but didn't know so erred on the safe side. As he walked away he said, "The Lord bless you mister!" I replied, "Don't worry, He does, but if you are lying to me he probably won't bless you." You know that I am still waiting for the twenty, but sadder still is that something is awaiting him, and it ain't gunna be pretty.

For those times, pray that God can get hold of those people and bring them to Himself so he can forgive them of their sinful ways - you know, kind of like He brought us!

5. It was made clear that the apostles would go to the Jews and that Paul would go to the gentiles. Not sure what that says about the group. Twelve going to the Jewish minority and Paul gets the rest of the world - where is the fairness in that?

So, why is this statement important, or was it just informational? It is clear that the apostles only "suggested" that Paul care for the poor thus indicating an equality about the group rather than the apostles being over him and telling him to care for the poor.

But why did the apostles declare that Paul was the apostle to the gentiles and they to the Jews. Isn't it the same gospel? Isn't the spiritual need of Jew and gentile the same?

Let us think - if you had been a good Jew following all that you had been taught and you were talking, to say Peter, at the Jack in the Box over coffee, what would he be telling you to bring you to Christ?

Would he be telling you that you needed to be saved? No, not really, because you, as a Jew, were right before God as you understood it and on your way to heaven. Isn't it more likely that Peter would begin explaining that Jesus was the Messiah that was prophesied, the Messiah that had come, the Messiah that had fulfilled all that was required for God, the Messiah that had freed you from the law as the Old Testament.

There is no difference in the result of the gospel, but the gospel or good news that was presented to the Jew and to the gentile would certainly have to include a lot of different information. The gentile would need to know that there is a God, that He is a God to be reckoned with, and that He

is a personal God that has done all that is needed to save you from your sinful nature, your sinful ways and your sinful end in hell.

I think that there was a distinctly different message given to the Jews by the apostles and to the gentiles by Paul. Both ended in satisfaction that Christ was the provider of their salvation, but much different information.

Of course there would have been Jews that were not spiritual Jews, and there would be gentiles that would have been spiritual Jews, (sojourners with the Jews) so the message would be adjusted to their position in belief.

This brings up one further clarification of the Gospel. Most today tell the lost they must accept Christ and that their salvation is because they did so. However, isn't salvation based on faith in what God has said, rather than an act by Christ. The faith is in the promise of God to do all that is needed to save us. The Old Testament saint was placing his faith in that promise, not in the fact that a man/God would one day die on a cross - they had no concept of this, but they did have all the promises of God in the Old Testament.

Today, we also, must place our trust in the veracity of what God has revealed - belief that Christ provides the salvation that we seek.

Week four: 2.11-21 Paul explains a false issue

I would suggest at the outset in this section that if you spend any time in commentaries you will most likely find a lot of supposition and speculation. Beware, and stick to the text as closely as you can. For example, some suggest that Peter was the leader of the Judaizers in Jerusalem and that the Jews that came to Paul's area in this text were Judaizers. I am not sure you can validate that scripturally.

Is it important to know who the Jews from Jerusalem were? Yes, because this is Scripture we are dealing with and all is important but in the grand scope of things - not in my mind, they were Jews and the others were Gentiles and Peter acted in a way that was inconsistent with the Gospel. Yes, if they were the Judaizers it would be clearer for us to understand, but I can't imagine why Paul would clobber Peter over what he did if the Judaizers were present with their false doctrine. I would guess he would have had a revival meeting in the back room with the Judaizers and if that was unsuccessful I'd guess that he would have preached a message to the Gentiles about their false teaching. Additionally, if Peter were the head of the Judaizers, as some suggest, I doubt he would have avoided mentioning his false teaching in with his inconsistent living.

To say these were Judaizers and that Peter was identifying with them is to say that he believed that the law was a requirement of salvation along with Christ. I am not sure that I believe that, nor that it can be supported with the Word.

One author suggests that Peter was changing his beliefs to accommodate those he associated with when he sat with the Jews rather than with the Gentiles. Again I am not sure I believe this nor that it is the teaching of the Word.

Another author suggests that due to James and his bent toward legalism that he had sent some of his followers to check up on Peter. Again, what is this based on? This is not the record that Paul gives us. It would seem they are looking at the book of James and judging him to be legalistic and then further assuming that he is causing problems, which I might add, is not true on either count.

11. But when Peter was come to Antioch, I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed. 12 For before that certain came from James, he did eat with the Gentiles: but when they were come, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing them which were of the circumcision. 13 And the other Jews dissembled likewise with him; insomuch that Barnabas also was carried away with their dissimulation. 14 But when I saw that they walked not uprightly according to the truth of the gospel, I said unto Peter before [them] all, If thou, being a Jew, livest after the manner of Gentiles, and not as do the Jews, why compellest thou the Gentiles to live as do the Jews?

After telling the reader that he had the apostle's agreement, he tells them that he confronted Peter. This guy thinks he has the truth and is going to enforce it from the looks of things.

The 19th century German scholar, F. C. Baur suggests that there was a conflict so deep at this point that the conflict between Peter and Paul continued for quite some time. He suggests that any book by either that doesn't show this conflict between law and grace is not valid. He interpreted those books that were left according to this theory. Few hold to his thinking and most feel that the conflict was over quickly.

I guess some pundit would say that if only Peter and Paul had found Mary there would have been peace and not conflict, but I don't think I would want to say that in print.

Some suggest that this conflict occurred before the Jerusalem Council and call to reference the fact that the conflict did not last long because in Galatians there is conflict and later at the council there is only support from Peter for Paul.

We see in this section Paul's final argument to the Judaizers, in that his gospel was from Christ, his gospel was validated by the apostles and now that he had the power to confront Peter, an apostle, when he was found to be in the wrong.

There are four areas of error:

Peter and the Jews seemed to be out of line in their actions - they wanted to separate themselves from the Gentiles.

There must have been some stumbling in the Gentile group to have called for confrontation.

Not only was there the problem of causing others to sin it was hypocritical of Peter to suggest that eating with Jews only was the spiritual thing to do.

And finally there is the problem that it appeared that they were going back to a keeping of the law in some manner instead of living a life of grace.

Now, the question in my mind is whether Peter even thought of the problems that he had caused. Had he consciously set about to offend others? No, definitely not. He simply feared that he would be thought to be in error if he did not eat with the Jews. I don't think there was an attempt to cause trouble, only to protect himself and his character. That can be a problem at times - don't protect your character at the cost of others.

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

Verse sixteen seems to say three times in quick succession, that the law doesn't cut it in salvation - I rather think Paul was trying very hard to get that point across to his readers.

Darby translates the verse this way. "We, Jews by nature, and not sinners of [the] nations"

The "we" being Peter and Paul - we - Jews by our very nature and heritage, and not lost as the Gentiles, know that we aren't justified by the law, but by faith is the thought of verse fifteen. Another clear declaration of salvation by faith in Christ alone, without any part of the law.

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

Jamieson Fausset and Brown suggest that Paul is saying, if we, justified by faith in Christ, are found to be sinners - by eating with the Gentiles - then is Christ not the one causing us to sin if we eat with them?

Just an observation before we move on, I have to wonder what kind of relationship Peter and Paul had intellectually. This is Paul's side of the conversation, and it is such a detailed complicated response - what must Peters comments have been to elicit such a response? Just a thought to ponder.

It seems that Paul saw some feeling in the Jews, that Christ had made things different for them. The Jews and Gentiles were considered as sinners before God and seemingly the Jews may have felt that since they knew about God before the Gentiles did that they should have some special standing before God. Paul seemed to sense that there was a feeling that Christ dying for the Gentiles to was somehow causing them trouble with the Gentiles.

Paul says Christ did not cause this sin.

My own view of this verse is this. If you are seeking to be saved by faith in Christ and look to the law also - which is going to tell you that you are a sinner - then does Christ become the purveyor of sin - definitely not - it is the law that is the problem not Christ.

Verse eighteen (18 For if I build again the things which I destroyed, I make myself a transgressor.) follows to say if I lay on the law I lay on the sin as well and make myself again a sinner, when in reality Christ has made us free and Christ is all we need to remain so - if we in fact take on the law then we take on sin once again. No, I am not speaking of security at all. He is explaining the relation of the law to Christ.

Verse nineteen adds to this! 19 For I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God.

I'm dead to the law and it can no longer make me a sinner, because I cannot obey all of it.

20 I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave

himself for me. 21 I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness [come] by the law, then Christ is dead in vain.

There is a choice to make. You can trust in the grace extended by Christ or you can trust the works of your mind and body to gain acceptance with God and gain entrance into his heaven. There are two choices, but only one can be had per person, you can't have it both ways, you can't do both, the one excludes the other.

Kind of like toast. Dry and crumbly, only way it comes but a little butter seems to make it a little more acceptable. No, works do not make the cross a little more acceptable - the cross stands on its own or it does not stand.

The overall argument to the Galatian believers - my gospel is from God, my gospel teaches right living, and just to add a little proof to the pudding, my gospel corrected Peter himself. If my gospel does it all, how can you want to try to live by someone else's perverted gospel?

Verse twenty-one restates it all again, if I take upon myself the law I render Christ's death null and void - for myself, not for all man. (21 I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness [come] by the law, then Christ is dead in vain.)

Note that the law frustrates the grace of God. Oopps, I say ooopppppps, that verse should frustrate also the Calvinist that believes man cannot frustrate or interfere with what God wants to do. If we follow through on the thinking - if I take on the law it seems that it will hinder grace. Just how far can we take this? If I am a lost person and take upon myself the law am I not countering grace completely? It would seem so. IF I counter grace completely am I not choosing the state of the lost? It would seem so, and since this counters the rest of the Word we need to understand this text in the spirit in which it was given not in some intellectual manner.

Paul is giving a defense of doctrine, not stating cases in point. He is speaking hypothetically. Not that one can choose to step outside of salvation, but that this is the end result of what the Judaizers are attempting to do. It is impossible to do in actuality.

APPLICATION:

1. We have a very clear threefold application that needs to be looked at.

a. Paul had the umph to confront an apostle with wrong doing. Wow, do we dare suggest there is application for us today in this thought? Dare we not apply what we have seen?

First, if you see another, or especially in this context, a leader of the church in error we must confront them with their error. They are not exempt from church discipline if required.

Secondly, if you do confront a leader, be sure to duck very quickly and run for cover for the

fountains of verbiage will expel upon your head profusely. I've tried it a time or two and the results were very ugly. What am I saying here? Duck and run :-)! Be sure you are correct in your assessment of the situation, pray for your own preparation and confront the wrong.

This is all you can do, this is what Scripture requires us to do and it is what the Lord wants us to do, however if it goes real sour, don't be surprised, don't be dismayed, know that you have done right.

Years ago I confronted our pastor with having betrayed a confidence I had shown him. He did not deny it, just sat there and stared at me. He, like a trooper, took the ire of the upset member so the member would leave, then he promptly started spreading rumors about me.

Ultimately we had to leave the church because the deacons backed him completely and had accepted all his lies about me as truth. I found later that he had done the same to a couple of other students, and he did it to the two that followed me.

Know that truth is on your side and that you must follow its dictates and not fear's.

b. The obvious next application is to the other party in the conflict. First if you do wrong accept confrontation openly and correctly. There is absolutely nothing wrong with a leader faltering now and then as long as it is unintentional. Secondly, step up to the consequences if there are any.

To admit error and to accept consequences is a lot more spiritual than to lie and backbite behind your oppositions back. There is never a time that a leader should take the low road to conflict resolution.

Peter faced what needed to be done and did it. There was no argument, there was no passing of the buck, and there was no rationalization. He did what needed to be done.

That must have been hard for Peter - think of it - the man that preached the message that founded the church - the man all looked up to as the leader of the church - how difficult it must have been for him to face criticism, to admit wrong, and correct his action. Peter may have been a lot of things, but at the very least he was a big man to admit his error.

c. Of course there is the third aspect to this application - Paul did it to Peter's face. He didn't slink off to Jerusalem and corner the rest of the apostles and say "Hey, you know what Peter is doing now?" He went face to face and confronted the error with the man that was committing it.

2. This might be a good place to clarify the law. Paul is not saying that the law is done away with, and he is not saying it is of none effect, nor is he saying we should set it aside. He is merely saying that it is not an integrated part of being saved - that is through Christ's work on the cross and it alone. The law is something that is good as he states in Rom. 7.12 "Wherefore the law [is] holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good."

This is not to say that we need to follow the ceremonial law for Christ is the Lamb, and there is no need for any other. The moral law however is something that we should use as a guide for our lives. The Ten Commandments are moral guide posts for our everyday living.

3. The Life Application Bible notes state that these men from James were Judaizers and that the problem was that Peter had been eating with Gentiles prior to their arrival and when they arrived he started eating with the Judaizers. They did not state any proof of this, and I think it was just an embellishment to show greater conflict than was really there. There may be evidence of this but I am not aware of it at the present.

I would suspect Paul would have blown a gasket if that had been the case.

4. I am going to offend some with the following, but so be it. The crux of what Paul is saying is that you must not include the law in your gospel else wise you push Christ out of it. If you trust the law and Christ for your salvation, then you are trusting the law. You have replaced the gospel of Christ with the gospel of the law.

Likewise there are many today that substitute other rules and regulations as being part of the gospel. You accept Christ, but you must also bow to these laws to be saved.

Now, there are others that suggest if you see any do's and don'ts in the Word of God and try to follow them then you are a legalist. This is number one, totally absurd and against the teaching of what legalism is, and secondly seems to be a form of legalism itself. Aren't they saying that to believe the true gospel you must reject all do's and don'ts from the Scripture? It seems that this is a set of laws that are added to the simple gospel of Christ.

If I accept Christ and then find I must not follow the do's and don'ts of Scripture to be saved is this not legalism of a sort? I think so.

Some today add Lordship to the simple Gospel. To be properly saved you must accept Christ and you must make Him Lord of your life. That seems to me to be a two step process when God has given only a one step process.

I agree that Lordship should be a part of all believers' lives, but it may not be an immediate condition after salvation. Many things might hinder even the understanding of Lordship thus if these folks thinking is correct, the person has accepted Christ but is not saved until they understand and act on Lordship. Not a teaching that I would like to espouse.

5. Life Application Bible notes suggest three ways in which the law is good for the believer.

First, it gives us the proper standard to follow so allows us to live properly. Secondly, when we view it we are convicted of sin and are able to know our path is to seek God and his forgiveness. Thirdly, it requires us to trust wholly in Christ and Christ alone, because we can never keep the

law and even if we could it could not save us.

6. It seems to me that Paul says Peter was eating with Gentiles, then when the Jews came he started eating with them, and the Gentiles, if they wanted to eat with Peter, would have to live as Jews. This seems the crux.

Today, when someone is saved what do we do - mold them in our image. I have fought this all my life and seemingly have lost. Glad Paul got away with the truth.

I was born and raised in a little farming town in the middle of Nebraska. I was raised as a common sort of person. My parents had education, but they lived as everyone else lived in town. When I went into the ministry, I found there was great pressure to conform to a certain, "stuck up" in my mind, image of a minister. Clean cut, proper English, proper manners, and all that stuff.

I am from Nebraska. Though not an official redneck, I am somewhat of that mentality. Why should I become something that I am not? I'm sure if I were to go to a class reunion the classmates would see the drastic changes in my manner, even though I have attempted to remain as I was - a simple Nebraska kid at heart. I have never taken on the holier than thou rhetoric, I have not always followed the crowd and as a result I have been on the outside most of my life.

Not to worry, I have done what God has called me to do and it is He I attempt to please not those that are around me.

When we see someone that lives a little differently, if it is not sinful, then what business is it of ours to try to make them to be like ourselves - in a word or two, isn't that a little arrogant?

7. A further problem or possibly the main problem, the eating only being a symptom, is the implied superiority of the Jew. They ate separately, they separated from the Gentiles. This was the real problem and that is what Paul addressed next.

I mentioned I am the Nebraska kid, well this Nebraska kid has always felt that I should dress in my best clothes to go to meet in God's house. I have always done this even though I did not have a suit for many years, but I always wore the best clothes I could afford.

At one point I was judged, by some super saints that wore suits, as having spiritual problems because I wore cowboy boots (the best I had - only footwear I owned) and dress slacks and sweaters over white shirt and tie. It ultimately lead to the pastor confronting me with my spiritual problems.

Now, it seems that there had to be a little arrogance on the part of some in this situation, in that they were trying to require me to go buy a suit that I definitely could not afford so that I could be as spiritual as they. I might mention in passing that when we had a couples get together for the

church nobody showed up - seems they, like Peter, separated themselves as well - we had no fellowship with the people in that church though we tried very hard.

Now, that casual is in for church dress, I have bought a couple of suits over the years, and find that I am now on the outs with the casuals. One assistant pastor came to me one morning, looked me up and down, and said, "Boy you make me look like a scrounge." His assessment, not mine. His comment as well as others he made over a few months seemed clearly to say, you really aren't dressed properly, you really ought to dress like me.

I don't wear suits to make others uncomfortable; I wear suits because that is the best I have to wear when I go to church.

Oh well, Nebraskans aren't known for their fitting into Enough said :-)

8. The believer today can deny the gospel by the way he lives. This is what Peter was doing.

9. We should look forward to our most basic beliefs and practices being tested. Peter walked into this test of his lifestyle and came out changed because he was in error. I trust that we will be open to change our belief/practice if we find it to deny basic truth from the Word.

I have a particular doctrine in which I hold to a little different view than most. I have put it on the internet for people to consider and question. I am not saying categorically that I would teach this doctrine as truth, since I am still comparing the Word to that belief to see if it really stands up to the Word.

A few years after putting the file online I was contacted by one of the internet writers that seems to know all, see all, and tell all, especially the tell part. He started blasting me about the teaching, which was okay - I had asked for input. As I countered many of his points, he would suggest many more. It was obvious that he was discussing this from the point of view that he was right and that I was wrong. There was no thought to the fact that he might be in error, or that I might have some valid points.

I didn't mind the testing, but I minded the closed mind at the other end. There was no real thought as to the possible validity of my point. I further, in my file raised a number of items in Scripture, problems if you will, that my line of thought answers most perfectly.

I asked that he respond to the problem areas with his answers to them. There was never any mention of these questions, totally ignored went they.

Know the Word, know the Lord and know your heart, and from there give thought to criticism from others. It will come, consider it and make your decision, then be comfortable in that decision. If change is needed, do so; if not then go forward in your life knowing that you have considered the possibles.

10. Giants fail - Peter did wrong, and he was confronted on the issue.

11. Confrontation of public wrong should be public, not private. I have been told that when one of the seminar people was in his prime some of his teaching was found wanting. Someone asked to discuss the teaching openly, and he refused calling up Matthew 18 as the reason - he said he would be glad to discuss it privately.

The accuser stood firm and pointed out that his teaching was public and that some of his students were taking his teaching to extreme limits and it was wrong. Since the supposed wrong was in public, the discussion should be in public.

Right on! That accuser stood for truth. He gained that discussion and from what I am told there was public recognition of wrong teaching.

Sin needs to be confronted - it should be confronted personally if it is personal and public when it is public. Confrontation is very important. If we don't do it we gain a church as we have today - one that is full of sin - open sin - and nothing is being done about it. How in the world can we be a witness to the world of sinners when we are being a witness of open sin? Never can we be the light of the world. The church must purify itself before we can be a witness for our Lord.

12. Courage strengthens the church. This incident was one that straightened out a problem in the early church. It took courage for Paul to confront Peter, the leader of the church, the one that preached the first sermon of the church, the one that Christ seemed to favor - how does one gather enough courage to say, hey, you, you are doing wrong?

I fear - good choice of words - that I have been very weak in this area of Christian life. I find it easy to confront the wrongs I see in the church in the printed page, or online, but when it comes to face to face, nose to nose, and toes to toes confrontation I find it terribly hard to muster enough courage to do what is called for.

Those few times I mustered courage enough, the one I confronted was in no spiritual condition to see the truth of what I was saying, or just didn't care to be logical and spiritual.

The fact is that God wants us to confront, whether we are rebuked or if we are accepted - our responsibility is to confront wrong, it is up to God to deal with the result.

13. I wonder if part of the problem was that Peter was raised in Judaism and all that Judaism was at this time, thus when he accepted Christ he had that struggle of how to change his life to properly picture the change in direction of his life and belief.

It doesn't take long to think of the Roman Catholic that accepts the Lord. Some never leave the Roman church - not that it is right for them to stay, but it is understandable when you realize the life long indoctrination and habit that they have had and still have.

I don't see Peter as looking at this situation and deciding "I am going to offend the Gentiles and fellowship with the Jewish boys because they are my kind. Rather, I envision Peter just doing what he wanted to do and not thinking of the implications of how it looked and what message it was sending.

A strong point to remember - think about how you live your life and how it appears to others.

14. The question to be asked at this point: If a person accepts Christ then begins to add the law because he thinks it will help in his salvation, is he really a Christian. Another question that automatically comes up is this; if a person that is keeping the law in Judaism accepts Christ and continues to obey the law, is he really a Christian. One further question is if a person has been a Christian for several years and comes to believe that obedience to the law is required for his salvation, is he a person that was lost as we all were, and became a Christian, then by accepting the law became lost?

God will sort it out is the proper attitude, but let us see if we can sort it out a little more for our own minds.

I think it is clear that Paul is speaking hypothetically to prove a point - that the Judaizers are not correct in their doctrine. He is using logic to show that adding the law to grace has all sorts of illogical conclusions. In reality you can't add law to grace. Grace is complete in its work and no matter how hard you try you cannot assist it to its end.

In conclusion, I would suggest that if a person accepted Christ and later added the law, that he probably did not truly accept Christ unto salvation. A person can make a mental assent to the gospel without really accepting the reality of it within their life.

Years ago we met a Jewish woman that had been "led to the Lord" by a pastor. She had a glowing testimony for several months, but soon started seeking further spirituality. She ended up falling into the trap of the charismatic movement - seeking the baptism so she could be really complete.

Ultimately she happened into a little Baptist church and heard the gospel in its simplicity and reality and accepted Christ as payment for her sin. Some suggested that she was saved the first time and just didn't understand her salvation; others felt that the pastor did not clearly share the gospel with her.

Today, we have a watered down gospel that lets everyone accept - the gospel is so broad that anyone can believe it. We need first to get them lost in their minds, and then they can be saved.

Now, back to the question. I, at this point in my study of the Word, believe that a person that is truly saved that adds obedience to the law is not really adding anything to grace. They are only adding bondage to their living. Are they lost, I don't believe they are. Do they mock grace in their

lives, very definitely. Does their obedience to the law detract from grace, now, how could it, grace is complete.

Do they hinder their ability to evangelize? Definitely, they are preaching a polluted gospel - however it is no more polluted than the easy believism that evangelicals have allowed themselves to slide into.

I do believe that it is God that will have to sort things out in the end. To clarify, if I may, to work after salvation is good, but if you do it for salvation, you work in vain. If at any point you are truly trusting in your works for salvation, then you are not trusting God for them and you probably are not saved.

If a saved person is swayed into believing they must work to be saved, I do not believe that they have lost their eternal salvation, only the peace that grace can give. That person is not being overly nice to God in suggesting that He didn't do it right, but once a person is saved they cannot move themselves out of that personal relationship with God.

Week five: 3.1-12 Paul contrasts salvation by faith and condemnation by law

Deffinbaugh illustrates the former and coming passage by telling of two men that made mistakes.

He relates, in much more detail if you are interested, the accounts of Mr. Roy Riegels a football star and Mr. "wrong way Corrigan" a pilot. Riegels ended up with the ball and in all of his zigging and zagging across the field became disoriented and headed for the wrong goal line. He was finally tackled by one of his own team one yard from the wrong goal line. This mistake cost his team the game ultimately.

"Wrong way Corrigan" on the other hand attempted to fly from the east to the west coast, but ended up in Ireland. He had filed a flight plan for Ireland but it had been denied. His coast to coast attempt, some say, due to the extra fuel tanks on his plane, was actually an east coast to Ireland attempt in his class of air craft.

Deffinbaugh goes on to apply this with the thought that Peter, in the previous chapter had a mix up of direction and inadvertently done wrong as Mr. Riegel. The Judaizers on the other hand, and the Galatians as well, had made a deliberate mistake of adding to the Gospel that Paul had taught them. (Galatians: The Gospel of God's Grace; Robert L. Deffinbaugh, Th.M.; Biblical Studies Press; 1998)

Constable in his commentary suggests that Paul argues on three levels in this passage. From experience in 3.1-5 and then from the Word in 3.6-14 and finally from a logical view 3.15-29. This division is quite accurate and clear.

1 O foolish Galatians, who bewitched you not to obey the truth, to whom before your eyes Jesus Christ was written among you crucified?

Jamieson, Fausset and Brown suggest that this could be paraphrased as follows "fascinated you so that you have lost your wits" He mentions that one commentator thought that they were highly intellectual, which would make this phrase even more stinging to them.

Wow, "foolish" "bewitched" disobeying the truth - what strong language, yet it is the language that Paul used to get the peoples attention. Imagine sitting in the meeting when the elder rose and began reading this letter from the man that had founded their church.

First, to just hear such language from someone you most likely loved deeply in the Lord, and second to know that you had been duped and thirdly you had been caught in your foolishness by the one person you wouldn't want to find out that you had erred.

Who? As if Paul didn't know the one that had misled his sheep. He most likely knew not only the group but the particular person that was leading the group.

The term "foolish" not only has the thought of a fool but also the thought of not understanding. We tend to view foolishness as just the fooling around and not being serious, but this word relates to "not getting it" and acting in a foolish or misguided manner. Actually this word is the antonym for the normal word for wisdom. Some use the word gullible to describe the actions of the Galatians.

The term "bewitched" relates to the idea of casting a spell or to charm. The construction here indicates that this is done, they have been tricked, they have been bewitched, and they have been led off the proper path; it is a done deal, they have bought it, they have assimilated it, and they are living it - this error, or disobedience to the truth.

Barclay translates this as follows "Above all I pray that you may be in health unharmed by the evil eye and faring prosperously."

Deffinbaugh says that there is a word contrast here that the Galatians would have picked up on. Paul contrasts the gospel presented by way of the evil eye to his gospel presented before their eyes - Christ crucified.

Some translations leave out part of what the King James and Young include. (KJV, "who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth," Young states, "who did bewitch you, not to obey the truth") Not only had they been tricked to accept this false "truth," they had been tricked into leaving the truth.

There is a lot of "persuasion" indicated in this passage - someone went to great lengths to bring the people to absolute rejection of the truth.

In today's church the people have been persuaded to leave what they believed to be true worship, AND they have been convinced to accept another way, which is now supposed to be the "true worship."

Kind of a double negative Paul sets forth in my mind. Reject truth and then accept falsehood as truth.

Now, we know why Paul has taken two chapters to lay foundation to the gospel that he had given them in the beginning. He is attempting to overcome all this persuasion and charming and foolish teaching to gain their trust once again, for if they have rejected truth so completely, they surely have rejected Paul as a truth bearer.

He goes on to remind them that they had heard or been shown all that was needed of the crucifixion of Christ - by the way the term translated crucified is in a perfect tense - something that happened in the past, which is carrying through the present and which will continue on into the future to an ultimate and sure end. Think of the ramifications of that for awhile.

In short, Paul requires of them to consider who it was that bewitched them into rejecting the simple gospel and taking on this new false, untruthful gospel that in essence diminishes the crucifixion of the Lord Jesus Christ. If they must add obedience then his death was not sufficient.

Matthew Henry relates the thought of Christ being envisioned to them in some manner to the idea that Paul had taught them the clear meaning of the Lord's Supper observance, the death, the burial, and the resurrection of Christ. They had full knowledge along with the clear gospel from him of what they must do to be saved. Belief and faith alone.

Deffinbaugh concludes his thoughts well on this verse. "I believe that by the use of these two expressions ("bewitched" and "publicly portrayed") Paul is contrasting his methodology with that of the Judaizers. Their method is underhanded, secretive, and subtle. Paul's method is direct, open, and public. I sense the same contrast that we find in the book of Proverbs. Wisdom is portrayed as publicly calling forth, speaking forthrightly, inviting all to gain knowledge. Folly is more secretive and seductive; her appeal is to that which is either forbidden or unavailable to the masses. Error is sneaky while truth is straightforward. Error is offered to the elite-truth, to the all." (Galatians: The Gospel of God's Grace; Robert L. Deffinbaugh, Th.M.; deffinbaugh@bible.org; Biblical Studies Press; 1998)

2 This only I would learn from you: Did you receive the Spirit by works of the law, or by hearing of faith?

He calls them to remembrance of that first act of faith in which they accepted Christ and His work on the cross - that step of faith, rather than any works of the law. It should have pulled them up short to recall that they were saved by an act of faith, in simply taking God at His word. They did not have to follow any set of rules for ten days before they were acceptable, they didn't have to be baptized five times before they were born again, and they didn't have to follow some teacher before they were heaven-bound, they simply trusted God and His word.

This only will tell the real tail of what brings them salvation - Christ or works.

He isn't even going to tell them, they are to tell him - they are to instruct the apostle of their salvation. Almost an affront to them, in my mind - I told you the gospel, you received it, now you say I was wrong by adding to it, so now you tell me how you were saved. In essence he is saying, you tell me cuz I must not have been there - how were you saved?

3 Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, do you now perfect yourself in the flesh?

Some further logic; if you started in the Spirit do you, can you, must you now perfect yourself by your own works? The construction here is of note. They began at a point in time, but have to perfect themselves on a continual basis. You were saved - fact - done deal - now you are saving yourselves by works of the flesh - how so is the implication.

How can you be saved by Christ, then you, by your works do it again? This should scream out to anyone that doubts their salvation and security in it. It was done once, how can you add to it? That is impossible.

This should also scream at the charismatic that was saved, but now seeks to finish the work by seeking some special unction from on high that allows them to do things that make them even more spiritual.

There is something deeply wrong in any thought that seeks by works to add to the salvation God has given, be it works relating to gifts, to the works of doing of good, or works of making oneself spiritual.

For further on this concept see Phil. 1:6 and Col. 2:6.

4 Did you suffer so many things in vain, if indeed it is even in vain?

It seems Paul refers their minds back to the persecution they suffered by the hands of the Jews when they were first saved - the persecution of rejection etc. when they converted from Judaism to Christianity. (You might find Acts 14:1-7 of use, as it depicts the Jew's reaction to Christians.)

Some logical conclusions might be derived here: Did you suffer all that in vain, if it is in vain then it was. All that they had gone through was in vain, including accepting Christ by faith would be in vain if indeed their suffering was in vain.

Actually, Paul is saying, did you suffer all these things in vain, even if it wasn't in vain - again calling their logical minds to reality. Was it in vain? No, certainly not. Why would they then take on the works of those that persecuted them to become spiritual?

One might wonder if the persecution had softened their resolve and they had somewhere started wondering if their lost persecutors were right - then along came the Judaizers and they decided they had been wrong somehow.

5 Then He supplying the Spirit to you and working powerful works in you, is it by works of the law, or by hearing of faith?

If God supplied the Holy Spirit and great and powerful works in you (when you were saved) did you do it by works of the law or did it occur because you responded in faith to the gospel that you had heard and the working of the Spirit of God?

Now, I'm not going to jump up and down here but don't you think Paul is putting it out just about as simply as he could - can you ask a clearer, concise, and considered question to get to the point? I doubt it - simple - faith or works but not both.

Personally I think I will opt for the faith that Paul sets forth, because he doesn't seem to have too good an opinion of working for salvation.

6 Even as Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him for righteousness.

This is from Gen. 15.6 "And he believed in the LORD; and he counted it to him for righteousness."

Now, he goes clear back to Abraham, to the one all would call their father most likely, and says, look - even Abraham responded to what he heard by faith - this was before the law so works of the law do not relate. He heard God and he responded to God, the Galatians heard the gospel and responded to the gospel - both in faith in what God was saying.

Some in the reformed camp and others in other camps declare that dispensationalists believe in two gospels. They view the Old Testament people as keeping the law for salvation and in the church age they see the people accepting the gospel - two different methods of reaching God for salvation.

I don't know how many times on the internet I have confronted people that declare this falsehood. I have challenged all to share with the boards a quote from a real dispensationalist that taught this heresy. None has even attempted to supply the proof of their accusation, and I might add, none has offered a retraction.

If you disagree with some teaching, just attach it, lie about it, and disparage the person that believes in it - it don't matter about the truth, don't matter about the veracity of the speaker, and it certainly don't matter if you are wrong, cuz you believe in what is true and that makes you right is the attitude.

I will admit that Scofield in his first Study Bible made a comment that was very poorly constructed and could be read to see two ways of salvation, however he clarified that statement a number of times and it was corrected in the next edition of his notes Bible. (I will insert here the mistaken comment and some other information as a footnote to this lesson if you are interested in further information.)

7 Therefore know that those of faith, these are the sons of Abraham.

Simple statement, those of faith, those that believe are sons of Abraham as opposed to those that keep the law that aren't sons of Abraham is the clear implication.

8 And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the nations through faith, preached the gospel before to Abraham, saying, "In you shall all nations be blessed." (Gen. 12.3 "And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.")

Here we see the Scripture living and personified. The Scripture foresaw, the Scripture preached and the Scripture said. Now, some would suggest, and rightly so, that the Scripture was not set down in Abraham's time and it could not preach nor say anything.

We know that the Scriptures were coming via the method of transmission of the day - word of mouth. Abraham told his kids, and they theirs, etc. until Moses sat down at his laptop and started pounding out the Pentateuch.

No, the Scripture did not literally foresee, no the Scripture did not preach nor say anything, but Paul uses this method of illustrating his point.

It is a significant truth however that Scripture was always in God's plan and was always an integrated part of His working with mankind.

9 So then those of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham.

Constable suggests that the line of thought of the Judaizers might have been, that the Galatians were justified by faith as was Abraham, but that they must undergo circumcision at a later point as did Abraham to complete the process of coming to God. Circumcision was also required of the gentile coming into the Jewish nation in the Old Testament. This may well be the reasoning of the false teachers. They were trying to draw the Galatians into their line of thinking that was based on their Jewish bent of thought.

Those of faith are truly blessed, with salvation while those under the law are cursed according to the next verse.

10 For as many as are out of works of the Law, these are under a curse; for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who does not continue in all things which are written in the Book of the Law, to do them."

Once obedient to the law for salvation, one has rejected Christ and thus is under the complete law - one hundred percent obedience to the law if they really want to be saved - of course no one (except Christ Himself) can obey the law perfectly, thus the curse.

11 But that no one is justified by the Law in the sight of God is clear, for, "The just shall live by faith."

Paul just won't let it drop - he adds another nail to the coffin of the gospel of the law - the Scripture's requirement for salvation is faith and faith alone.

12 But the Law is not of faith; but, "The man who does these things shall live in them."

A further statement of fact - if you are going to obey the law, you must live in it completely.

So, we have three quotes here - just where do they come from?

1. "Cursed is everyone who does not continue in all things which are written in the Book of the Law, to do them." Deut. 27.26 "Cursed [be] he that confirmeth not [all] the words of this law to do them. And all the people shall say, Amen."
2. "The just shall live by faith." Hab. 2.4 "... but the just shall live by his faith."
3. "The man who does these things shall live in them." Lev. 18.5 A bit of a paraphrase by Paul, "Ye shall therefore keep my statutes, and my judgments: which if a man do, he shall live in them: I [am] the LORD."

There is a very interesting study that any Bible school student should be required to do - not that I was, it is something I should, yet do before I am with the Lord. A study of how the New Testament writers used and quoted the Old Testament.

APPLICATION:

1. And so, how do we apply this particular passage? Be very careful what you accept from a new pastor. Be very careful of what you accepted from your old pastor. Be careful what you accept from any source for all sources must be suspect or you are in danger of being duped.

Many are the sound Bible churches that have called pastors that have an agenda counter to the churches and have seen their churches slip into the reform camp or into some other groups clutches.

This calls to question those that accept a call to a church where they know they are in doctrinal disagreement. How does this happen? Seminaries that are not teaching their men ethics or at least real honest ethics.

It is never ethical to step into a position in a church where you know you disagree in the basic doctrines. That is dishonest and is the symptom of an underlying agenda to take that church into waters where it ought not to be.

The ethics of these men run along this line. They are the purveyors of truth, they hold and know the truth, and they must spread truth to the world no matter what the method. Thus if a "doctrinally incorrect" church calls them, they are by moral ethic required to go and teach them the truth that they alone hold.

You may say that is quite harsh - yes it is, but I have seen this over and over in life and I have seen this mindset on the internet many times.

The person that holds to a reform position views it as truth and as a result all other teaching is

heresy and false teaching. No matter if the other person is a believer, he teaches other than reform doctrine, thus is in error. Many of them would not hold to the person being a "true" believer, because they do not conform to a creed or confession.

Heaven forbid we hold to the Scriptures for truth. Many of them teach their families confessions rather than Scripture in devotional times. They would counter that they are teaching Scripture for the confession is based entirely on Scripture. Then, I would wonder, why you don't teach the Scripture and use the confession to show that the church has taught this truth before - not that I think those churches that taught reform theology were correct.

2. I do not believe that I can ever know the mind of God, but I wonder if He isn't hurt to the core when a person, saved by faith, determines that what He has been freely given is not good enough to satisfy God, but that he must add works to the mix to make it to heaven.

Problems with that thinking:

- a. God's decrees were inadequate.
- b. God's word is incorrect.
- c. God's works are imperfect.
- d. God's planning is deficient.
- e. God's law was better than His grace.
- f. God is really not up to the job of saving us.

And there are probably other points - the main point being, we are better at saving ourselves than God - what supreme arrogance the creature has to question and put himself above his Creator - uh oh, I guess that is what Satan did isn't it.

3. This passage brings up a pet point of mine. Just how are we saved? Are we saved by the act of accepting Christ? Are we saved by the believing in His death, burial and resurrection? Are we saved by knowing he was God?

This text is quite clear that none of those things are mentioned, but what is mentioned is that Abraham believed, and had faith in God's promise - in short Abraham believed God and what He said and trusted in that and that alone.

Some would counter with the Acts passage that states that there is no other name under heaven whereby we might be saved -- the name of Christ. I would suggest that this is so very true, but it is not that name that saves us, it is not believing in that name that saves us, it is the work of that

one named Jesus Christ that saves us, as God said in His word. We are saved by faith in God, and that salvation is provided by Christ.

This doesn't directly bring up the next point, but I will.

4. If Christ's death is the provision of salvation, then just when were the Old Testament saints saved. Were they saved at the moment of belief? I personally do not believe they were. I believe that at the moment of their belief all was done to carry them through to heaven. I do, however, believe that they were not born again or regenerated at that moment of faith. How could they be? Christ had not died yet, there was no provision for them, and there was no way for them to enter into God's presence.

Indeed, that is the very reason for Sheol, that two compartment holding area for departed Old Testament saints. They were not entirely prepared to meet with God, so they were ushered into Abraham's bosom to await that work of the cross completed.

I don't expect you to accept this as Gospel, so would refer you to my book on regeneration on my website for the "REST OF THE STORY" as Paul Harvey would say it. This has a complete look at this thought of regeneration and when it occurred.

I might add that this is another area where reformed people "have the truth" and reject all other teaching. They have it in their head that regeneration is something other than being born again and so reject any thought of mine concerning regeneration - it is automatically wrong.

I discussed this at length one time and there were seldom Scriptures given to disprove what I had to say, only "statements of fact" that were not backed up by fact. (They view regeneration as a process whereby lost man is made a little spiritual so that he can understand the gospel. It is not actual rebirth, only preparation for the possibility of rebirth. They suggest that John the Baptist was regenerated when he moved in his mother's womb - thus anyone can be regenerated at anytime, prior to believing faith.)

5. Many preachers today tip toe around their congregations as though they can't stir up anyone lest the giving drop and the salary be cut for the preacher. Paul tells them they are foolish, that they have been bewitched. He told them the truth. He told them they were fools. He told them they were tricked. How much clearer could he make the truth?

A preacher that made things that clear today in most churches would be replaced quite quickly. Thus we have little clarity of teaching in our churches today - few there are that will chance unemployment to assist their congregations into a true spiritual life.

We attended a church where the pastor was wearing khaki pants and a sport shirt. He said that he did not feel comfortable dressing that way for ministering - he blamed it on his elder board that told him to dress more casually. What happened to back bone, what happened to courage, what

happened to right? Guess it is out and "get along with the paycheck writers" is in.

I suspect that is one reason I opted to be a tent maker all my life - I knew that boards would not like the truth and a stand for it.

6. Verse seven and eight bring up a question that we need to consider. "Therefore know that those of faith, these are the sons of Abraham. 8 And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the nations through faith, preached the gospel before to Abraham, saying, "In you shall all nations be blessed."

What relationship is there between the Old Testament saint, via Abraham and the New Testament saint via Christ? This passage declares that we are sons of Abraham, that we will be "blessed with faithful Abraham." What does this mean for the believer today?

We know that we are all God's people whether Old or New Testament, but are we equals? We are equals in the spiritual sense of our relationship to God, though there will be some differences in how we will be treated in the end times. The Jews will occupy the land promised, and we will be in some other relationship to God and the Jews.

Are we equal in the respect that we will be given the promises of Israel? No, the above point in the end times proves that we will not receive the promises of Abraham and the Jews, only that we are blessed in the thought of being allowed salvation with the Jews.

If you look to the New Testament and notice how the Jews and gentiles and believers are spoken of, you will soon notice that there is a difference between the Jew and the Church age believer. This is the crux of dispensational teaching. If there is no difference between Israel and the Church then dispensations makes little difference.

The reform camp ignores the differences in the New Testament, ignores the literal promises to the Jews, and mixes Jewish and Church believer into one mess. Circumcision for all males becomes baptism for all, both male and female. Baptism becomes a rite for all ages, including infants, etc. The mixing of Israel and the church changes all sorts of things in ones belief system.

7. It seems to me that the Galatians had received the gospel and had settled into their new life and like many even today felt that there must be more. They may have found themselves in the boredom of the day to day world and felt that there had to be something more to this Christianity. They may have been open and looking for something new and exciting. Something to excite and stir the flesh seems to be the goal of most, even today.

Many today do the same thing. They may even get into daily Bible study and prayer, but become bored and seek more. This is the basis for much of the charismatic movement - excitement, lots of new stuff, lots to do, lots to seek.

Others find excitement in all the Bible studies and seminars and cruises etc. that the worldly church offers. Why not, everybody is doing it? The hand waving, the beat, the stirring of the mind rather than the spirit seems to be the thrill of our day. No matter what the Scripture teaches, if it feels good, then do it is the assumed command that they seek to fulfill.

The Christian life is what God wants it to be - Him and the individual and nothing more, why would any believer think they could add to that relationship anything of worth?

8. Abraham was saved by faith. Gen. 15.6 "And he believed in the LORD; and he counted it to him for righteousness." and Rom. 4.3 "For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness." clearly show this.

The Life Application Bible notes suggest that the Judaizers were saying you must first become Jews, and then become Christians. This most likely is a true statement of the facts. How like some in our own day, that require you to jump through hoops of their own to be a part of their church. We have attended, briefly, several churches that required you to become part of their group before you could be part of the Church. They required that you be baptized by one of their group before you could join "THEIR" church. This in essence says that their church is the only true church and that all others are defective in some manner. Not unlike the Judaizers.

9. A little off the subject, but related to this thought is the fact that we believers today are not unlike those that were scattered at the tower of Babel. We have divided ourselves into so many splinters and splatters of Christianity that it takes volumes to list the groups, the splinters, and the sub splinters of groups of Christians today.

I am not making a case for denominationalism; I am saying that within orthodox, basic Bible believing people we are so splintered that we can't get along. The case of the group in point eight. I agree with them in almost every doctrine except the doctrine of the Universal church, which in my mind they would agree with me if they would understand the doctrine. They believe, due to their rejection of the universal church that only their church is valid to baptize. As a result of my not being baptized by one of their pastors, I a believer in every way, I a believer of 95% of their doctrine, I a believer in the same gospel as they, cannot partake of the Lord's table and celebrate what Christ did for all of us, in their church because I have not been "properly baptized" by one of their own.

Based on my inadequate baptism, I cannot be a member of their church, I cannot partake of the Lord's Table, and I cannot manifest my spiritual gifts in their midst. There just has to be something wrong in our thinking as believers today. Babel must have been an inherent part of man, or we certainly have not learned anything about ourselves since.

10. The keeping of law as rule for life is called "nomism" - does that trigger any thoughts? Antinomianism is the rule of life that there is no law for life - kind of like America today - live life any way you want, any old way will do it. There is no moral compass there is no truth, and

there is no reason to follow any set of rules if we don't want to.

The two extent of the spectrum. We even see this in the church today. We have those that follow their prescribed laws and we have those that follow no law, not even God's guide, the Word.

11. In Verse five Paul mentions that the Spirit worked miracles in their midst. This is secondary to the Spirit himself. He made clear note that it was the Spirit that worked the miracles. This clarification may be due to the fact that miracles do not make something true. Miracles via the Spirit are true.

The Devil can do miracles: II Thess. 2.9-10 " [Even him], whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, 10 And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved." Also you could refer to the wonders that were done by Pharaoh's men when God was doing great things through Moses.

The point here and now, just because someone is doing miracles, do not assume he is of God. Many of the miracles done in God's name today are just plain falsehood and trickery. There are wondrous things done in the name of Black magic as well, so don't assume God is in something that you are told about just because it was wondrous or a miracle.

12. In verse five he relates the receiving of the Spirit directly with the point of salvation. This is a prime text to show that the gift of the Spirit is near synonymous with the theological point of salvation - justification etc. This disturbs any thought that it is a second work of grace at some other point in time.

It also is a clear point of proof that they were saved without the law, that by faith they received Christ and received the Spirit. They were true believers without the law.

NOTE: Concerning Scofield and Dispensationalism.

These are just some footnotes from his reference Bibles. The first is the one most use to prove he believed in two ways of salvation, and the rest are quotes that show that he did not.

from the Old Scofield Reference Bible on John 1:17 note: "The point of testing is no longer legal obedience as the condition of salvation, but acceptance or rejection of Christ, with good works as a fruit of salvation, (Joh 1:12,13 3:36 Mt 21:37 22:24 Joh 15:22,25 Heb 1:2 1Jo 5:10-12) The immediate result of this testing was the rejection of Christ by the Jews, and His crucifixion by Jew and Gentile (Ac 4:27)"

From page 1124 (Note on Jn. 1:17) of the New Scofield Reference Bible: "Under the former dispensation, law was shown to be powerless to secure righteousness and life for a sinful race (Gal. 3:21-22); now it is clearly revealed that salvation and righteousness are received by faith in

the crucified and resurrected Savior (Jn. 11:12-13; 5 :24; I Jn. 5:11-13), with holiness of life and good works following as the fruit of salvation (Jn. 15:16; Rom. 8:2-4; Eph. 2:8-10; Ti. 2:11-14)."

From page vii of the New Scofield Reference Bible: "As a further aid to comprehending the divine economy of the ages, a recognition of the dispensations is of highest value, so long as it is clearly understood that throughout all the Scriptures there is only one basis of salvation, i.e. by grace through faith; and that strict limits cannot be placed upon the terminations of all the dispensations because (1) there is some overlapping, and (2) the divinely-given stewardship may continue after the time-era of special testing has ended."

From page 3 of the New Scofield Reference Bible: "Before the cross man was saved in prospect of Christ's atoning sacrifice, through believing the revelation thus far given him. Since the cross man has been saved by believing on the Lord Jesus Christ in whom revelation and redemption are consummated."

From page 19 of the New Scofield Reference Bible: "In the continuance through the centuries of this stewardship of truth, believers of the church age are called upon to trust god as Abram did (Rom. 4:11, 16, 23-25; Gal. 3:6-9), and thus enter into the blessings of the covenant which inaugurated the dispensation of Promise."

From page 94 of the New Scofield Reference Bible: "...the law is not here proposed as a means of salvation"

From page 1211 of the New Scofield Reference Bible: "The Hebrew and Greek words for salvation imply the ideas of deliverance, safety, preservation, healing, and soundness [wholeness]. Salvation is the great inclusive word of the gospel, gathering into itself all the redemptive acts and processes, as justification, redemption, grace, propitiation, imputation, forgiveness, sanctification, and glorification. Salvation is in three tenses: (1) The believer has been saved from the guilt and penalty of sin (Lu 7:50; 1 Co 1:18; 2 Co 2:15; Eph 2:5,8; 2 Ti 1:9) is safe. (2) the believer is being saved from the habit and dominion of sin (Ro 6:14; Php 1:19, 2:12,13; 2 Th 2:13; Ro 8:2; Ga 2:19,20; 2 Co 3:18) And (3) The believer is to be saved in the sense of entire conformity to Christ. (Ro 13:11; Heb 10:36; 1 Pe 1:5; 1 Jo 3:2) Salvation is by grace through faith, is a free gift, and wholly without works (Ro 3:27-28, 4:1-8, 6:23; Eph 2:8) The divine order is: first salvation, then works (Eph 2:9,10; Tit 3:5-8)."

Again last night this question came up on a board where I took great pains to clarify Scofield's comments less than a month before. The person decided because Scofield was in error in that one instance that they should reject all he taught and that since Dispensationalism hangs in the balance of what Scofield taught then Dispensationalism was completely discredited.

That is kind of like saying, because one of my college professors made a mistake in what he said that all he ever said was false and that since he was teaching Calvinism, all Calvinistic teaching is false doctrine and to be rejected.

I hate to say it, but many reformed people have this line of illogical progression anytime they engage their brains and fingers to type or tongues to talk. They are brothers in Christ, but they act as if they are God making declarations from His holy throne in the heavens.

Week six: 3.13-27 Paul contrasts Abraham's promise to the law

Last study we saw that we were tied completely to the law if we were to try to keep any of it. Verse twelve was quite clear on the subject.

Rom. 10.5 Adds to this thought. "For Moses describeth the righteousness which is of the law, That the man which doeth those things shall live by them."

The Romans text is a reference to Lev. 18.5 "Ye shall therefore keep my statutes, and my judgments: which if a man do, he shall live in them: I am the LORD."

In this study we see that Christ freed us from all those bonds and ties.

13 Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed [is] every one that hangeth on a tree:

The term redeemed has many thoughts. It can mean to buy with ones own belongings something from another for ones own use. It can be translated ransom - a price paid to another to gain something back from domination.

In this context it relates to Christ buying us back or paying the price to free us from the domination of the law. Before, the law and it kept, was our only possible salvation, now that Christ has fulfilled that law, and given his life as atonement, we are free from the laws dominion and rule over us.

The fact that this redemption is in an aorist tense means that it was done at a point in time, that it is no longer going on. There is no further redemption being provided on a continuing basis, there is no cross on a continuing basis and there is no need for offering Christ on a continuing basis. It was done in the past, on the cross and it remains done for all time.

The verb "is written" is a perfect tense, something that was written in the past, something that remains written even now, and something that will always be written into the future to a time of completion. Rather well describes the eternity of the Word of God doesn't it.

The passage referred to is Deut. 21.23 "His body shall not remain all night upon the tree, but thou shalt in any wise bury him that day; (for he that is hanged [is] accursed of God ;) that thy land be not defiled, which the LORD thy God giveth thee [for] an inheritance."

The "us" to some commentators relates specifically to the Jews in Paul's audience as well as himself, however it also extends to the gentiles in that, a way had to be made for the gentiles to be blessed through Abraham. We will see a little more on this in the next verse and find that this idea of "us" is not necessarily true.

Christ being made a curse speaks to the substitutionary aspect of the atonement, He was cursed for us - we need not suffer death as did Christ since He already suffered and paid the price.

A couple of verses in Deuteronomy picture this portion of Christ's ministry to us on the cross.

This passage pictured what He would go through hundreds of years before the fact. Deut. 21:23 "His body shall not remain all night upon the tree, but thou shalt in any wise bury him that day; (for he that is hanged [is] accursed of God;) that thy land be not defiled, which the LORD thy God giveth thee [for] an inheritance."

The second passage relates to the curse upon any that does not follow the entire law. Deut. 27:26 "Cursed [be] he that confirmeth not [all] the words of this law to do them. And all the people shall say, Amen."

Just a little freebie here, the first Deuteronomy passage is a great illustration of how the Old Testament helps us know and interpret the New Testament. Many are the passages of the Old that open the secrets of the New.

14 That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.

Here we see Paul including himself in the collective "we" of the Gentiles, whereas, he included himself in the collective "us" in the previous verse speaking of Jews. It was mentioned that the "us" in the previous verse related specifically to Jews, but I don't think that case can be made since this observation seems to indicate he is speaking of all elect generically rather than to groups within the files of the elect.

There is a note of interest here in that Paul pictures Christ's death as being for the Gentiles alone. Now, was there no need for Christ to die for the Jews - of course he needed to die for the Jews as well as the Gentiles. I think he is here just speaking directly to the people of interest at this point in time - the Gentiles that needed to understand that the death of Christ was sufficient for their salvation.

The promise of the Spirit comes from Christ and His work rather than from the promise to Abraham, thus again a thrust of the grace sword into the heart of the legal minded works-a-lot Jews.

The Spirit was promised in the following passages:

Joel 2.28, 29 "And it shall come to pass afterward, [that] I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions: 29 And also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my spirit."

John 14.16-17 "And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; 17 [Even] the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you."

John 14.26-27 "But the Comforter, [which is] the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you. 27 Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid."

Lu. 24.49 "And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high."

Acts 2.33 "Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear."

Paul seems to tie verse fourteen to the falling of the Spirit at Pentecost and by way of round about says that this was related directly to the promise of God to Abraham.

What are some of the blessings that the Spirit gives to us? We have seen in the previous passages already that we have peace, knowledge and power. Are there other benefits to this blessing?

Yes, of course, let's just list a few:

Indwelling John 14.16-17

Peace: John 14.26-27

Power: Lu. 24.49

Knowledge: John 14.26-27

Remembrance: John 14.26-27

Learning: John 14.26-27

Gifts: I Cor. 12.1ff

Fruit: Gal. 5.22ff "love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance"

Not to mention all the ramifications of Salvation: Baptism into the body of Christ, regeneration, justification, etc.

And again we see the same emphasis on faith that we have seen before. Faith alone can bring us to salvation, and it is that same faith that Abraham had when he believed God in the beginning - faith in the Word of God.

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

This covenant was "confirmed" - the verb is in the perfect tense - something that will be carried forward "as is" till completion yet future. The question is what covenant we are talking about. Is it the covenant with Abraham, the covenant of the coming Spirit or what?

The context is clear that this is related to the promise to Abraham that has been fulfilled by Christ - the blessing of Gentiles.

It is of note to me that the passage seems to be telling us that the blessing of all nations is done, is set and nothing more is to come. Not that future generations of Gentiles won't have access to salvation, but that there are no other conditions to be met, in other words, there is no way that the Gentiles are to benefit from the promise of the Land or any other promise other than salvation.

There is the question of Paul's terminology. Most scholars make great mention, when studying the Old Testament, of the fact that this covenant with Abraham was God's covenant with Abraham, not Abraham's covenant with God. How does this relate to our passage, or does it?

First of all, yes, this is God's covenant, He made the promise, and it is on Him to see to its fulfillment, not Abraham. Having said that, it is a covenant WITH a man, the man Abraham. It is a covenant with man, thus Paul's terminology only calls to the thought that God made the promise to a man, and that there is no man that can disannul it - in short, this passage backs up the thought that God has the responsibility to fulfill it and that no man, no matter how powerful and smart can do anything to stop God from doing His promised work.

The phrase "if it be" is in brackets meaning that it is not in the original, only added for understanding. I might add that it is to be understood as "if and assumed so" rather than "maybe it will and maybe it won't" - a much different view. The American Standard Version states "Brethren, I speak after the manner of men: Though it be but a man's covenant, yet when it hath been confirmed, no one maketh it void, or addeth thereto."

Paul, when he speaks "after the manner of men" is simply saying, from man's point of view - a covenant once ratified (by God) is not made void or changed by man. Again, how arrogant for a man to assume that he can make void or change the covenant that God has set into motion.

I might clarify my own statement - Paul specifically says no man will ADD to the covenant - and we see another clear, concise lunge to the heart of the Judaizers teaching. Paul isn't even nice about his little comments here and there that had to inflame the false teachers. No wonder he had

so much trouble with them, they must have hated his every word.

At the same time, how sad to see that truth brings hatred from the false teacher. Often this is the case in reality.

Heb. 9.17 gives a little insight to the thought of a covenant or testament. "For a testament is of force after men are dead: otherwise it is of no strength at all while the testator liveth."

Kind of relates to why Christ had to die - the covenant was dependant on God and his Word and really His death to put the covenant into effect. This is the seeming conclusion to this passage. A good deal of study could be done on this subject if one had the desire to dig deeper.

16 Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ.

(Some passages of interest in the Old Testament are in Gen. 12:7; 13:15; 17:7; 24:7.)

The Net Bible translates the verse as follows: "Now the promises were spoken to Abraham and to his descendant. Scripture does not say, "and to the descendants," referring to many, but " and to your descendant ," referring to one, who is Christ." This makes it easier to see what Paul is saying, not that the King James doesn't give this same thought, it just is not as easily seen by some readers - in my opinion of course.

The Net Bible lists the following passages to show that the singular was the terminology that God used when He spoke to Abraham and indeed they do show this. Gen. 12.7; 13.15; 17.7; 24.7.

This verse is a part of the next verses and all present an argument to the Judaizers which again prove them to be false teachers. My how uncomfortable they must have been when this letter was read.

I must also wonder if some of them didn't see the pure logic and correctness of Paul's arguments and repent of their false doctrine. They would have to have been quite hardened to the Spirit to reject what Paul was saying.

So, was the promise for or to Christ might be the question that is raised. Since many preachers tell us that all nations will be blessed by the promise to Abraham, and this passage states that the seed is Christ, then was the blessing Christ that was to the nation or was Christ to be blessed because he was Abraham's seed?

We need to link to this passage the information given in Gen. 17.4 "As for me, behold, my covenant [is] with thee, and thou shalt be a father of many nations." He would father nations. This is mentioned in other Genesis texts as well. Add to this, Gen. 18.17 "And the LORD said,

Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do; 18 Seeing that Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him?" and we see clearly that the nations would be blessed through Abraham, but that the seed was Christ. I think some preachers probably are a little sloppy in their use of these passages - myself included. The seed of Abraham is blessed, but the seed proper is more to the point, Christ.

Abraham, by the way means "father of a multitude." You and I are a part of a multitude of spiritual kids. Actually the term "seed" is the word sperma which literally relates to the seed that is placed in the ground in the hope of germination and a plant to follow, and as has been indicated previously is in the singular.

One might wonder if the "seed" thought of the promise wasn't related to the fact that the Jewish law required brothers to raise up seed for a dead brother that had not. This might well relate to the thought of spilling seed on the ground being wrong. These laws related to the possibilities of the line to the "seed" Christ.

Let's read this argument in its completeness: 16 Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ. 17 And this I say, [that] the covenant, that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect. 18 For if the inheritance [be] of the law, [it is] no more of promise: but God gave [it] to Abraham by promise. 19 Wherefore then [serveth] the law? It was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made; [and it was] ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator.

The promise was first, and then came the law, so how can the law be part of the promise - the promise is the source of salvation, not the law. A very simple logical argument against the teaching of the Judaizers that wanted to make the law a part of salvation.

I don't know how much clearer Paul could have made it. This is almost a picture drawn with words to refute the intellectual musings of the false teachers.

We might, in our smugness, suggest that this sort of thing can't happen today - we are too smart to allow ourselves to be drawn into such false teaching yet, just this past Sunday we were visiting an independent, fundamental church and sat through a video presentation that was taking dowry passages from the Old Testament and relating them to how a man should approach a woman today before marriage.

Yes, there might be some application from the feelings, the respect and the approach for today, but to directly start applying such passages to today's youth is nothing less than Judaizing - telling them they have to court as the law tells them to court. Not a far jump to the relating of law to salvation if you are this close all ready.

Just a side note, the term "He" does not appear in the original. It is assumed from the verb. The Net Bible translates this as "Scripture does not" and their footnote states that this is an alternative translation to assuming "He" in the passage. Whether it is God or Scripture the result is the same, for if it is Scripture it is from God - His Word and He said it, and if it is God, then His word is in complete agreement. It was God that spoke it in the first place anyway.

Just some other thoughts on the passage, the verb "confirmed" is in a perfect tense - something that has happened, but the action is ongoing into the future to a completion. It is confirmed by God, so we have something that is kind of like guaranteed I would think.

In verse eighteen the verb "gave" is also a perfect tense.

20 Now a mediator is not [a mediator] of one, but God is one.

The term mediator relates to one that comes between two to bring peace. Much as a legal mediator does today. In the spiritual realm there is a rift between God and man, and Christ the mediator is the only one that can mend that rift. The term also can be translated arbitrator. It is someone that brings peace and restores friendship.

Just what is the meaning of the verse? Some suggest that the King James addition for understanding may be incorrect when it puts "[a mediator]" in the verse. Without it we read "Now a mediator is not of one, but God is one." This seems clear to me - a mediator does not work well, if at all if he is working with one person. You can't mediate without two parties. You can't restore something between one.

Not having checked commentaries I have to wonder if the passage is just disclosing that there was division within the God head in the area of the promise - in that it was yet to be completed, and Christ was the one, the mediator that brought peace within the trinity - God is one, but there are three.

Another reference for further study: I Tim. 2.5 "For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus;"

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

That is quite a thought - had any law been able to give man salvation God would have moved in that direction, Christ would not have had to die. Indeed, the whole sacrificial system would have never come to pass, for a law could have been given to bring us home to Him that created us. God would not have had to kill animals for skins for Adam and Eve when they sinned.

Just a side track, the animals had to be killed to provide covering for Adam and Eve, due to their sin. Indeed, this pictures beautifully the "covering" of sin for the Old Testament saints until their

sins could be removed by the Lamb of God. Also what a wonderful picture of the difference between the Old Testament saint pre-Christ and the New Testament saint post-Christ. Sins of the Old were covered until washed away at the cross, while the New Testament believer's sins are removed immediately.

22 But the scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe.

All are under sin because of the Law - it revealed the requirements, and we all fail. The promise was given to those that believe. Believe what? God and what He said, as we have said before. Belief is the only way to God, not following any law of any sort.

The term faith and the term believe are very closely related - one is "pistis" and the other "pistueo," both relating to commitment to something. Belief being the knowledge, while faith being the action of trusting in that knowledge that is believed.

This passage ought to make the strong Calvinist squirm, since belief seems to be a pre-requisite for the faith. Many of them hold that the faith is given so that we can believe. Others get around this little problem by saying that God regenerates the lost person so that they can believe and receive faith. A good way to explain things, but they only have one passage to base pre-salvation regeneration on, and that is that John The Baptist was regenerated in His mother's womb - and the fact that there is no indication of regeneration in this passage isn't a problem to them - what they assume is truth and that is that (for them :-)

The Net Bible reflects a newer line of thought about "faith of Jesus Christ" that relates the faith to Christ Himself, rather than our faith in Him. "But the scripture imprisoned everything and everyone * under sin so that the promise could be given because of the faithfulness of Jesus Christ to those who believe." The Net Bible note suggests that most modern Greek scholars follow this line of thought.

Some related verses: Ro 8:2-4; Ro 3:11-19; 11:32.

23 But before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed.

This suggests clearly that the faith of verse twenty-two is related to Christ, not us.

Now, this passage has some import that I have never heard before - I have always been taught that it speaks simply that we were bound to obey the law. This passage seems to say much more to me. Before faith came, some suggesting this be Christ while others see it simply as faith/belief, we were kept or held guard, or imprisoned under the law. The term used relates to being under guard or the thought of a city under siege - the city dwellers are kept from escape. Shut up in prison until faith should be revealed. Again, some see faith as Christ, others as faith fulfilled

coming.

Now, the thought of being imprisoned under law seems to relate to much more than just being bound to the law to obey it, to me it suggests that until Christ came, the believer was literally imprisoned spiritually. This is true, in that they could not have been regenerated until Christ came to do the cross work. The reformed abhor this thought, but it is the logical conclusion - how can regeneration ever occur until Christ has done all that is required for regeneration and redemption.

I do not suggest, as some have intimated, that the Old Testament saint was not saved and on his way to glory, but I am saying that they could not get there until the work of the Cross was done. It is illogical to put the cart before the horse. I have suggested that even God can't deficit spend - He cannot override the requirements His own decree set forth. It is the cross of Christ that brings salvations possibility and nothing else. It, of course, was from the foundation of the world, but God, when he created set His decree within a framework of time and limited Himself to that medium.

How can He provide something that He has not supplied? He can't. The Old Testament saint was bound for heaven as sure as I, but based on the coming "faith" or work of Christ. (See my work on regeneration for more on this line of thinking.)

Finally, to the point - the Old Testament saint was in bondage until Christ was come. This is what Sheol and Luke sixteen is about. The saints of old were contained in Sheol until they could be liberated and set free by their coming savior.

Oh, what a truth - and the reformed folks I have spoken with on the subject just bristle and foam over such thinking - how clear it is to me from this passage as well as others.

The term "kept" has the thought of kept by a garrison, or kept under guard - be kept from moving freely where you will. The Old Testament saint was not free spiritually; they were very limited in their position before God, until Christ came and made provision for all of us.

This was a keeping of their soul as well as their mind and will, this is also why the Old Testament saints were such sinners, they did not have the Holy Spirit to convict and guide them, they were very limited in their ability to do right - the law was their prison.

24 Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster [to bring us] unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith.

This term schoolmaster is also translated instructor in the Bible. It really just pictures the fact that anyone attempting to obey the law found how inadequate to the task they were - in short they knew they needed another way for they could not do it. The law informs them that Christ is needed.

The term is used of Roman slaves that were entrusted with the bringing up of boys in that culture. The boy was taught and mentored in all sorts of ways to bring him to manhood. The boy could not leave the house without his schoolmaster.

Again, Paul emphasizes the fact that it is not the law that can justify, but rather Christ by faith.

There are some today, mostly in the independent Baptist circles from my observation that are saying you can't properly teach the gospel until you teach the law. This passage is partial basis for this teaching. I would agree to the fact that we need to get them lost - help them understand their position before God - but I don't think we are required to teach the law. If you want to show the law (how impossible it is to keep) yes, go ahead, this will show them their lostness as well, but I personally feel that they only need to know they are lost and that Christ is the only answer available now or in the future.

The law was our schoolmaster or our teacher to bring us to Christ.

25 But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster.

In the classical use of the term, when the boy becomes a man there is no need for the schoolmaster. The one standing born again before the Master has no need of keeping the law, only serving his Savior.

26 For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. 27 For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.

I say uuuuupppps. Faith brings us to Christ - baptism allows us to put on Christ. Hummm. I think we have a topic to discuss here.

Is baptism a requirement for salvation? We have covered this as false doctrine before, so of course baptism is not contingent on salvation. It is an important act of obedience, but it is post salvation - if it was part of salvation, it couldn't be an outward sign of inward change. Simple isn't it when you apply a little logic.

However, I doubt a baptismal regenerist would buy that simple logical explanation.

In verse twenty-six "ye are" is a present tense - something that is ongoing. In twenty-seven "baptized" and "have put on" are aorist tense - point in time. This does not seem to point out anything in particular other than once you are saved it is a continued classification/condition.

The question that needs to be answered is which baptism is being considered here? Is this speaking of water baptism, or is it speaking of Spirit baptism, or is it maybe - read that as "this is" - the baptism of the believer into the body of Christ.

The only time we are baptized "into" Christ is when we are baptized into the body of Christ. This is the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Many misconstrue the baptism of the Holy Spirit as your baptism with the Spirit when you speak in tongues, but this is not a teaching that is in keeping with Scripture. This passage itself speaks directly to "into" Christ - nothing about the gifts in the context, nothing about salvation in mind, and nothing but the body of Christ can fit the context. (John the Baptist foretold this baptism - see the following for further study Matt. 3.11; Mk. 1:8; Lu. 3:16; Jo. 1:33.)

APPLICATION:

1. In verse fourteen it mentions that the gift of the Spirit was a direct result of the blessing via Abraham. Was this the only blessing? Was this THE blessing promised? Was the gift of the Spirit to the gentiles the blessing to all nations through Abraham, or was there some other part to this blessing?

Seems like the subject of a good study to me.

2. I have no doubt that some might use verse fifteen and following to suggest that Paul is talking to saved people and that he is speaking of a promise of the Spirit yet to come, as in you get saved, and THEN you will be promised the Spirit and you must groan and moan and seek and try to find and all those other antics that you must go through to "get" the Spirit.

Not so, Paul is merely saying that the promise is where it all began and by faith we gain salvation - the indwelling Spirit being the sign of said salvation. He is pointing out the absolute truth that salvation comes from faith and that the Spirit is our proof of said saving.

3. One might suggest that there is quite a contrast between two special benefits to our faith in Christ. Not only are we saved and all that entails, but we also receive the Spirit and all that entails.

We could go on about those two topics for quite some time. We have already listed a few of the benefits of the Spirit, let's just take a moment and list some of the benefits of salvation.

Regeneration

Justification

Redemption

Sonship

Heirship

Saved from eternal hell

Saved from our sinful nature

Freedom from the law

Freedom from a sinful life governed by our lost nature

Wow, what benefits we have in Christ!

4. Might I step into areas of thin ice? I know I am going to get very wet!

Years ago, and I might say most churches have wised up a lot since this time in church history, I was told by a church member of some actions that had gone on in his church.

He related that some long haired young men - now this is in the 70's when long hair meant all those things like peace nick, free love, irresponsibility, laziness, rebellion etc. - had been led to the Lord by some of his fellow church members. The long haired fellows were starting to attend church, when on the second or third Sunday the deacons of the church cornered the group and told them that they really needed to cut their hair - it really wasn't Christian to look that way.

Now, I must admit I was one of those that had a problem with hair, but early on, the Lord placed me in a working context with some long haired young men, and I found that they were quite likeable, quite bright and quite energetic. I found them to be courteous and hard workers. I would guess these deacons were unfamiliar with these men on a personal basis.

These deacons seem, in my mind, to have been trying to add to God's covenant just a very little law of appearance. I don't, for a moment, think these deacons would have verbalized the need to have short hair for salvation, but they seemed to be practicing that line of thought.

I found as the long haired generation matured, that many of these people changed their appearance in their and God's own good time after they were saved.

The need of the Christian is to lead people to Christ and allow the Holy Spirit to do the convicting - he does a much better job of it. Yes, we should disciple - in one on one situations, not by a mob action cornering people in the church foyer on a Sunday morning.

5. Another point from verse fifteen. When God calls you to do something, when God gives his direction to a church, or when God leads a group to a certain purpose, where do MEN get off, changing God's mind and/or methods?

God is the one Person in the universe, in time, and in intellect that is capable of directing, leading, or calling as He sees fit. He is concise, He is clear, He is not swayed by public opinion

and He is GOD, the one we are to FOLLOW.

How arrogant we are to try to say His way is not valid, how arrogant we are to try to add to His clear direction and how arrogant we are to set ourselves above and over Him that created us and saved our worthless souls - yet arrogant we often are. It is no wonder Satan thinks he can win us over, for we are often just like him - even in our saved, regenerated and on our way to heaven state we tend toward rebellion against Him.

I have run into men on internet boards that think that their particular education is the only valid one to be had. Anyone that didn't go to a school similar to theirs is deficient in some manner and God will never be able to use those that are so lowly. One man mentioned that God had lead him to a particular school and program, to which the brainiacs countered, that is a deficient education, why would God lead anyone to prepare improperly for the ministry.

They totally discounted the man's leading and tried to shame him into thinking that God couldn't have lead him into this substandard program, that he must have been listening to someone besides God.

Such arrogance will surely be met with reality one day and I doubt that I would like to be on the holier than thou men's side of things.

There is a growing attitude among Christians that if it isn't the best, in their eyes, then it cannot be Godly. If it is less than my standard then God cannot be in it. Yes, seek the education that God leads you to seek, but do not allow others to set the standard for you, allow God to set the standard.

6. Well one more application from verse fifteen. If God has a plan, and if Christ knows that plan, and Christ is the Head of His church - and all are true - and most evangelical churches would agree - SINCE these things are true, why is it that so many churches so seldom seek Christ's direction for His church? Why do so many churches bow to their pastor's decision to lead HIS church in a particular direction? Why do so many churches seek programs and ploys to get people into the church, when Christ has given us direction to go out into the world to win them?

It seems we seldom seek His will, His direction, or His desire for our churches. He has all of these, if we will only seek Him out and ask what He would have us do.

Why, if these things are true, do we not seek Him at least at public prayer times to ask direction from Him that can and will give it?

7. I think this passage points up a very critical issue that many Christians fail to pick up on in their lives. Many doctrines are mentioned in this passage, and all those doctrines are interrelated. If you change one you affect all. This is true when you look at the whole of the Word.

A number of years ago we were asked to pastor a church. The men could not find a doctrinal statement nor constitution. They wanted to move forward without them with the understanding that they would be critical to my decision. They were sure that I would be in agreement and the man that recommended me to them was a trusted fundamentalist in my mind so we did not feel this was out of line.

At the final meeting the men asked me officially to become pastor and they handed me the documents. They wanted an answer so I told them I would be their pastor but it would be contingent on my agreement with the documents. All were in agreement and we parted.

When I arrived home I read the constitution first, which was quite general, quite weak, and quite inadequate, but I figured we could work on it in the coming days. The final statement seemed to pop back into my mind several times. It ran something like "We will cooperate in ministry with any evangelical group."

I don't mind cooperation with people of like mind, but the term evangelical screamed for clarification since most charismatics would consider themselves evangelical. I would have a problem with a lot of other evangelicals as well.

I called one of the deacons and sure enough, they had charismatics in mind when they had adopted the statement. He went on to tell me that both documents were patterned after a charismatic movement church's documents. He further informed me that the church supported a charismatic missionary.

I told him we needed to talk. We drove out to his home and discussed the matter awhile. He could not see what the problem was. He did not agree with tongues, but felt that was not an issue. I asked him if he realized how many doctrines that one false teaching affected. He did not, so I informed him of some of the ramifications of holding to tongues.

He still saw no problem with me being pastor of a church that saw no problem with the charismatic doctrines of the Spirit. I did, and informed him of my decline on their offer to pastor their church.

One simple doctrine can affect how you view so many other teachings.

Just another example lest you question this truth. If you accept the five points of Calvinism as taught today, you may also end up accepting covenant theology and amillennialism. That is quite a bowl of cereal to swallow!

8. One thing Paul is not saying in this passage is that the law has nothing good in it for the New Testament believer. Most know the familiar passage II Tim. 3:16-17 "All scripture [is] given by inspiration of God, and [is] profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: 17 That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works."

This passage requires that there is something in the law for our benefit - ALL "scripture is given" and this clearly includes the Old Testament for that is the only scripture that existed at the time.

Though we are not bound by the law, we are to view it as "profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness;" In fact we did this when we considered verse thirteen. We looked to the Old Testament for further teaching concerning the work of the cross and the curse of the law.

9. Constable suggests that Abraham had four different seeds.

He had, of course, his natural seed - his physical descendants: Genesis 12:1-3, 7 and many others. There is further what Constable calls "natural-spiritual seed" or the physical descendants that became believers: Isaiah 41:8; Romans 9:6, 8; Galatians 6:16. Further he had a spiritual seed that was made up of all Gentile believers: Galatians 3:6-9, 29. His final seed was the ultimate seed, Christ Himself: Galatians 3:16; Hebrews 2:16-17.

10. Some today take the thought that the law is profitable to us to mean that the law is a basis for the ruling of any nation - that the law is the frame work within which you can run a nation in the world. You might like to know that many of these people are attempting to set this up in America. You think we have trouble with the liberals, wait till some charismatics start wielding the law with a rod of iron.

Rushdoony, Greg Bahnsen, and Gary North are some of the prominent reconstructionists. This line of doctrine is also called theonomy as well as Chalcedon school. This doctrine is more prevalent than you would think. It is gaining great strides in the charismatic movement, and by the way normally translates into Postmillennialism.

These folks would have the population of the United States believe that the Old Testament Law is the basis of the government, the basis of all law and an added part of their thinking is that this will bring the Lord back to set up his kingdom. Since man has been able to set up the law as the basis for society, then Christ can return. In case you did not catch that, we are the ones that will bring Christ back, not the plan of God.

11. Another truth that we might draw from this passage is an old truth, a glorious truth and a very comforting truth. Just imagine the changes in the world from Abraham's time to our own. Drastic changes. From riding on camels to RV's larger than camels, from cooking on an open fire to opening a pouch, and from the dusty roads of the desert to purified apartments of filtered and cooled air. Yet, God has not changed. He is the same identical God that was there with Abraham. He is here with us today in the same form and character. He not only hasn't changed, He, indeed, cannot change.

So, as Abraham trusted Him, so we can trust Him, with our lives, our salvation and our souls.

12. Is it the law that condemns us, is it the law that tells us we are sinners, is the law that which brings us to Christ? In a sense, yes it is, but in another sense it is not. It shows us what sinners we are, but how does it accomplish this? It accomplishes this by giving us the reality that this law is God's requirement for righteous life. It is HIS standard that we are failing. It is HIS requirements that we cannot meet. It is HIS righteousness that we cannot achieve by anything that we do.

In truth the law only shows us what we really are before Who and What God really is - holy, just, pure, righteous and all the other things that we are not. Only through Him can we gain any favor - not by following the law that we cannot keep.

13. Many, including the Jews, believe that the law was given via angels. I do not know what the Jews base their thinking on but others base their thoughts on comments by Stephen in the Book of Acts. Acts 7.38 "This is he, that was in the church in the wilderness with the angel which spake to him in the mount Sina, and with our fathers: who received the lively oracles to give unto us:" Acts 7.53 "Who have received the law by the disposition of angels, and have not kept it."

Verse nineteen may well add to that thought. The term ordained can be translated ordered or commanded, thus incorporating the angels into the mix in some manner.

So, work if you desire to work for Him, follow the PRINCIPLES that the law contains, but do not look to either for the basis of your salvation for if you do you will be sorely disappointed in your final destination when you pass from this life.

Week seven: 3.28-4.7 Paul explains the oneness of believers, both of old and of new

INTRODUCTION:

Please think back to your childhood and remember that relationship you had with your father - probably your "dad" - then mature yourself and consider your relationship with him now. We will look at the Father Son relationship in this lesson. God the Father has opened the way for us to be adopted and made full sons in His family.

Consider what kind of relationship we should have with the Father. Consider your present relationship with the Father. Indeed, if your natural father relationship is lacking maybe you should spend some time considering how you relate to God and apply those truths to your father in this life.

I have heard it said that as your physical father relationship went so will your spiritual Father relationship go. I have found this to be true in many cases. If you have a high regard, respect and awe of your physical father then so will you view God the Father. If you have a close fuzzy relation with your physical father then your spiritual relation will also be close and fuzzy one. What it boils down to is that if you respect your physical father you will have profound respect for God, while if you have little respect for your earthly father there will be little respect for God.

Now, if there are problems between your physical father and yourself, then maybe this is why you have problems with your spiritual father.

Knowing this, try to separate your feelings toward your physical father and concentrate on the Word of God to find out how you should relate to your spiritual Father. You should not make the mistake of forming your relationship with God based on the wrong relation you have with your father. Be sure your concept of God is from the Word and no where else.

28. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.

Now, I am told that young Jews of old prayed the following prayer each morning upon rising from their nights rest. "Lord, I thank you that I am not a Gentile, a slave, or a woman." They pray it, I don't okay! The verse we have just read tends to disprove the thought of their prayer.

In short there is no room in Christianity for Archie Bunkers, even though we have some that are close to that mind set scattered through the church.

The word Greek can relate to specifically Greek people, but also it can relate to any nation/people that are different than Jew either in cultural or religion. It is the later thought in this context as Paul is speaking to the Jew/Gentile questions.

Bond in the verse is the normal word for slave - one that is controlled by a master/owner. This is of major note in Paul's day in that there were slaves that had heard the Gospel and had accepted Christ. Philemon is a letter written concerning a Christian slave. There is no label of slave in the church; they are counted as one with all others.

This ought to be a priority in our churches today. There are many clichés and groups that segregate out by all sorts of demographics. The rich stick together, the poor stick together, the professionals stick together, the blue collar stick together, etc. This ought not to be the case.

Just a comment on how one church dealt with the rich poor differences. The rich loved to do their get togethers up in a big way and it usually cost money to attend through tickets. Being one of the poor at the time, we seldom attended these functions. Some of the better off couples made it a habit of buying extra tickets and providing them to those that couldn't afford them. Others would invite other couples to attend with them.

This was a good way for the different groups to get to know each other and find out that they are real people too - in fact they probably had common interests. It was a good time of bringing people of the church together.

There are three sets of groups, each separated by the word "nor" however the final phrase is divided by a different term than the other two. The first two phrases are divided by a term that means simply neither or nor. The phrase "male nor female" actually is divided by a term that is normally translated "and" but is not translated "nor" normally. I assume that the first two divisions are not quite as well defined as the male/female grouping, although in our present American society the differences have been blurred to the point that one must wonder what sex a person is at times the way people dress/act.

That last phrase has a little word in it that is so big in concept; "one" really is a monumental concept to achieve within the church. We are one - declaration - not open for discussion - done deal - completed - over and done with - etc. So, why are we so many categories these days?

Let's just list some categories we separate believers into these days.

Clergy - layman

Church leadership - simple member

Black - white

Brown - black

Rich - poor

Educated - uneducated

Professional - non-professional

Young - old

Middle aged - child

Mature - immature

Outgoing - inward

I have heard lately that they are doing separate youth worship services rather than the usual, everyone together. With the kids in Jr. Church and the youth in their service how could anyone consider the church fragmented?

Just enough to get your thought processes going - all these divisions are improper and unscriptural and we should root them out of the church so that we all can know that we are one with the other.

I have a study relating to the Bible's many passages that speak to the "one another" PEOPLE that we are and should act like.

Just some other passages that relate to this truth:

I Cor. 12.13 "For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit."

Eph. 2.14 "For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us; 15 Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace;"

Col. 3.11 "Where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free: but Christ is all, and in all."

29 And if ye [be] Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

The term "seed" is a figurative use of the term "sperma" which relates to physical generation of life. It is normally translated seed and is the word for the seed that you plant in the ground for life to spring forth from. It cannot mean that any believer is the literal seed of Abraham, for that is a physical impossibility. We are his descendants in a figurative manner. Just what that means we need to consider in the application section.

Just what are we heirs of? Simply we are benefiting from the work of the seed - Christ and his work on the cross.

Heir is simply the people in line to inherit. When a person dies there is usually a will and if not the state divides up the remainder of the estate and gives it to those that are legal heirs, people that legally descend from the person that died. In fact one of the aspects of this word is the thought of partitioning or dividing. It can be translated appointment. It is not only something that is deserved, but it is something that is apportioned correctly and is given as a thing scheduled.

Kind of interesting to view your salvation in this light - as coming from that promise so long ago - God has been working on bringing this to pass for a long long time. It, to me, shows a tremendous love and concern on God's part for insignificant me!

4 :1 Now I say, [That] the heir, as long as he is a child, differeth nothing from a servant, though he be lord of all; 2 But is under tutors and governors until the time appointed of the father. 3 Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world:

In the old days a child was placed under a tutor. The tutor was rule, you did not do anything against him and you did everything he told you to do. This was a control that was delegated by the father for the proper rearing of the child.

This is a picture of the law. The Jew was to do the law and live as if it were his rule for life, for indeed it was. Yet, this was not to be the only way of life, for God had something better yet to come.

This also pictures the fact that there is no respecter between members under the law - all are treated the same. The child of the master is treated the same as the child of the servant - all must be trained and raised properly.

We might suggest this is lacking in our own day. The rich children and the prospered children often are coddled into all their glorious spoiledness while the poor and the lowly are taught the truths from life's hard knocks. It might be good for our society to realize that the spoiling that has gone on by the baby boomer generation has caused its mountain of problems in their children.

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

In God's time all came to pass. The "fulness" of time relates to the completeness of time. In God's timing - His perfect timing the cross occurred. Not a moment sooner than planned and not a moment later than planned. The term is used of a ship that is full of not only its load, but loaded with its crew, soldiers and all that is needed for sailing - a full compliment.

In God's full time table, He had His son present Himself to the Romans for crucifixion.

In Bible College a professor took an entire class period to present the fact that Christ came at the most opportune time in history. He presented from history the climate, the geographics, and the politics of the time, and it was obvious that the timing was perfect, the setting was the most advantageous, the Christ was on time. (No, I don't have the notes on the class to share with you, sad to say.)

See also Rom. 8.15; Eph. 1.5 for further study.

I would wonder of the significance of Paul adding the phrases "made of a woman, made under the law," to this verse. Why would he add this information at this point? I have to wonder if there weren't some aspects of the Judaizers teachings that were defective in the humanity of Christ and possibly in the thought of how Christ related to the law. I see no other reason for him to include this information.

It may be to emphasize the fact that in the fullness of God's time He made Christ of a woman, and He made Christ under the law - the fact that God determined all of this, that nothing was accidental or by chance.

Verse five ("To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.") seems to add to the thought that we have considered which teaches that the Old Testament saints were not fully "vested" in their salvation. They still needed redemption and adoption for Paul places them with himself as needing these things. Christ in the fullness of time accomplished these things for the Old Testament saints so that they could finally be that complete "part of God's family."

6 And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father.

Now, I may step on toes here, but that is life in the theological scene. "Abba, Father" is described by some as an endearing term like "dada" or "daddy," however I see nothing in the words themselves, nor the context to indicate we should address God as "dada" or even "daddy."

The term "abba" is the Aramaic word for father and the word "father" is the word "pater" which means father. In the lexicon it is mentioned that both words were used of God in prayer and in worship and used in great reverence, not great familiarity and endearment. I may be wrong, but I think "pater" is one of the terms that the Roman church uses of the Pope, certainly not a term they use like daddy!

This whole idea of "dada" is part of the bringing down to man, the God of the universe. It is the making of almighty God into Someone we can bond with, Someone we can relate to, and Someone that we can live with - not Someone that is high and lifted up, not Someone that is our

Lord and Master, and not Someone that would be comfortable in the comforts of our wishy washy living style that is akin to the world, and not akin to the heavenlies.

This "dada" thought is akin to the movement that says God wants us to be rich, that says God wants us to be prosperous, and that wants us to never want for anything. If this is so, Paul wasn't very spiritual because he had to work for a living; he had to walk long miles in the dust of the east. Jonah had to take a fish instead of his Corvette - how ludicrous to say that God wants us all rich! He wants us rich in the heavenlies, yet some pastors are telling us to lay up stores here on earth. (And I might say, most of those same pastors set a perfect example by amassing cars and riches.)

7 Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ.

We are now full sons, mature and ready to take our place beside our father - full heirs of God through the work of Christ the promised seed.

Again, how can you consider this passage and not sit in awe and wonder at the workings of God behind the scenes to bring all this to pass for your worthless soul. You must have a great and wonderful value to the Father and to the Son that gave His life for you.

And we complain about taking a couple three hours out of our week to go to church and learn of his wondrous love for us. Indeed, we have pastors preaching everything under the sun but the Son.

Christians, we are far from worshiping the God that orchestrated our salvation, we are far from worshiping the God of Abraham, and we are far from worshiping the God that yet has plans for the future that will just as surely come to pass - just as surely as our salvation, just as surely as our heirship, will those future events come to pass.

And who do we worship - the god of contemporary music, the god of bringing lost people into the church, the god of convenience, and the god of entertainment and ease. May God have mercy on the church leaders of our day.

APPLICATION:

1. In verse twenty nine we read "And if ye [be] Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise."

We observed earlier that "seed" indicates that all believers are figurative descendants of Abraham. We observed also that a physical link to Abraham is an impossibility, thus we may safely assume that this is a figurative use of the terms.

Just what does this "figurative" link to Abraham mean to the believer? Are we to benefit from any of the promises made to Abraham long ago? Are we to benefit from the future blessings of Abraham in the end time?

We will reign with Christ in the kingdom and whatever that entails, but we won't be with the Jewish folks that will receive the land as promised to Abraham.

2. Just a little further study relating to "abba father."

"Abba" has its origins in the Chaldean language and is Hebrew in nature - it meant "father." It was used as a title for bishops and patriarchs in early oriental churches, thus indicating the thought of honor, respect and position rather than a familiar, endearing term. It became "abbot" in Europe, again a term of description and respect.

Christ used the term of God the Father in a number of passages: Matt. 11:25-26; Matt. 26:39; Matt. 26:42; Luke 10:21; Luke 22:42; Luke 23:34; John 11:4; John 12:27; John 17:24; John 17:25.

In Mark 14:36; Romans 8:15 and here in Galatians the term translated Father is preceded by the term Abba. The Mark passage says "And he said, Abba, Father, all things are possible unto thee; take away this cup from me: nevertheless not what I will, but what thou wilt."

Some suggest that Paul's use of both an Old Testament word and a Greek term is to also show the lack of difference between the Jew and the Gentile. God is a God of all not just the Jew.

Barnes states: "It is said in the Babylonian Gemara, a Jewish work, that it was not permitted slaves to use the title of Abba in addressing the master of the family to which they belonged. If so, then the language which Christians are here represented as using is the language of freemen, and denotes that they are not under the servitude of sin."

None of the commentaries I checked give any hint that this should carry the thought of papa or dada, but more the idea of respect, position, honor, trust and the other fatherly attributes. As a pet name for God, I think not.

It amazes me that one would take a phrase meaning "father father" and suggest that it should be a term that a child would use of their father such as dada or papa. Two words require two words, not one.

And finally, how can you interpret in the historical context of this passage and understand these terms as dada when the father was supreme in the family. He controlled all aspects of the family and I'm sure the terms abba or father were in the area of respect of the position. Not that there could not be more familiar and loving terms used, but just not these two in my mind.

One further final thought, just what does this phrase "sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father." mean. It seems to me that it is the Spirit that is crying to the Father, and I can't imagine the Spirit of God calling the Father dada!

I will point out that it is we, the Christian, that calls out in Rom. 8.15 "For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father." The next verse seems to tie the Spirit's cry to that of the believer. "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God:"

"We cry" is the same terminology as the cry of the Spirit of God - again dada doesn't seem to fit.

Vincent states of the term "crying" "A strong word, expressing deep emotion. The verb originally represents the sound of a croak or harsh scream; thence, generally, an inarticulate cry; an exclamation of fear or pain." Again the term dada doesn't quite fit the context of the usage.

Thayer states the following in relation to the term "abba" "acquired the nature of a most sacred proper name, to which the Greek speaking Jews added the name from their own tongue."

The only authors that suggest the term abba should be understood in a familiar relation suggesting the idea of "daddy" are modern evangelical people like Erickson and MacArthur. I find this of interest when related to all the older commentators and scholars. It would seem that there has been a change of attitude - from one of honor and respect to one of familiarity. They relate their thought to the fact that we are now sons.

I ran across another author that was of the current line of thought that it should be translated "daddy" but he did not go as far as to say it should give the idea of "dada" - only that it should show the intimacy of relationship whereby when we are in trouble we can call upon our dad for assistance. He seemed quite emphatic in saying that this is not the immature child calling "daddy" but the mature son calling "dad."

Again, I see no reason to see this or to translate this as "dada" or "daddy" since the lexicons say it means father - quite two different things in my mind. The above mentioned author (Dr. Constable) goes on to state that the term is used in other literature of a mature person claiming the inheritance left him by his father. Suggestion: Put "dada" in this context and see if it fits. Would you go before a judge to claim your inheritance and say, "I am here to claim my dada's money and property?"

3. It has crossed my mind in understanding the father son relationship in the Old Testament that there is a grand illustration of theology in this part of their life style. The father was the top dog in the Old Testament economy and he could do as he pleased. He could farm out his kids to a servant to raise them, or he could do it himself. The illustration comes when you realize that the father could adopt into the family any child that he wanted to adopt - an illustration of God's choosing or electing some but not others. It is also a grand illustration that he is electing some as

sons but not electing others to non-sonship. The non-sonship is not a result of the election of one, it is the constant condition of the non-son prior to and following a man's grace in electing one.

If that was an acceptable illustration, how many arguments might be saved from happening over the profound thought of electing the lost to hell.

I might add that it is not I that chose this illustration, but God through the apostle Paul that used it in God's Word in the letter to the Galatians.

4. Well, now here we go again, getting theological - verse 6 "And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father." speaks to the theological term "trinity" - note the Father sent the Spirit of the Son - a clear reference to all three members of the trinity. Though the term trinity does not exist in the Bible, the truth that is taught under its name certainly does.

It always amazes me on internet boards when people state that the word "trinity" does not appear in the Bible as though that will wipe away the entire teaching in one sweeping statement that really does not relate to the teaching. It is their feeble attempt to cast doubt upon a doctrine that the church has taught for centuries.

This passage also tends to disprove the thought of a single god in three manifestations as the Jesus only cult teaches. They hold that there is only one god but that he appeared as God the Father in the Old Testament, as Jesus in the early New Testament and as the Spirit from the book of Acts on. This cult is one of the hardest to dispute because they use the same verses to attempt to prove their point as we use to prove the trinity.

After many conversations with them on the internet, I feel it is probably a waste of time to discuss the trinity with them. They, like those of the reform faith, assume they have the only true interpretation, so refuse to even consider whether your interpretation might have validity. Their interpretation is what God means and that is the end of the discussion - if you feel it means something else, you are automatically teaching falsehood and are to be rejected as a false teacher.

I have had numerous discussions with people like this on the internet and find that all that it will gain you is frustration and maybe a headache :-)

5. In relation to verse 28 "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus." we need to consider a couple of items. This is not a blanket statement that all differences between Jew and Gentile, between bond and free and between male and female are wiped away.

It only teaches that in the church all are equal; in the family of God all are equal and in value and worth, all are equal. Does it mean that the wife is no longer to be submissive to her husband? No, how can it for that would contradict other, clear teaching of the Word of God. It does not say that

all servants should be freed either, for how could it? Servitude was a way of life in this historical context. Female subordination was also a historical fact, as well as the Jewish/Gentile divide.

This passage does not suggest for a moment that we should attempt to wipe away these differences, it only speaks to the equality ALL have before God in their common salvation.

Feminists might camp on this verse while ignoring others to prove that God is a feminist, but they do so wrongly. ALL of Scripture must be related to this one verse to find the Biblical view of women.

NOR, is this as some might suggest that we should ordain women to the office of elder. It says nothing of the order of the sexes that God has laid out in His word, nor does it abrogate all that God has said of women in the Word. It is only one aspect that is to be considered along with all the other passages relating to women in the Bible.

This passage does speak heavily to the fact that all are equal before God, that all have the same free access to God, and that they are all believer priests before God for themselves. No man that believes in Christ needs to go through any other man to have direct and equal access to God.

NOR, does this passage prove or even speak to the thought that Israel and the Church are an integrated part of one another. They are distinctly separate in the New Testament and nothing can mix them. This only speaks to the oneness that we have in Christ. Indeed, the believing Jew is part of the church body now, rather than a part of Israel. I don't know how all this will work out in the end time, but I do know you have to set the word on its ear to suggest that Israel and the Church are one.

In the first place most of Israel is lost at this point in time, as well as in Paul's time. How can you even attempt to state that Israel and the Church are one, when common sense shows that most of Israel is lost and most of the church is saved?

6. Some suggest that there is a clear distinction that Paul is making in verses 1-3 that show the Jews obeying the law and the Gentiles obeying "the elements of the world." are different. I do not see this difference; Paul is saying that both heir and servant are under the tutors command until the father says differently. Paul goes on to say that we were in the same position - under the tutor, or the schoolmaster that was over us as immature children.

There then is great discussion as to what "elements of the world" might mean. There seem to be five primary suggestions.

a. That the elements are rules and regulations of pagan religions. Though they do not give answer to the idea that not all non-Jews were under a pagan religions influence.

b. Others suggest that this is the Demonic and Satanic influences set upon the world through all

time.

c. Yet others suggest that this is basic philosophy and religious teachings.

d. Then there are those that feel these are the fundamental elements of the creation, fire, water, air and earth. Since the context is a discussion of being under the law, jumping clear over into the elements of creation seems a little too large a jump.

e. And finally one author suggests that it is a matter of maturity. The child is under the elemental laws of childhood, while the adult is free from these restrictions.

Take a few moments to read the verses and see if you can determine which of these might be correct.

I might suggest a sixth possible that seems from the context to be more plausible - that the lost Gentile was just under the rules, regulations, and beliefs that he had relating to God in his own individual life.

I might also reject my own possibility for if you watch the pronouns adequately you will note that Paul includes himself as being under these elements of the world. He was a Jew, and could not include himself if there really was a distinction in his mind in this passage. Read the context. "3 Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world: 4 But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, 5 To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons."

I think that Paul was simply suggesting that all were under the rules and regulations of whatever we were under (elements of the world) relating to this world and all it requires of any person, as opposed to the next world.

Hate to say it, but I think we theologians and teachers make things way to hard by considering the phrase without the context.

Just a little information, the term elements, can and is translated in other translations, as rudiments. It comes from the thought of lining up one after the other - you know when you finally get your life organized you say you have all your ducks in a row - that is the thought of the word originally. It then became related to the thought of the alphabet, thus the thought of elemental or elements.

This gives indication to me that Paul was just relating to the rules and regulations that go with trying to exist in this world without God and how wonderful the salvation is that puts us under God's organizational system.

7. Swete suggests that "The purpose of the Son's mission was to give the rights of sonship; the

purpose of the Spirit's mission, to give the power of using them." (The Holy Spirit in the New Testament; H. B. Swete; p. 204.)

8. The overall truth of the text seems to me to be that if we were under the law, then saved from it by the work of the cross, if we were outside the family, then saved into the family by adoption, why in the world would we go back under the law, why in the world would we thumb our nose at the one paying the price, and why in the world would we attempt to remove ourselves from the family by rejecting its freedom and placing ourselves back under the elements of this world?

9. In relation to the Judaizers, it is suggested that they were prone to want to return to the past. This is not uncommon for man. I don't know if this is what the Judaizers did or not for we are not told, but if they did have a "hankerin fer the past" they surely could have come up with this mix of law and grace without too much trouble.

We need to beware that our desire to return to the good ole days doesn't end us up in non-Scriptural areas of doctrine and practice. We need to desire the good of the past, but not to the detriment of the present or the future.

While we are on this subject we need to realize that when looking back we tend to exaggerate the positive and negate the negative to the point that all is glorious in the past. This is not so, for the past is full of pitfalls, and troubles, and problems that made the end seem positive.

10. There is another line of consideration when we come to the divisions within a church body. We tend to blame any divisions on the fact that the groups tend to clump together, and this is true, however there is the back side of this. Many there are in the church that doesn't feel comfortable associating with those that are different from themselves. This is probably why we tend to clump.

It is wrong - even though we may feel uncomfortable we should attempt to be kind and considerate to ALL people in the church. We should make it a point to say hello to that lowly janitor (I have been that lowly janitor in a church so know the concept well.) Say hello to that rich doctor, say hello to that social climber, say hello to that poor old woman that is trying to get by on social security. "All" is the concept with God; we need to work at that which is right and proper.

Gen. 12.3 "And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed." shows that God has the whole in mind rather than the individual. One of the great shortcomings of Israel was their lack of inclusion of the world in their great God's plan. They were seclusive and few Gentiles entered into the covenant with them.

11. We mentioned earlier that Christ came at the right time, the proper time, and the appointed time. God is also interested in your own needs and be assured that His time is in His mind for

you - He won't forget you, he won't forget your need, and he won't forget to fulfill your need at His time for you.

Often we are way in a hurry to get things taken care of, but He doesn't seem to get it - we keep pestering Him to take care of a need and He just dawdles along while we sweat and worry. Maybe we need to give Him the need, give Him the time He desires and GIVE HIM A BREAK - stop worrying and start resting in His promise to care for you. He will get to it when it is time. He has never been late.

12. This passage is clear and to the point, anyone that believes in Christ is an heir with Christ, we are sons to the fullest extent. We inherit the riches of our Father. Personally, I have never grasped that concept in a personal way, even though I see the clear teaching of the Word. I understand the fact of it, I understand the implications of it, but I don't think I have personalized it.

In the first place, I am saved by the pure grace of God - I was on my way to hell, and He reached down and stopped that progress and drew me abruptly back to be a part of His kingdom. So, where in that is there anything that I have done that would deserve anything else? Indeed, I am not deserving of being in His kingdom. I am His and He decides to shower riches upon me. Go figure. I am just very glad to be on my way to heaven, I don't know that I care about the riches. I am sure when I have them I will enjoy them but they don't seem to excite me like the usual coming attractions.

I suppose some will think back to what I have mentioned about a house full of toys and wonder why I am not anticipating riches, but then that is the disconnect we tend to have between this life and the next.

He will do as He will and I am sure I will enjoy it, but even now, I can't grasp that life of sonship over and above the freedom from hell and ability to walk in righteousness here and now. The anticipation of that next life is filled with knowing Him and understanding all of this life.

Week eight: 4.8-20 Paul reminds them of his labor and love for them

At one point in our lives we were asked to pioneer a work. We were asked to take over a small Bible study and move it into a church. We moved cross country because we were called of the Lord to do so, and we have never regretted the time and labor involved. We know that all of it was God's purpose and that we grew immensely from the experience as a family.

On the other hand there was the other side of our thinking that we had given the greatest effort that we could to the people involved and yet there was nothing that indicated any growth or learning whatsoever.

I worked full time (45 hours a week) while preparing and teaching five lessons/sermons a week. As we moved through time with the work, it was obvious that the people were there to take and nothing else. None of them would do anything when asked. We met in our home and they wouldn't even come a little early to help me move the furniture out of our living room so that we could set up chairs.

There were times of great frustration on my part and I am sure on my wife's as well. We continued on wondering if things would ever change.

We ultimately left because we could see there were some fundamental differences of philosophy between myself and the people. The group of pastors that had started the Bible study in the first places promised that they would take over the flock and find someone else to shepherd them.

We heard a few months later that the pastors had disbanded the church, resulting in a little frustration on our part remembering their promise to care for it. Many years later we found out that the pastors had met with the people and it was obvious to them that the people had little desire to do anything, and that they had no intention of trying to prosper the work - thus the decision to close.

My point, finally is that I really wondered at the labor that we had put into that work - whether it was worth it or not. We knew we were there for God and that it was God that we served, but we wondered if our labor had been in vain as it related to the people.

In this section we see Paul wondering at some of his work as well.

4.8 Howbeit then, when ye knew not God, ye did service unto them which by nature are no gods.

What a backward, sneaky, backdoor way to call their former life idolatrous. They had been in bondage to their gods that were not gods.

I have always marveled at the concept that God knows He is one God among multitudes of gods and that He doesn't really care. He even mentions it in the Old Testament.

He knows the reality of man having other Gods, yet he makes it quite clear that He is above all gods. Deut. 10.17 "For the LORD your God [is] God of gods, and Lord of lords, a great God, a mighty, and a terrible, which regardeth not persons, nor taketh reward: " Joshua 22.22 "The LORD God of gods, the LORD God of gods, he knoweth, and Israel he shall know; if [it be] in rebellion, or if in transgression against the LORD, (save us not this day,)"

The Old Testament is near clogged with references to gods, the gods that God's people trusted, the gods that they served. Yet, He simply declares Himself to be what He is and trusts that some of His people will ultimately see and worship Him rather than his much lesser competitors.

He just ignores all the gods and does His Godly work as if the others didn't exist - oh, whoops - they don't exist – that is what Paul is making clear in this verse :-) No matter how real they are to man, no matter how convinced we are that they exist, and no matter how much we think they do for us, they don't exist so they can't do for us, they can't exist, and they aren't real.

The Old Testament also declares other gods are not gods at all. II Kings 19.18 "And have cast their gods into the fire: for they [were] no gods, but the work of men's hands, wood and stone: therefore they have destroyed them."

Also I Chron. 16.25 "For great [is] the LORD, and greatly to be praised: he also [is] to be feared above all gods. 26 For all the gods of the people [are] idols: but the LORD made the heavens." II Chron. 2.5 "And the house which I build [is] great: for great [is] our God above all gods." Psalm 95.1 "O come, let us sing unto the LORD: let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation. 2 Let us come before his presence with thanksgiving, and make a joyful noise unto him with psalms. 3 For the LORD [is] a great God, and a great King above all gods." Psalm 136.2 "O give thanks unto the God of gods: for his mercy [endureth] for ever." And there are many more if you take a look in a concordance.

Probably the Old Testament passage I like most relating to idols is the one where the people go get the limb from the tree, and cut some of it up for fire wood and then they make an idol of the left over. Isa. 44.15 "Then shall it be for a man to burn: for he will take thereof, and warm himself; yea, he kindleth [it], and baketh bread; yea, he maketh a god, and worshippeth [it]; he maketh it a graven image, and falleth down thereto. 16 He burneth part thereof in the fire; with part thereof he eateth flesh; he roasteth roast, and is satisfied: yea, he warmeth [himself], and saith, Aha, I am warm, I have seen the fire: 17 And the residue thereof he maketh a god, [even] his graven image: he falleth down unto it, and worshippeth [it], and prayeth unto it, and saith, Deliver me; for thou [art] my god."

Note that the god comes from the residue or the left over of the wood. Kind of like us isn't it, giving what is left over of our time and wealth to God. You'd think if you were making a god you would go looking for some of the nicest and best of woods so that you could have a great god, but not so. You'd think we would give of the best that we have to our God, the God of creation, yet we often only give Him the leftovers, the drivel of our lives.

Ps. 115.4-8 speaks to the gods of the gentiles. It is even worse than the above text in relation to idols and their effectiveness. 4 "Their idols [are] silver and gold, the work of men's hands. 5 They have mouths, but they speak not: eyes have they, but they see not: 6 They have ears, but they hear not: noses have they, but they smell not: 7 They have hands, but they handle not: feet have they, but they walk not: neither speak they through their throat. 8 They that make them are like unto them; [so is] every one that trusteth in them.

9 But now, after that ye have known God, or rather are known of God, how turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements, whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage?

"turn ye back" is used of the person converting to Christianity, it has the idea of turning around to something else.

"weak" relates to the weakness of being sick, that puny dragged out feeling.

"beggarly" is just as it sounds, to beg.

"rudiments" or elements, this is the same word we discussed in verse three, the "elements of the world" which had the thought of the abcs or very elemental things.

How can you turn from God and go back to the puny, sickly, beggarly elemental stuff that is worthless when you have the God of creation right in front of you might be the thought of what Paul is trying to say.

Think back to the description of the idols - the same thing applies, how can you serve the leftovers of a branch when you have the creator of the branch sitting - waiting - desiring to communicate with you and assist you, and be your strength.

Not only have we accepted God, but WE ARE KNOWN BY HIM - let that seep down into the cracks of your brain - He knows you, He knows about you, He knows all there is to know about you and you are turning away from Him - HOW DUMB IS THAT? Yet, the Galatians did it and we Christians tend to do the same thing.

Why is it when we talk to God we give Him such great detail of who we are, of who we want to be, what we want Him to do. He knows us. We don't have to explain who we are and what relationship we have with Him, he designed that relationship, He drew us to Himself because He knew us, He knows our very being!

10 Ye observe days, and months, and times, and years.

They not only had taken on part of Judaism, but they must have been adhering to the days and celebrations of the law. They were returning to those elemental things of Jewish life rather than rejoicing in the freedoms of grace.

Times means an unspecified amount of time as opposed to the other terms in the verse which specify specific amounts of time.

Most commentaries relate this to the Jewish days that were to be observed in the law. It may relate to the overemphasis and critical attitude of some today that almost require church attendance anytime the doors of the church are open.

Church attendance is important, but to miss now and then is not going to hinder your entrance into heaven nor your walk with God. We need to remember this. Most pastors relate someone missing one of their sermons as close to rejecting all truth. Yes, the messages are important, but not quite salvation keeping important.

I once made the comment that I was not going to a church service, due to the fact that they were having some music special that did not appeal to me - I was a marked man, I was an unspiritual man, I was a man that didn't support my church, I was a man that didn't support my pastor - ya, right!

11 I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labour in vain.

The word translated "afraid" is the Greek term from which we gain our word phobia. Paul is really afraid that he has wasted time on these people - his time taken in giving them the gospel and working with them.

I suspect many pastors know just what Paul was feeling. They go into a church and spend years of their lives laboring and when they leave, the people act as though they haven't been taught anything.

I assisted in a church, for awhile, where their pastor had just resigned. He had planted the church, he had nurtured the church, and he had invested his life in the church. After he resigned, they called me to interim pastor. After about a year they called a full time pastor that proceeded to split the church in about a year.

That poor man saw his work turned into turmoil - how frustrated he must have been.

I say all this knowing that God is in control, that the pastor may have made mistakes, and that the people may not have been seeking God's leading in the choosing of a new pastor, but to see all those years of labor thrown into the air must have given him great heartache.

12 Brethren, I beseech you, be as I [am]; for I [am] as ye [are]: ye have not injured me at all.

He reassures them that they have not injured him, but he is just wondering at their rejection of his teaching and the acceptance of the teaching of the Judaizers.

13 Ye know how through infirmity of the flesh I preached the gospel unto you at the first. 14 And my temptation which was in my flesh ye despised not, nor rejected; but received me as an angel of God, [even] as Christ Jesus.

Paul had a problem when he was there originally, but he went ahead and preached to them anyway. He was ministering to them in spite of his limitations. In spite of this they accepted him and his message as from God, as though he was an angel from God. They realized their lostness and understood the salvation that he was offering.

15 Where is then the blessedness ye spake of? for I bear you record, that, if [it had been] possible, ye would have plucked out your own eyes, and have given them to me.

He continues on that they would have done anything for him when he was there the first time. Now, he asks them where that feeling was. They have lost that blessedness of salvation - they had taken on the law to their own unhappiness.

16 Am I therefore become your enemy, because I tell you the truth?

He calls for their acceptance of his rebuke for their turning from God to the law. He has not turned against them as they have turned against God, he is only trying to help them understand how damaging the Judaizers teaching was to them.

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

He tells them that the Judaizers are zealous, but they are zealously affecting them in a negative way - they have taken the joy of salvation from them and saddled them with many observances.

“yea, they would exclude you, that ye might affect them.” The Judaizers were not stupid; they were separating themselves from the Galatians so that the Galatians would not affect them or their belief system.

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

He continues with his concern for them and his desire to move them away from these false teachers and their false doctrine.

APPLICATION:

1. We scoff at the ignorance of the Old Testament people worshiping other gods, gods made of gold, of wood, of stone, yet we do the same, only we have substituted steel, plastic and

everything else as substance for our gods. We worship the airways that carry our trashy television, radio and music, we worship the cars of steel and the goodies of plastic. If we aren't tied up in these, we are tied up in the god of self and self fulfillment. We are out to get all the toys, to climb all the hills and all the while leave God out of the whole mix.

The Old Testament is full of references to the fact that the Israelites took on the gods of other nations, and so we, the church have taken on the gods of the world. We have adopted their methods, we have adopted their music, we have adopted their viewing habits, we have adopted their world, we have just changed the name to Christian.

We have followed the Biblical view of coming out and being separate, but we have created our own little world that is just like the Devil's world, cept we call it Jesusville. We claim it is Christian, but it is that in name only.

The Bible speaks to idolatry in the New Testament. Most relate idols to the Old Testament, that in the New Testament we are more educated and don't believe in those old ways. After all the Romans didn't worship sticks and stones, they worshiped a man - Caesar. In the book of Acts Paul spoke to the educated of his day of all the different Gods that they worshiped. They even had one in case they missed one, the unknown god. One must wonder if this was their Romans one illumination in action.

In Acts 17.23 he uses this unknown god to introduce them to his God, the God that they were really seeking. Earlier in the chapter (verse seventeen) he perceived that the entire city was given over to idolatry. Wow, an entire city given to the worship of all but God Himself.

No, idolatry is not just an Old Testament problem. In fact in I Cor. 10.14 Paul admonishes Christians to flee idolatry. "Wherefore, my dearly beloved, flee from idolatry."

So, it seems that I am not way off base to assume that believers today can be involved in idolatry. Indeed, we are getting ahead of ourselves but in Gal. 5.19 we see that it is listed among the works of the flesh. "Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are [these]; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, 20 Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, 21 Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told [you] in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God."

Another of Paul's letters mentions a similar string of horrible sins. Col. 3.5 "Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry: 6 For which things' sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience: 7 In the which ye also walked some time, when ye lived in them."

Okay, now let's get down to some brass tacks here. Notice, Paul mentions that "covetousness,

which is idolatry" is not to be part of the Christians way of life. However, what is the reality teenagers? I gotta have those name brand jeans, I gotta have those name brand shoes - oh and what about the reality of adults? We gotta have that huge SUV, we gotta have that big screen tv, we gotta have that well we all get the point I think.

Why do we "gotta?" Because we COVET those things. Plain and simple, we are a coveteous people in America. The lexicon says covetousness is the "greedy desire to have more" and that is the crux of America today - even many if not most Christians today.

Paul walked through history with a cloak, a few scrolls and what clothes he could carry. We gotta walk through history with a house, a car or two, a tv in every room, a stereo in most every room, a load of money in our pocket, a ton of money in our bank account, a great watch, a great and the list could go on for some time. In America we seem to be never satisfied with what we have and are always wanting more.

I don't exempt myself from the finger pointing, though I could claim innocence since we live in a small apartment sized house and drive an older Hyundai, however that house is packed to the gills with toys and many of them are not needed, though we thought they were at the time of purchase.

2. Jamieson Fausset and Brown suggest an interesting point in relation to the fact that Christ came at the appropriate time. Not to sidestep the issue that God appointed the time, and that His plan was most certainly in effect, we might also understand that He had good reason to plan it this way.

"Had Christ come directly after the fall, the enormity and deadly fruits of sin would not have been realized fully by man, so as to feel his desperate state and need of a Saviour." This is quite an item to consider. Had Christ come just after the fall and died for Adam and Eve's sin, would they have realized that they needed His work on the cross? I rather doubt it. They, after all, had only eaten one piece of fruit! Why would they need someone to die for them? Why would someone need to correct that problem any way? They were kicked out of the garden, they were cursed, what more could God want?

No, sin was not fully realized so time for it to grow might well have been necessary.

Now, that we are talking of sin and its result, just what are some of the results? Our physical death, our bent toward sin, the creation itself is suffering under the result of sin, disease is becoming worse, civilization is degenerating even though the humanists would have us believe otherwise.

Sin is having its way with the entire creation and with God's creatures. It is progressing, no matter how good we humans make it look.

It is clear also that through time God has allowed man to prove that sin is rampant under all sorts of governing relationships. In conscience, in law and now in grace sin seems to rule supreme even though God starts all of these times out in relative Godliness - He gives man the opportunity to follow Him, but man always chooses to follow someone else.

3. In verse nine, Paul asks them a question. "whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage?" He asks why they want to again be under the bondage of rules and regulations. By way of application, consider your own life.

When you feel the most safe is when you are in a known lifestyle, a lifestyle many call a rut. When you are in a rut you feel comfortable. This is not uncommon for the human existence. We like things and times when all is going along by the pattern, by the rules, by the norm. When the end of the rut gets kicked out and we have to face the possibility of change, of not being comfortable because we don't know what is going on, we tend to get upset.

There may be a natural desire to get under some system that makes us comfortable. It may be the law or it may be just a church lifestyle. It gives us comfort to be controlled - our destiny so to speak.

4. Verse ten introduces the idea of "Ye observe days, and months, and times, and years." Now that is clearly something relating to the law and can't possibly relate to the church age. Correct, though I wonder if some pastors don't get into this rut. Sure, they would deny it, but how many of the pastors of your past "religiously" give Easter messages on Easter, Christmas messages on Christmas, Veterans messages on Veteran's day, patriotic messages on the fourth of July etc. They even feel that the Gospel isn't being preached properly if they don't have a VBS and that the church is living in sin if there isn't an Easter and Christmas cantata. **AND BE SURE IF A MEMBER MISSES ONE OF THEM THEY ARE REALLLL SINNERS.**

I think many churches/pastors are near to observing days, and months, and times, and years. Let's be careful of how we view our little rut as churches as well as individuals.

5. In verses thirteen and fourteen Paul mentions some shortcoming that he had while with them. We don't know what that was exactly, but at the least it was a shortcoming - not sin, but a shortcoming. Now, consider the last pastor candidate that your church rejected. Why was he rejected? Was it due to sin, to lack of qualification, or because he wasn't perfect?

Many are rejected because they aren't perfect in everyway, but here we have Paul the apostle confessing to an imperfection. If he can have one why not pastoral candidates today?

I was in a meeting with a candidate and a church congregation. The man was well qualified, he seemed to have a great family, and he was trained well. His only mistake was to confess that he had future plans for the church; plans that involved seeing the Lord grow the ministry. His imperfection cost him the position.

One further illustration, a man years ago wrote a theology book. I found the book very valuable. It was concise and it hit on topics that were of interest to me, topics that most books avoided. For years I enjoyed this mans work.

One day I was contacted on the internet by a man that had been searching the net for this author's name. Since I quoted the author in some of my work I came up in the man's search. Come to find out the man had sat under the author in college and loved the man's teaching.

Through the email correspondence I found that the man had some tapes by the author and he offered to send me a cdrom with the sermons on it. When the cd arrived I quickly started listening to the man - he was nothing like the book, he was rather common and unassuming in his approach to the Word, and I am sure would not have been called to pastor a church due to his lack of delivery skills.

An imperfection of skill, of talent of ability should not automatically set a man aside in the Candidating process.

Our text actually goes further, according to some, than just an imperfection, but could relate to some loathsome appearance of Paul when he was there. It was some difficulty of the flesh, of the body. We tend to avoid those that are not like us. We tend to avoid those that have infirmity. This ought not be so. The Galatians were a good example to us in this area - they treated Paul as a gift of God even though he had this infirmity.

Look past the external and respond to the internal! You might find illustration material in II Kings 7 where the message of four lepers was gladly received even though they weren't beautiful messengers.

6. "They zealously affect you," in verse seventeen gives a little insight to the Judaizers. They were zealous in their teaching of the people. This gives us two items of interest.

a. They were zealous, they were real workers, they really believed in what they were doing and they were intent on getting the Galatian believers to follow them. They didn't, in my opinion, realize that they were false teachers. They thought they had the truth, so were putting that truth out there for everyone to see. Not like some Christians today, that know they have the truth, and don't put it out there.

I have to wonder if some of these false teachers, when confronted with this letter, turned away from their false ideas to the truth of Grace. In looking at the arguments set forth, I would suspect that some at least would have seen their error.

b. How "zealous" are we as pastors, as leaders, and as lay people when it comes to bringing people to Christ, in bringing people into true discipleship, or in bringing them into the church so that they can be discipled?

We tend to lay back and leave all that to the pastor. This is not all our fault for many pastors through the years have fostered the thought that they are the soul winners, that they are the disciplers, and that they are the important ones. My goodness have they let us off the hook, and given us a wide comfort zone!

7. Verse eighteen should be stricken from the Bible. It can't possibly belong there. Pastors have been decrying the sin of zealotry for years, they have demeaned many that do good work as zealots and used the term in the most harshest of ways, yet Paul says being zealous can be good. This can't possibly belong in the Biblical record. "But [it is] good to be zealously affected always in [a] good [thing],"

Paul says zealousness is good. End of statement. If you hear someone decrying someone as being too zealous, ask them why and see if their answer stacks up with Paul's simple, clear and concise statement.

If you have interest in the real Biblical story of zealousness, there is a study of mine that seeks to find out what is a balanced view of zeal. You can find it at my website.

8. The Seeming cooling of the Galatians relationship to Paul may indicate that he had prior discussion/letters with them relating to this false teaching. Sure, there is the first of the book that would have driven them away due to its bluntness, but he did not know if this was the case or not as he wrote. To know that they had cooled toward him would have required prior contact with them on the subject.

I would apply this to suggest that if you have confronted someone and you know in your heart the person is "BIBLICALLY" wrong, then a second or maybe third attempt at reconciliation might be the wise path. Matthew 18 suggests at least two attempts.

9. Paul rightly seems to deal with the wrong doctrine, but also relates to the people. Any doctrinal deviation is wrong, it is sin, but it is being done by a person. You can deal with the sin and leave the person out of it, but you will not deal correctly with the situation. Deal with the person while dealing with the sin.

Example: Many today are not attending church. This is not right, this is not how the Lord wants it. However to just pile on the person about his wrong, there is also the person that is behind the not going. There are reasons he is not going, there are situations that have brought them to this point and this decision. You must deal with this as well as the wrong.

I do not use the word sin in relation to non-attendance, as I believe there are times when there is no other choice for the believer. The churches today are so sick it would be wrong for the people to attend them and give credence to them.

Many quote the passage that mentions the forsaking the assembling of the brethren. First of all

there needs to be brethren, secondly there needs to be the elements of a church to bring one to worship, not elements of the world that entertain. Worship is more than a greeting time preceded by standing around singing wishy washy verbiage that is unBiblical at best.

10. Learn well from Paul's graciousness and kindness to these people he is confronting. He has blasted them verbally but he did it in a loving way. Many there are today that have just been blasted - this is one reason church attendance is down today. Blasting without kindness and love will drive people away very quickly.

Learn also that he was on solid Biblical ground not on opinion ground. There is a vast difference that many preachers fail to realize.

11. In verses thirteen and fourteen we have mentioned Paul's sickness - now we should dwell a little more on the response of the Galatian Christians.

a. They were lost when they started responding positively to Paul. It was after they had responded to his physical need that their spiritual needs were met. Even as lost people they did what believers should do.

It has always cracked me up to hear the strong Calvinist, when speaking of total depravity, say unsaved man can do no good whatsoever. This verse teaches the opposite as does much of life if you observe. Many unsaved people do quite well at living the Christian life without the benefit of regeneration. Many live upstanding and moral lives.

More to the point of this passage Mt 25:34-40 speaks to the fact that we are to be doing good works in the area of helping the poor and the suffering. We don't do all that well with this one these days. We do have a unique situation in our society in America - we have many that are using the system, that are abusing the system, and that are making a mockery of the system. Many are using the Christian church to live the decent life without working to support them selves. They live off the system of welfare and social assistance rather than work for a living.

There are "homeless" that say they are making a good living panhandling. This is a perversion of what our society in America is about, and it is a perversion of what the Christian life is.

The point is really that we are to be involved in this assisting of the poor and destitute. We need to do the work and allow God to sort out the bad guys. He will judge when the time is right.

We need to give due diligence to determine the honesty of the need, but we don't have to necessarily prove a need before we respond. Respond as best we can and allow God to hinder the one that does our charity wrong.

On a personal basis, we need to use wisdom and respond as the Lord leads. If you don't know, just do for the person and remember that if they have wronged you and your charity, then the

Lord will deal with them for it, you don't have to worry about it.

We need to respond to all kinds, all shapes, and all conditions. I once heard the testimony of a missionary lady in South America. She had traveled for miles back into the jungle and had stopped at a little village. She was sitting by the fire when she smelled something foul, and shortly an old disgusting woman appeared and sat down beside her. She was sick and dirty and totally disgusting, but the missionary knew that her heart needed a change. The two talked awhile about things and then of Christ and his love for the woman.

At some point in the conversation the missionary leaned over and kissed the old woman on the cheek. A tear appeared and she said something along the line that Jesus must love her if the missionary could love her. The old woman became the main contact for the area and became a strong Christian.

We need to respond to all that come along and allow God to do His work with these people.

As far as churches go, I have given some thought to the response system that might be of help. It is not perfect, nor is it comprehensive - it is something that you might be able to build upon. You can find it on my website under the "Notes of Lots of Other things" under "deacon's fund."

12. We might insert here that many believers do not have a real joy in their lives. Many have observed that the law adds bondage, and that it lacks the joy giving qualities of the gospel. If you have no joy in life it may be that you are trying to live up to some standard - a standard that you have falsely set, or maybe a standard that someone else has falsely set.

Our standard is freedom in Christ, not subservience to some standard of living that we constantly try to attain or keep. If you are trying to live a standard, give it up and come to know the joy of living in the freedom of grace that comes to us through the Gospel.

I have known many that have accepted the standard set forth by a church or a group and they are usually totally miserable. They aren't meeting the standard and decide that they are worthless and a failure. On the other hand if we realize our only standard is the Word we can live by it and know that the standards have been met. If we fail and miss the standard now and then, then we know we have I John 1.9 to find our forgiveness before the Lord.

13. It crossed my mind that Paul did very little explaining about some mighty deep doctrines. It must be that while he was with them he had covered some deep truths of the Word with them. He must have given them a strong foundation before moving on to his next work.

He speaks of adoption, but little is said of the background of it. He speaks of Christ, the Spirit, and the Father, but says little about Who and What They are. He speaks of their salvation, but little about the doctrine that is behind that salvation.

This brings forth another application: A minister should know his congregation and their knowledge of the Word. As he realizes where the people are he should then speak to their level of understanding.

Many are the preacher that preaches a gospel message every Sunday. How can they waste that kind of time on the possible one or two unsaved that might be there. Why not spend that time in helping your congregation mature instead of giving them time to daydream and sleep?

I have oft times looked around at the congregation to see what they are doing in a sermon. Nail manicuring, looking out the window, reading books, sleeping, playing with the kids, and a multitude of other things. This isn't worship, this isn't edifying, this is a total waste of time! Indeed, the fact that I am looking around at others probably tells us something about my own interest.

Pastors, we are boring our congregations to tears and just keep on doing it week after week. When will we wake up to the fact that these folks are there to learn, to feed, to nourish themselves from our ministry - when will we accommodate them and their God?

14. In relation to adoption there are only three cases of adoption mentioned in the Old Testament: of Moses Ex. 2.10, Genubath I Ki. 11.20 and Esther 2.7,15 and these are all outside of Israel. Paul is the only writer that uses the word in the New Testament. This was a gentile thing and in different countries it meant different things. (See I.S.B.E. for further on the customs of the different areas.)

Since the customs were varied, it would seem that Paul was just using this picture in a general sense and that we should not get too carried away with the implications and applications. Only take the general idea of adoption as set forth and relate them to salvation - not go into great detail as to what all the items might mean as they relate to salvation.

The parables of Christ are to be understood in the same light - only the general characteristics not the minutia.

Week nine: 4.21-31 Paul explains the difference between Isaac and Ishmael

21 Tell me, ye that desire to be under the law, do ye not hear the law? 22 For it is written, that Abraham had two sons, the one by a bondmaid, the other by a freewoman. 23 But he [who was] of the bondwoman was born after the flesh; but he of the freewoman [was] by promise. 24 Which things are an allegory: for these are the two covenants; the one from the mount Sinai, which gendereth to bondage, which is Agar. 25 For this Agar is mount Sinai in Arabia, and answereth to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children. 26 But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all.

Paul sticks a board in their ear in the first verse of this section, "Hey, folks you are following the law but are you listening to what it says?" "You certainly aren't listening to it from the looks of things." Now, I don't claim to know what Paul was thinking or meaning, but if I were a follower of the Judaizers teachings, and Paul said that in a letter, I would have become indignant - "Of course I hear the law, that is why I am doing this stuff!" might be the response.

Immediately he lets them know where he is going with his comments - it should have been obvious to them that if they weren't disgusted with his thinking by now, it was certainly time to leave the gathering, because it sure wasn't going to get any better.

Then he gets into the basics of the Old Testament; things that they had learned early in their spiritual lives - what is the apostle doing? He is telling us the stuff we learned in Sunday school, why is he not giving us the deeper stuff? Bingo, that is just where he is going.

First, what is an allegory (mentioned in verse 24)? An allegory is, according to Webster's 1828 dictionary: "ALLEGORY, n. [Gr. other, to speak, a forum, an oration.] A figurative sentence or discourse, in which the principal subject is described by another subject resembling it in its properties and circumstances. The principal subject is thus kept out of view, and we are left to collect the intentions of the writer or speaker, by the resemblance of the secondary to the primary subject. Allegory is in words that hieroglyphics are in painting. We have a fine example of an allegory in the eightieth Psalm, in which God's chosen people are represented by a vineyard. The distinction in scripture between a parable and an allegory is said to be that a parable is a supposed history, and an allegory, a figurative description of real facts. An allegory is called a continued metaphor. The following line in Virgil is an example of an allegory.

"Claudite jam rivos, pueri, sat prata biberunt.

"Stop the currents, young men, the meadows have drank sufficiently; that is let your music cease, our ears have been sufficiently delighted."

Gen. 16.1ff gives us the story of Sarah and her bareness and her impatience and her lack of faith in God's promise of a son. She gave Hagar, her handmaiden, to Abraham to raise up a son - a son that became the Arabic nations of the Middle East. He was born out of a sinful relationship, and a

lack of faith in God's promise of a seed.

We might add that this was a normal practice in the culture in which Abraham lived. This is not license to do whatever "culture" does because "culture" is normally the Devil's world, that of lost unregenerate people doing what they want. (See also Gen. 30.3-9, 13 for further example of this practice.)

I will get off the subject only briefly - divorce used to be a worldly thing, but it became culturally acceptable and the church has adopted it as an alternative to right and correct living. Soon homosexuality will be accepted in the culture, and the church is in some cases already embracing it.

Gen. 21.9ff gives the account of the dispute between Hagar and Sarah which ended in Abraham sending Hagar and son packing.

We see the result of Hagar's dismissal from Abraham's camp in Gen. 21.17ff "And God heard the voice of the lad; and the angel of God called to Hagar out of heaven, and said unto her, What aileth thee, Hagar? fear not; for God hath heard the voice of the lad where he [is]. 18 Arise, lift up the lad, and hold him in thine hand; for I will make him a great nation. 19 And God opened her eyes, and she saw a well of water; and she went, and filled the bottle with water, and gave the lad drink. 20 And God was with the lad; and he grew, and dwelt in the wilderness, and became an archer. 21 And he dwelt in the wilderness of Paran: and his mother took him a wife out of the land of Egypt."

The generations of Isaac and Ishmael are listed in Gen. 25.12ff.

Notice that all that was promised for Ishmael was that he would become a great nation. There is no explanation as to the meaning of that phrase; there is no indication of anything other than a great seed, so why does Paul give us this great meaning to Hagar's seed? Is he embellishing history, is he sharing information that just isn't recorded in Scripture, or is he just using "poetic license" to provide an illustration? It would seem that he assumed the Galatians would relate completely to what he said, thus they must have had the same information, or understood it as license.

The Genesis account says nothing of Ishmael's bondage to the law which actually implies total complete lostness for all his seed and their seed. Are all Arabic peoples lost, are they all non-elect, are we not to take time to give them the Gospel? Some interesting questions - in my mind at least. It would seem that Ishmael was under bondage to the law, due to his being circumcised, but the following seed would seem to be external from that bondage.

They would have no relationship to God because they were outside of promise - outside of God's people, and most likely as I understand it because of Ishmael's rejection of God. The great seed was for Abraham's benefit - to help him feel better about the situation.

We do see in Gen. 17.21 a note that Ishmael was under the same covenant as Abraham, as the son of Abraham. This is the connection that Ishmael had with the covenant - he was under the law. "And Abraham said unto God, O that Ishmael might live before thee! 19 And God said, Sarah thy wife shall bear thee a son indeed; and thou shalt call his name Isaac: and I will establish my covenant with him for an everlasting covenant, [and] with his seed after him. 20 And as for Ishmael, I have heard thee: Behold, I have blessed him, and will make him fruitful, and will multiply him exceedingly; twelve princes shall he beget, and I will make him a great nation. 21 But my covenant will I establish with Isaac, which Sarah shall bear unto thee at this set time in the next year. 22 And he left off talking with him, and God went up from Abraham. 23 And Abraham took Ishmael his son, and all that were born in his house, and all that were bought with his money, every male among the men of Abraham's house; and circumcised the flesh of their foreskin in the selfsame day, as God had said unto him. 24 And Abraham [was] ninety years old and nine, when he was circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin. 25 And Ishmael his son [was] thirteen years old, when he was circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin.

26 In the selfsame day was Abraham circumcised, and Ishmael his son. 27 And all the men of his house, born in the house, and bought with money of the stranger, were circumcised with him."

The question now is this. Just why would Paul describe Ishmael as being in the bondage of the covenant as compared to Abraham which was under the promise? It would seem that Ishmael was under the covenant because dad forced it upon him, but not under any subservience or faith in God. God made a deal with Abraham for his son Ishmael thus putting Ishmael under another covenant. He was circumcised under the Abrahamic covenant, but was ultimately under a different promise of God, than the one given to Abraham - that which Isaac came under.

I suspect that Gen 17.18 is the key and the answer, "And Abraham said unto God, O that Ishmael might live before thee!" Evidently Ishmael had rejected God but God wanted to bless him as much as He could for Abraham's sake.

Thus, Agar (Hagar) and Sarah are pictured as the two covenants - one of the law and one of grace; one of bondage, and one of freedom; one of the flesh and one of the spirit; one of sin and one of salvation.

Ishmael had no promise, he had only the law that he could not keep. Abraham and Isaac's seed were under the law, but they also had the promise and the results future of that promise.

Gen. 17.18 is of interest in the NASB. It adds a little to the conversation "But God said, "No, but Sarah your wife will bear you a son," It seems God knew Ishmael's heart and that it was not going to change so God was moving on the Isaac front. (The NET Bible, ASV, New King James also inserts the "no.")

Jamieson Fausset and Brown suggest that even though Ishmael did not produce the church that he may have enjoyed the benefit of it - not likely from what we've seen thus far.

Isaac is an interesting name in the Hebrew "yits-khawk" is how it is pronounced - imagine calling him to dinner - some would think you were sneezing me thinks. ("yitschaq" is the word.) Now here is the clincher, Isaac means "he laughs."

The comments concerning Jerusalem show once again that the city that is so prominent in the Bible is of spiritual importance as well. It, when contrasted to Mt. Sinai is the contrast between law and grace. Jerusalem is pictured as above Mt. Sinai. This is true geographically, it is north and some east of Sinai, but it is also always up from anywhere in the world to the Israelite - they always went UP to Jerusalem. It is the center of all God's activities with the Jew and in my mind it is the center of all activity with man in general. (See my study on the location of the Garden of Eden.)

Jerusalem is also contrasted with Sinai as free, while Sinai is in bondage.

One further note concerning Jerusalem being the center of activity of God's dealing with mankind - verse twenty-six "But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all." Mother of us all relates directly to spiritually in the context, of believers being free, but it may also look back to the city being the starting point of mankind. How else could it be the mother of us ALL?

You might find Heb. 12.22 of interest in relation to Jerusalem - the city of God. "But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels,"

Jerusalem isn't just a tourist destination to make the pastors and television evangelists of our day money; it is the City of God. It is that place where God has dealt with man for centuries and will for the future unto the end. Jerusalem is God's place on earth to work with mankind. Something special, not just a place of interest.

27 For it is written, Rejoice, [thou] barren that bearest not; break forth and cry, thou that travailest not: for the desolate hath many more children than she which hath an husband.

Paul says it is written - where is it written might come to mind? This is from Isa. 54.1 "Sing, O barren, thou [that] didst not bear; break forth into singing, and cry aloud, thou [that] didst not travail with child: for more [are] the children of the desolate than the children of the married wife, saith the LORD."

This seems to continue the picture message that Paul is giving. It relates to the fact that Sarah was barren, but that she was told by God that she would have a child - and she did - the seed that would produce Messiah.

28 Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise.

Isn't that just what I said? :-) Messiah came to provide adoptability for all that would come to the

Savior, through the promise.

29 But as then he that was born after the flesh persecuted him [that was born] after the Spirit, even so [it is] now.

This speaks to the fact that Ishmael gave trouble to the one promised, and that this was true even at that time - those in bondage to the law are persecuting those that are free from the law by grace. What a sharp jab at the Judaizers - Paul couldn't have made a picture more plain for the folks listening to his letter - the Judaizers are after you - to cause you trouble.

Gen. 21.9-10 speaks to this trouble between Ishmael and the promised line. We aren't clear from this passage just what the "mocking" was or who it was related too, but it is clear it was trouble between Ishmael the one under bondage, and the Promised, free, line of Abraham. "And Sarah saw the son of Hagar the Egyptian, which she had born unto Abraham, mocking. 10 Wherefore she said unto Abraham, Cast out this bondwoman and her son: for the son of this bondwoman shall not be heir with my son, [even] with Isaac."

30 Nevertheless what saith the scripture? Cast out the bondwoman and her son: for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the freewoman.

This is reference to the passage just quoted in Genesis twenty-one. We as believers are not of the bondwoman but of the freewoman and Paul states this in the next verse.

31 So then, brethren, we are not children of the bondwoman, but of the free.

What a vivid picture Paul has painted with words to show once again in yet another manner that we are not under the law, we are not outside the family and that we are free, born of the Promised One Jesus Christ.

The further very clear implication is that those under bondage are not acceptable among the free - in short - kick those law following Judaizers out on their legalistic, bondage ridden pants and get back to being the free people that you are!

Just some misc. information that might interest some.

Note should be made of the sons gathering to bury their father (Gen. 25.9), an act of conciliation, though we don't know if there was animosity between the two. Paul's comment rather indicates this possibility as well as the jeering of Isaac early in life.

Smith's dictionary lists pure Arabs as descendant from Joktan while mixed Arabs descend from Ishmael.

It seems that Hagar and Ishmael parted company as both, in the Chronicles, have their own lines,

the Hagarites and the Ishmaelites.

Hagar means flight or stranger and was an Egyptian and may have been a gift from Pharaoh when Abraham was down there being a little dishonest.

The angel that appeared to Hagar when she first conceived is actually Christ pre-incarnate. If you do a study of the Angel of the Lord you will find He has qualities of the Godhead and is most likely The Son. There is a study of this on my website for those that are interested.

The seed of Ishmael have no relationship to God due to their father's rejection of God. The implication is that there might have been a relationship had he not rejected God. None of these peoples have a special relation with God, other than what they can have through Christ in our day.

APPLICATION:

1. We saw in Genesis 17.18 that Ishmael was not living unto God, that Abraham was concerned for his being. God, in his concern and love for Abraham told him that even though he was not walking with Him, that He would bless him anyway - bless him as much as he could.

This pictures God's love in a little bit different perspective than usual. He loves the lost children of believers. That should be a comfort to believers that have lost relatives. His love may not be able to overcome their rejection of Him, but He can bless them as much as He can. This might well be a very important praying point for those that do not see their relatives coming to God.

It is also true that God blesses the lost in some manners just as He blesses the believer. Both lost and saved benefit from the rain, the sun, life and all those general items that man as a whole enjoys.

2. Again in Genesis 17 I am left to wonder, after reading it several times, IF Ishmael could have been the promised line. Note the flow of this text. God has announced the coming birth of a son to Sarah, and Abraham laughed at the thought. He then expresses his wish that Ishmael would walk with God. God then mentions that He would make a nation of Isaac, and in deference to Abraham's concern for Ishmael tells him that Ishmael will also become a nation. Now, this had already been promised to Hagar, but is now information given to Abraham.

There are two possibilities here. One, that Ishmael could have been receiver of the promised line, or on the other hand this was just a comment of Abraham that God ignored and returned to Isaac, then after He is finished with Isaac, He consoles Abraham by telling him Ishmael will also be blessed.

Which of these is true? I suspect the first, but I'm not sure there is Scriptural proof of such. It

would also give rise to great conversations with the staunch Calvinist and the relationship of the passage to election and free will.

Adam Clarke hints at this when he suggests that Abraham seems to be wishing that Ishmael could have had that relationship with God in Genesis 17.18 (His comment is in his Romans commentary.) Yet, in his Genesis commentary he clearly shows that God had other plans and that this was not a possibility.

I'd like to interject a brief overview of the Genesis account to see if we can sort this out.

Gen. 12.2-3

12.7 the land is promised

13.14-15, 17 the land is again mentioned

13.16 His seed would be as the dust on earth

15.1-3 Abraham complains that Eliezer/servant is his only heir

15.4 heir promised from his own loins

15.5 his seed to be as the stars in number

15.6 Abraham believes and it is counted for righteousness

15.18 the land is given

16.1ff Hagar is given to Abraham and she conceives and of course Sarah is mad.

16.9ff Hagar is told her seed would be multiplied

16.12 Hagar is told that Ishmael will be a handful in adulthood

17.1-5 Abraham is mentioned to be father of nations (nations and kings 12.6)

17.7-8 the land is to go to Abraham's seed/future generations

17.9-14 circumcision is set forth as a coming requirement

17.15-16 Sarah is to have son/mother of nations and kings

17.17 Abraham does not believe

17.18 Abraham laments Ishmael's direction (God already set his course it seems in 16.12)

17.19,21 his coming son through Sarah is to be Isaac -- covenant is to be with him and his seed.

17.20 Ishmael is to be a great nation

17.23-27 circumcision done to all in Abraham's camp including Ishmael

18.1-15 Sarah still unbelieving (laughed) about child. Abraham's belief/disbelief is not mentioned

21.1-8 Isaac comes on the scene

21.9ff Hagar is run off --

21.18 Ishmael is to be a great nation

22.15ff covenant is confirmed -- Abraham is to be blessed, large seed, and in his seed the nations would be blessed (Christ)

I know that Abraham thought Ishmael could possibly be the promised line, but whether this was ever a possible in God's mind/plan, I don't think we can determine. I think logically that since Ishmael came from an incorrect response from Sarah that this probably was not a possibility. It seems however, that Ishmael was not living in a manner consistent with being the promised line.

3. Paul seems to be saying, folks you are attempting to move from the place of sons to the place of rejects, of bondage, of ranker. You are not of the spiritual line of Ishmael, but of the line of promise, why are you trying to live like the other guys?

Is this not what Christians are trying to do today? Today we have all the "Christian" trappings that are identical to the world. We have:

Christian rock

Christian punk

Christian Hip Hop - even a hip-hop version of the Bible

Christian everything the world has in music

Christian action figures

Christian fiction

Christian movies

Christian entertainment

Christian credit counseling

Christian finance

Christian jazzercise

Christian diets

Christian romance novels - based on Biblical characters

Christian television

Christians are living like the other guys!

Christians don't want to be identified with the world, but they want to be just like the world, so they take everything of the world, tack on the term "Christian" and call it theirs. FOLKS THAT IS THE WORLD - tacking on the term "Christian" doesn't change the sum and substance of anything!

God says, that we are to be lighthouses unto the world, how can we be a lighthouse if they can't tell us from themselves?

4. I think Genesis 17.18 is a grand verse for parents, especially those that have an adult child that has not followed the Lord. Here, before God, Abraham laments his sons living, and yet God does not condemn nor reproach Abraham for not raising him properly.

Adult children make adult decisions and must live with the consequences. The parent, if they tried to parent correctly, are not responsible for wandering mature children.

The passage also pictures the great love that Abraham had for this child conceived in sin. This is natural, and should be the attitude of parents in that situation. It is not the child's fault that the parent made a mistake.

This is parenthetical to the point of number four in application and clearly a rabbit trail that I would like to follow for a moment or two. I might mention that I used the phrase "conceived in sin" and I believe this to be the Scriptures analysis of the situation, but there is a major item to consider of Abraham, or any Old Testament saint and their lifestyle. They were not as we. They did not have the Holy Spirit indwelling them as we have. There are many in the reformed camp that would dispute this truth, but there is no reason for the Lord to promise the Spirit to the

apostles if they already had Him within.

Without the Holy Spirit within you there is a great lack in the spiritual stalwartness that we enjoy; they had no leading of the Spirit, nor convicting of the Spirit as directly as we. Thus, we must understand that they were just as prone to sin as we, but equipped with fewer tools than we.

We, even enjoying the work of the Spirit, often choose to sin, how much more easily must it have been for the Old Testament saint to choose to sin. I can imagine, Sarah telling Abraham to take Hagar - "hey, whatever works for you, works for me." Yes, a little simplistic and possibly base, but this is about how I see the Genesis account. She offered, he did it, she got mad, and everyone suffered for it.

There is also the fact that the Old Testament saint was not yet regenerated, they were accepted because their sin was COVERED but they were not in the family of God in a complete manner until the work of the cross. Now, if that doesn't ring a bell, that means that they were operating under their fallen nature - not an easy time to refrain from sin if you know the Scriptures.

Consider also, Ishmael - the one that didn't have a vote in the soap opera - he was just dumped into it - people, THINK before you decide to satisfy your own lust, the offspring may suffer immeasurably for your moment of chosen sin.

And now to the real point of this diversion. We in the church age have the Spirit within us to aid us in our control of our inner man. The Old Testament saint did not. Will we not be held to a higher standard than they? We have no real reason to ever sin, other than our own desire to allow it to come to pass. With the Spirit within we have all capability of saying no to ourselves, but we so often opt to sin anyway.

5. We might take a little time to think about our Bible and how we view it. We would hold to inerrancy and defend it to the hilt, yet we allow some mighty sloppy interpretation on the part of pastors and teachers.

We were in a church years ago and the man was drawing things from the verse we were studying that just plain and simply were not there. I in my usual obnoxious fashion asked him how he could say those things came from that particular verse. His reply ran along the line that the quarterly says it so it is so. He would not question the quarterly nor its authority to teach him nor his students.

Inerrancy is important but we should not forget that accuracy of interpretation is as important if not the more. After all wouldn't the Roman church agree with us on inerrancy, wouldn't many cults agree with us on inerrancy, indeed the Calvinist and the Armenian would agree with us on inerrancy, yet look at the wide differences in interpretation that we get from the same inerrant Scriptures.

Of course all interpretations are completely accurate - to those that have interpreted. Each one believes he has the truth.

Thus I guess you need to understand that the Judaizers were honest in their beliefs, even though they were wrong.

This might bring up a question that I am not sure I can answer.

How do we determine who is right in this area of interpretation? Since we are all right (in our own eyes) how do we know we are right, how do I know that I interpret Paul's comments correctly?

Let's list some possible items to consider:

- a. Compare Scripture with Scripture.
- b. Compare your interpretation of a passage with other Scripture. Is your interpretation consistent with all other Scripture?
- c. Be walking closely with God and seeking His guidance in all your study and thinking.
- d. Compare your interpretation with that of other known scholars (notice that makes you one too by following this item :-)
- e. Compare your interpretation with that of the church in years past. Are you consistent with what other church leaders of past ages taught.

If all these are done, then you have a fair chance of a proper interpretation, but be careful even then, for some of these people you are comparing to may be in error.

So, how did Paul know that he could be so definite on what he was telling the Galatians? He had received his information from Christ Himself - he didn't need to compare with anyone, he was the authority of the day.

More to the point is the fact that the method of interpretation is critical. If you interpret Scripture allegorically, you will end up in the Roman or cultic camp. You will find that there is no authority as to truth in this method.

I might add that this passage is not showing that Paul interpreted allegorically. He was simply using a picture argument to disprove error. See the next item of application.

I might give you a little picture of the importance of being careful in interpretation. It would have been easy for me to continue on in my thinking about Ishmael and the possibility of his being the

promised line and gone haywire with super new information for the church, however when I went back to the passage in Genesis and interpreted Scripture with Scripture it was much more clear that it was likely only Abraham that thought this might be a possibility rather than it being a real possibility with God.

6. In a further need of comment in this area, in verse 24 "Which things are an allegory: for these are the two covenants; the one from the Mount Sinai, which gendereth to bondage, which is Agar." Paul is not interpreting the Genesis account allegorically; he is using the account as an allegory to show a truth. There is a vast difference.

He is not saying that when Moses set down the account that it was meant as an allegory and that all believers since that time should interpret it allegorically, he is saying that this account pictures what I am trying to convey to you Galatians.

He goes on in the following verses to use other parts of the Genesis account in the same manner.

To the point, when you read the Genesis account you need to interpret it literally, and understand the plain literal meaning of the words, not look for some deep spiritual interpretation.

Allegorical interpretation treats the passage as only a vehicle or truck to carry the message. The message once understood enables the reader to discard the actual verse. This is a most dangerous method of viewing the Word.

I once asked a youth group to interpret Revelation 1.13-16 allegorically. The result was hilarious. One that has always stuck in my mind was from a very sharp teenage girl. She said it was a hippie in a Bahai robe standing in an old bathtub with brass claw feet with the water running. I asked the others in the class to prove her wrong and obviously they could not.

Christ in essence used allegory when he used parables. They were fictional accounts that He used to teach literal truths. Paul in this passage just uses a real account to teach his literal truth.

When Scripture uses allegory, it is quite evident in the passage where it is used.

Allegory is used to pass on information more easily to the listener. I once used a wall as an allegory. One day the students wanted to go to the cafeteria for class so they could have coffee with their class - not necessarily a commentary on the teachers interesting lectures, but then again it may have been.

At any rate the information I wanted to convey was the end times. When we arrived at the cafeteria, I realized my overlays would not be useful since there was no overhead projector. I leaned back in my chair about four feet from the wall and proceeded to divide the wall, imaginarily, into the sections of the end time. Each time I would speak of the tribulation I would point to where it was supposed to be on the wall. As the hour went on, I stopped pointing and

noticed when I mentioned one of the areas some of the students would actually turn their eyes to that portion of the wall.

I was using the wall to visually teach and convey information. So, Paul used a historical series of events to convey his argument against the Judaizers, and I must say that he couldn't have done a better job of giving forth this information.

7. One other item that some suggest, and probably rightly so, if all this is true, is that the Judaizers are of the law, are of sin, are of bondage, and are of Ishmael so to speak. Since Abraham kicked Hagar and Ishmael out should not the proper living Christians give the Judaizers a swift kick in the get out of here? I think that is probably the direct application that the Galatians should have made.

This would also give rise for immediate reconsideration of your belief system as a person that was following them - do I really want to follow bondage, and leave with the Judaizers or commit myself to the freedom of grace and stick with the good guys? This would have been a highly charged time in the life of the Galatian church.

Those that had rejected the Judaizers would be high on their superior thinking, knowing that they had finally been proven correct - that is just a little application of what I know of human nature, I trust I am incorrect. Anyway, they would have been readying themselves for the expulsion of the Judaizers and would have been turning their sights on those that had been bought into the false teaching.

What a time of soul searching some of the Judaizers must have gone through. Having seen their doctrine split open and exposed as falsehood. There must have been some that were convinced and turned away from their error - surely there must have been.

8. Okay, it is time to get nervous. I am going to talk about the covenants. No, I am not a covenant theologian, no I am not reform, I am unabashedly a dispensationalist, but the Bible talks of covenants and so must we if we are going to do the Bible justice.

There are two covenants mentioned here. The old and the new basically are in view at this point. Specifically it is the Old Testament Law compared to the Promise theology, if you will, of the Old Testament. Both worked together through the time of the law and into the time of Christ. At the point of Christ the Promise covenant was changed, or maybe a better term might be, fulfilled.

The one covenant, that of the flesh and Ishmael lead nowhere spiritually, but were a promise or covenant between God and Hagar/Ishmael whereby they were blessed with a great seed and a great nation. Unfortunately it was separate from the other covenant which lead to great spiritual peace.

The other covenant, the promise made to Abraham is usually tied up in four promises. I think that

a fifth is clear from this passage in Galatians.

- a. Abraham was to be blessed.
- b. Abraham was to be given a land.
- c. Abraham would have a great seed.
- d. Abraham would bless all nations.

The fifth seems to be the singular seed that Paul mentions, Christ Himself. Christ was not only from the plural seed of Abraham, but was "the Seed" that was to fulfill this promise to Abraham and his progeny.

Gal. 3.16 "Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ."

Gal. 3.19 "Wherefore then [serveth] the law? It was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made; [and it was] ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator."

Now, I may be splitting straws to make a fifth part of the promise, you could say that there are four and that the third one has two aspects - and you would be within bounds in my mind, but the specific thought of a plural seed or progeny, as well as a singular seed is required by the Word Itself.

9. Let's list the two covenants and their information for ease of observation:

SEED OF ISHMAEL SEED OF ISAAC

of the flesh of the promise

of Ishmael's promise of Isaac's promise

of the old of the new

no singular seed singular Seed, Christ

results in physical numbers results in physical and spiritual numbers

of Sinai of Jerusalem

of the law of grace

of bondage of freedom

of the past of the future

of bareness of fruitfulness (vs. 27)

of conflict of peace (vs. 29)

cast off accepted as heirs

One wouldn't want to miss the picture that Sinai brings forth either - that of idol production and the giving of the law.

10. International Standard Bible Encyclopedia suggests that the Sinai aspect relates to physical Israel even unto today and Jerusalem relates to spiritual, heavenly Israel. Let's consider that for a moment. Is this true or not?

In reality it definitely is true. Present Jews are bound up in the Law while rejecting grace, though a few have left the law and are enjoying salvation through Christ, so indeed, this is true. It is also true that the illustration Paul uses is limited to the lost Jewish law abider versus the saved Jewish/Gentile grace acceptor. (Indeed, there is a possibility that there are Gentiles in the lost Jewish grouping as well because the Old Testament has a complete set of rules whereby a Gentile can be accepted into the Jewish faith as a sojourner or stranger, as they are called in the Old Testament.

Week ten: 5.1-15 Circumcision is of no value, we are free

5:1 Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage.

This is probably the key verse if you would want one; it sums up the book fairly well.

The Galatians were called to "stand fast" or persevere, or stand firm in their liberty. The tense is a present, so keep standing would be the thought of the verse. Don't take that stand and leave it, don't let down liberty and take on bondage - stand and keep standing firm.

So many fail to stand firm in what they believe today. Many are the times when I stood firm and suffered the consequences and costs, but the knowledge of standing firm was a great comfort. When doctrinal position is questioned, we must stand firm, when life position is questioned, we must stand firm, and when moral position is questioned, we must stand firm for what is right, honorable and Biblical.

Some will quake at this next comment, but the word liberty has the thought of what we call license today. It is the freedom to do whatever we please, whether it is right or wrong. It is freedom to follow Christ and it is freedom to follow Satan - we are free in Christ to do whatever we want, whenever we want, and for as long as we want.

Now, before the tar is warmed for the feathers, let me say, we are free to do so, but our love for Christ, our desire to serve Christ, and our devotion to following Christ will not allow us to live outside the constraints placed for our voluntary acceptance as believers. We can live against God, but we ought not.

Too many today in the church take this liberty very seriously and live as they like rather than placing themselves under the constraints of Christian living. Sad. Many a pastor has been told to mind their own business when confronting a believer with sin.

"Make free" is the verb form of the word translated liberty. The liberty is that freedom given us, and the "make free" is that which makes us at liberty. It is the singular act of Christ which gives us the liberty in which we do and should stand firm.

"And be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage." relates to the belief of the Galatians that they had to go back under the law. "Entangled" is just what it describes in our language and culture. It is to be ensnared in, tangled up in, and not able to escape from. The law followed is an ensnarement to the believer.

Now, lest anyone get the wrong picture of the law, be sure to understand that it is an ensnarement to the believer and the believer only. To the lost person it is not an ensnarement, but a guide toward the Gospel which can free them.

This is a simple and inadequate illustration, but it will give you a little feel for this idea. Consider the many smokers that have left this addiction, left its health inhibiting clutches, and left its pocket book robbing character, for the freedom of not being tied to such a habit, THEN returning to that habit and all its consequences, having been free of all that and then going back to smoking and becoming ensnared again.

I have observed this several times, and still wonder at how the person can do that, how they can understand the danger, the addiction, and the hurt of the habit, then to enjoy the freedom, the good health, and the added finance only to turn again to the dark days of being tied to a habit that leads only to the grave for so many.

And here we have people leaving that freedom in Christ for the confines of the legal system than binds them in such a complete and stifling way.

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

The term "circumcised" is a present tense, so he is not suggesting that some were contemplating presenting themselves for physical circumcision, but that they already had gone through this procedure.

I think verse six sets the way Paul is using the word circumcision here. He is using circumcision as the term to encompass all that keeping the law requires. He is saying that this right, this procedure, this sign is of no use to you spiritually, and that Christ is the key.

He is saying that this sign of the Sinaitic covenant is no longer a valued act for the person desiring to follow God. It will not make you more spiritual, it will not make you more acceptable, and it will not make you more valuable to God. It can only be that step which leads you into obedience to the entire law of the old way which is physical and not spiritual.

What Paul is not saying when he says "Christ shall profit you nothing" is not that if you are Christ's and decide to follow the law then you are lost. He is suggesting only that if you set aside Christ, you will have no profit from him. He cannot free you, He cannot be your guide, and He cannot do a thing for you - you will be bound to obey the law instead.

3 For I testify again to every man that is circumcised, that he is a debtor to do the whole law.

Wonder if anyone has counted the ways that Paul has already stated this concept to the Galatians, and still he pounds it home one more time. If you place yourself in attempting to obey one part of the law, you are bound to do the whole law.

The suggestion is and it is truth, that if you even decide to keep the Sabbath as your day before God, because the law requires it, you are debtor to follow every single letter of the law. What a total burden to take upon oneself, yet many of the Galatians evidently were contemplating it or

had already done it.

4 Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace.

Now, here we have a serious statement of fact from Paul, not that the person is lost, but that they have chosen to follow one of two paths toward salvation. One is the law which cannot save and the other is grace which will definitely save. If they have chosen to follow the law, they have chosen not to follow grace where they once stood. They have turned from or fallen from grace to follow the law.

Christ and grace cannot assist them in their desire to be justified by following the law. This is contrasted in the next verse with those believers that follow grace toward eternal salvation.

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

Simple fact of where Paul and other believers are in their spiritual life - living by faith and enjoying a righteous life through the Spirit of God.

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

Now, this passage is a clear concise statement that might answer a question that some men might come up within this area of circumcision. If I am circumcised physically am I bound to live the law? No. If I am not circumcised, should I be? If I am not circumcised am I more spiritual than one that is not? No to both of these questions.

Paul clearly says to the believer that circumcision or uncircumcision is irrelevant to the believer, that living by faith is what is needed. No matter what our parents or the government decided when we were born about circumcision - none of it relates to our spiritual salvation.

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

The word used here to give the idea of hinder is a word used of someone running out onto the track in a race and jostling a runner so as to throw him off track or off step so that his good race is quite hampered.

It seems that Paul did not know what the Judaizers/Judaizers were, only that they had done their work and that some had been misled into false doctrine. This is a straight forward statement and a clear question. Who is it that did this to you?

Paul must have desired to know the source of this false doctrine. I have to wonder if he didn't plan to confront it personally at a later time.

8 This persuasion [cometh] not of him that calleth you.

No, matter where it came from Paul guarantees that it did not come from Christ. This would be to combat anyone suggesting that accepting Christ might bring them to understand the need of the law. Christ frees, He does not bind.

9 A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump.

Oh, how true and oh how sad to see pastors allowing a person to teach false doctrine in their church.

We decided to try a little church we had knowledge of - the pastor was from a good school so we went to Sunday school. Much to my surprise the teacher was implying that there could be errors in the Scriptures. He suggested that a certain passage might be wrong. Then one of the class seemed to be in agreement with the teacher and by the end of the class it was clear that the entire class had a very low view of inerrancy and of the trustworthiness of the Scriptures.

I was sure that the pastor could not agree to their view of things but decided maybe I'd better check. I called and asked about the class. He told me that the class was a split off from another church that felt comfortable in his church so they had their little class and attended the church.

How ridiculous to allow wolves to have free access to the sheep. Had we been an immature couple in the Lord that wandered into that class we could have received serious false doctrine.

Oh, how dangerous to allow wolves to teach the sheep. When false doctrine is found it must be rooted out for the sake of the sheep and the prosperity of Christ's church.

10 I have confidence in you through the Lord, that ye will be none otherwise minded: but he that troubleth you shall bear his judgment, whosoever he be.

Paul leaves this false teacher to his judgment before the Lord, and trusts that the Galatians will understand that leaven needs to be removed before it does its damage.

I Peter 5.1-4 relates to this as well as Heb. 13.17.

11 And I, brethren, if I yet preach circumcision, why do I yet suffer persecution? then is the offence of the cross ceased.

He has already alluded to the fact that those of bondage persecute those of freedom and grace, and he states clearly that he is persecuted, implying that it was coming from the Judaizers. Evidently someone had accused Paul of preaching obedience to the law and he logically dispels this rumor.

12 I would they were even cut off which trouble you.

This could relate to one of two things. That something outside the church would cut off the Judaizers access to them, or that they would remove the Judaizers from their midst. Paul uses a future tense here thus they have not been cut off as yet, but his desire is clear - that they WOULD be cut off.

I think from his illustration of Hagar and Ishmael that his desire is for the people of the Galatian church to cut off these false teachers. In the church, only the church can cut off false teaching - unless the Lord might intervene and take care of the problem, by physically removing the person in some manner.

13 For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only [use] not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another.

There are three items of truth here. We are free, but we are not to use the freedom to sin; rather we should serve one another.

Now, that "serve one another" is a phrase that is a study of its own. If you want an introduction to the thought look for "one another" in my writings (In the book Notes On Lots of Other Things). Or better yet, just study it yourself, the New Testament speaks of many things that we are to do for one another - take time to study this important topic.

14 For all the law is fulfilled in one word, [even] in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.

Here we have quite a statement from a man that has just condemned the law and its keeping in a number of ways over several cases of proof and he suggests that loving your neighbor can fulfill the whole thing.

I suspect he wants to say, if you really want some relationship to the law then follow what the Lord told us to do - love our neighbor - neighbor being the church brethren (assumed from the context).

This could be a quote from the Old Testament, or it could have been something that Paul heard from the Lord while here on earth or even when Christ was teaching Paul. Luke 10.27 mentions it when the lawyer spoke to the Lord and in Matt. 19.19 it is mentioned by the Lord when he spoke to the rich young ruler. Lev. 19.18 is the occurrence in the Old Testament.

15 But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another.

I think these final thoughts relate to how they cut off the false teachers. Be careful in your cutting, so to speak. The usual church life is one of serving one another, not cutting others off.

Get rid of the leaven, but don't slice the whole loaf into stuffing makins.

APPLICATION:

1. The obvious application from the last verse might run along the lines, of how do we treat one another in the church? Are we loving and caring or do we tend to shun and despise those we don't like or those that tend to disagree with us?

Pastors ought to accept all their people, not just run off those they don't like or that they find themselves disagreeing with. Love one another as thyself - wow, how long has it been since your pastor showed that sort of love and concern to you, or your Sunday school teacher, or that person in the pew beside you, or for that matter, when have you treated those people with love, as you would yourself.

Well should we consider how we love ourselves so we can know how to love others in our church? Yes, it might be painful, but let's do it.

I take really good care of my physical being.

I take really good care of my financial being.

I take really good care of my wants.

I take really good care of my desires.

I take really good care of my toys.

I take really good care of my mental being.

I take really good care of my everything.

In short if I have a need I love myself enough to fulfill that need. So, how does that relate to the church member next to me? You should be willing to fill some of their needs if it is within your ability. BUT FIRST, you must talk to them to a depth way past "good morning" or "welcome to our church, glad to have you" to find out what their need might be that particular day.

How do you react when someone asks for prayer for financial help, do you dive right in and pray about it or do you dive for your billfold? When someone needs a friend, do you suggest they call a pastor, or do you sit down and listen to their problems? I think we get the picture.

2. This may be a stretch to some, but I think it relates quite well. The passage made it clear that circumcision amounts to nothing positive or negative toward salvation - it is irrelevant, thus certainly not necessary in any way.

Let's take that one step further, is there any physical item that we do or can do to ourselves that will make us more saved? Of course not. The middle age monks that beat themselves and fasted long long days did so for naught. Salvation is by grace not by anything physical we can do. Staying slim, or getting heavy, exercising, not exercising - all are for nothing if you are trying to save yourself from eternal damnation. Some of these might well be healthy for you, but they will do you no good toward salvation.

3. Relating to a little leaven affecting the whole lump. Years ago we had a church situation where a vote was taken and the vote was unanimous to not do something. One couple disagreed with that decision even though they voted for it, I guess so they would seem supportive of the church. To effect a turn around they went to every home in the church (except ours - the pastor) and convinced everyone in the church to support their desires. They then approached me to ask that the subject be brought up again for another vote.

Now, it wasn't that the decision was so important that it couldn't have been voted on and changed, but it was the attitude of going behind the back, of sneakiness if you will, the attitude of getting your own way if you will, the attitude of my desire is more important than the leadership of the pastor - these were the real issues that the couple never became cognizant of, they simply got their own way.

Now, they didn't ruin the church, they didn't run the pastor off, nor did they become leaders in the church, but they did affect the entire lump in a negative way for several weeks.

4. There is a discussion that needs to be considered. When Paul said we are free from the law, what law was he speaking of. Yes, the obvious is the Mosaic Law, and this is the one he is speaking of, however just what is meant by the "law." Is it the entire law, is it the moral law, or is it the ceremonial law.

Some make a distinction and suggest that he was doing away with the pomp and circumstance, but retained the moral aspect of the law. The question is, just where did Paul delineate this division? He doesn't and that is the problem these folks have. Paul simply states "the law" and does not divide nor subtract, just comments on the whole.

Others suggest that the ceremonial was done away with and that the moral aspect was incorporated in part into a new law the law of Christ (Gal. 6.2) Thus keeping the Sabbath becomes keeping the Sunday. Sunday becomes what the Sabbath was and all the commandments that are repeated in the New Testament (all but the Sabbath one) are taken into Christ's new law.

Others suggest that the laws that children are under vary with the age of the child, yet when they begin to mature some of the laws continue on into their new area of maturity while others drop away. This would account with Paul saying the law is done and we are free of it while the New Testament holds some of the old parts for the new.

Okay, that sounds kind of like the previous one. Hummm, seems they all are looking to keep some of that law around, when Paul said we are free of it! Did I miss something here?

Simply put, in my mind, the law is gone, done, finished, while Christ tells us that there are some new commands to keep. The Law of Moses is completely gone, both ceremonial and moral and we are free of it. Now, that we are free to live for Christ He has a few things that He would like us to do in life - namely some of these new commands.

Yes, look to the law for principles of life, yes, look to the law for guidance of life, but don't you dare attempt to start reading the Old Testament and applying it directly to your personal life in this age of grace. Grace has FREED us from the law. Where the law is reiterated in the New Testament, yes, go forth following it, but again - don't you dare suggest that it will help you gain access to heaven, for it most certainly will not.

5. I guess I rely too much on logic. If I had been in this congregation and the Judaizers started telling me that I needed to be circumcised to be saved, I would ask them then why can't my wife be saved? This business of circumcision/salvation is so ridiculous - it isn't even a part of it in the Old Testament - only a sign of belief in God and His promise to Abraham.

6. Note might be made also that it is faith and faith alone that brings us to God, not faith plus love, and not faith plus works. Some today emphasize love so much it is almost equal to faith in reaching God - not so.

7. In 5.5 we see the idea of waiting. The thought is used seven times in the New Testament, and it is that waiting for the Lord's return. You might find this an interesting side study. (Rom. 8:19, 23, 25; 1 Cor. 1:7; Gal. 5:5; Phil. 3:20; Heb. 9:28)

8. In verse thirteen we have the phrase "only [use] not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another." This to some commentators is showing that we all have a sin nature that, in essence, controls us and demands sin of us - some talk about having a new nature and that the new nature can help us fight that old nature, but their evidence is that the old nature wins most of the time.

NOT! We have a bent toward serving self or serving the desires of our body/mind/ambitions, but it does not control us, and it need not control us - all we have to do is walk with God and our bent toward self will be ineffectual. (See my theology on natures if you just can't resist digging into this topic.)

9. It is of note to me that Paul points out, in a round about way, that the Galatian Christians had little foresight into their recent teaching. They had not taken it to its logical end. Paul tells them in most clear terms that the end is bondage to the law.

Often times when sitting in church I see pastors/teachers making error of teaching because of this

very lack of wisdom called foresight. They see what they see in a passage and teach it without thinking of the logical end of what they are teaching. If they would see the end of their line of thought they would know that they are teaching false doctrine. It may sound good on the surface, but what are the implications of what you are saying.

In a word the Galatians forgot to "think" through what they were accepting as truth.

The political community in America has this same short sightedness; they vote what sounds good without thinking of the ramifications of their vote. Foresight is needed in this life; else we might well miss the next!

10. There is a reality in our current world; we are one religion among many. We may believe we are the true and one religion but we are one of many that believe we are one and true. The Islamic men that destroyed the Twin towers on 9-11 are also quite faithful to their one and true god.

We must realize that there are many that would have us change what we are and what we believe. The Islamic also believes that circumcision is a ritual that they should pursue. This alone should tell us that their religion is false - if we believe Paul knew what he was talking about they are placing themselves under the law for righteousness.

I do not know just what law they are putting themselves under, though since they claim Abraham as their father I would assume at least in part they are looking to the keeping of the Mosaic Law as their duty. I searched some of their websites and found that they hold to the revelations given all the prophets, including Moses, so a following of the Law of Moses would be required. One site indicated this to be true, though others did not mention it.

This is a great passage for us to understand. One that is trusting the law is to be cut out of our congregation, while one that is trusting Christ is to be loved and trusted by the congregation. I would not want to set a division between the Muslim and the Christian, but Paul says there is one. We cannot accept the Muslim as a brother in any way, other than as created beings - as another man/woman in the human race. In that sense we accept and honor them, but we cannot accept them in any spiritual sense what so ever. They are of Ishmael and under bondage to the law if they see circumcision as part of their reaching heaven.

11. Barnes mentions an interpretation relating to the cutting off in verse 12 which was held by many of the church fathers including "Chrysostom, Theodoret, Theophylact, Jerome, Grotius, Rosenmuller, Koppe, and others." He does not elaborate on the position, but quotes Koppe in Latin. I don't do Latin, but I didn't need to know the language. I recognized enough words to understand that they felt that Paul was talking about some drastic action that they felt the people themselves should carry out. Suffice it to say that these church fathers were giving a little literal application of the Lord's command in Matt. 5.30 - enough said. (Matt. 5.30 And if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off, and cast [it] from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not [that] thy whole body should be cast into hell.")

12. I have given some thought to the historical situation of these Galatians. They had been led to the Lord by a converted Jew that had been a strong and devout Jew. They had, at best, a copy of the Old Testament for their Scripture. They would have been excited about living for God so would turn to His word for direction.

Now, if I were in Galatia in this situation, I have to understand why these people were so easily sidetracked. They would have been easily swayed toward taking on some of the practices of the law thinking they would help them become more spiritual. I have to think that they were a well prepared plot to plant and raise false doctrine.

Don't be too hard on the Galatian people that were hoodwinked by the false teachers. They needed to have the guidance of truth. Don't be too hard on the people of our age either, when they go off after false doctrine and change their lives to be in keeping with that false doctrine.

Truth is the key and it is the church's duty to deliver it. Too bad many churches are delivering up the false rather than the true.

Week eleven: 5.16-26 A walk in the Spirit is a must for the believer

This text is a window to what Paul means in verses fifteen and twenty-six.

15 But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another.

26 Let us not be desirous of vain glory, provoking one another, envying one another.

There is still that contrast between law and grace, bondage and freedom going on. In this section he tells the reader that the flesh has a certain outcome in practical living, and that the spiritual has another, quite different outcome. What a contrast there is between these two.

I am sure that many will jump on this passage to say that the flesh and the spirit war with one another within us, but this is not what Paul is teaching. This is clear in what he says in verse twenty-four "And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts." Notice the past tense and it is an aorist indicating a one time action, not a daily action as many suggest our spiritual life requires.

He begins with a simple statement that the believer is to walk in the Spirit and if we do we will not get into trouble with works of the flesh.

Gal. 5.16 [This] I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh.

Walk is a word that means to be occupied with. When I go for an exercise walk, I am totally oblivious to the world. I am walking as fast as I can, I am concentrating on the sidewalk before me, I am watching for lunatic drivers that can't get out of my way fast enough, and I am mostly concentrating on getting enough air into my lungs to stay upright. I am walking; I am occupied with this activity. It is my total concentration.

This is in the imperative thus a command rather than one of twelve choices in life. Many Christians live as though many of the things Scripture tells us to do are in the comparative - you know, compare the lot of them and pick out the easiest of them and go to town on your spirituality - not the thought of the Lord, He has left us with a certain lifestyle and we are expected to walk it.

Walking in the Spirit isn't walking around with your head in the clouds with a saintly air about you; it is asking the Spirit to work in and through you to help you live as Christ lived - to be filled with the characteristics that are to follow.

Remember in the movies when someone is in the confessional and the priest hears that they are done - he says something like, "Bless you my child, go and sin no more." No, that isn't walking in the Spirit. Walking in the Spirit is a lifestyle that does not allow for sin, it does not allow for thoughts of sin, and it certainly does not allow for acts of sin. Walking in the Spirit is the

opposite of fulfilling the lust of the flesh. The one is not compatible with the other. You can't be spiritual and dabble in the little sins that you like to cling to, you are either walking with God or not.

The verb could be translated "keep on walking" and as you do so, there will be no possibility of you walking in the flesh - one does not go with the other, you will never see the Spirit of God and the flesh walking on the beach together. They may be on the beach walking in different directions, but never together walking the same way - take it to the bank, they won't.

17 For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would.

All of the verbs in this verse are present tenses for your reading enjoyment.

The facts:

- a. The flesh lusteth against the Spirit
- b. The Spirit lusteth against the flesh
- c. The Spirit and the flesh are opposites
- d. Result, you can't do the things ye would

Okay, there you have it folks "The Devil made me do it." is a valid reason for sinning. You just can't do what you really want to do because he wins out all the time.

Now, consider that one. The Devil wins over the Spirit of God! I don't think so. God will win against the flesh or the Devil in any match you want to set up, thus the passage needs a different interpretation than "We can't win against the Devil."

Isn't "We can't loose to the Devil with the Spirit on our side." a little more to the proper understanding of the text? I think so, I think very definitely so.

Isn't it obvious that the phrase "so that ye cannot do the things that ye would." means that we can't sin and enjoy the things that we desire? I think that fits the text quite well.

18 But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law.

Ah, here we are back at the thrust of things - if we are led of the Spirit we are not under the law - simple facts again. The one cannot go with the other. If you are led of the law, then you cannot be led of the Spirit.

"If" is a big word. In this usage it is to be understood as "If and assumed so" rather than "maybe yes, maybe no" - it is assumed fact that they are led of the Spirit.

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

Okay, those that don't like lists turn away from your computer for a few moments while we deal with two lists. Hard to believe, but one is a list of don'ts and the other is a list of do's - see, I told you God had lists and that they were often in the do's and don'ts category.

Adultery: That which we see in nearly every movie, every magazine, every television show and most lives that we interact with on a daily basis. We even see it way too often in the church itself. The church's divorce rate is as bad if not worse than that of the world and many of those divorces are caused by infidelity.

My what an odorous truth for the Christian caught up in such lies. They are listed with those that will not inherit the kingdom. They keep company with lost souls rather than the redeemed. If you are in the throws of adultery open your eyes to your sin and your company. God is not pleased, nor can He be while you walk with the Devil.

Fornication: This is the Greek word "porneia" from which we gain pornography and the meaning is right in that crowd of witnesses. This includes any sexual act that is against the Word of God including homosexuality, lesbianism, relations with animals and sexual relations outside of the bonds of marriage, especially that between people that are relatives or married to others.

There is an added meaning to the word, which relates to the uncleanness one is involved with when they are in activities against God, such as idolatry.

Uncleanness: One of the terms used in the Lexicon is "profligate life" which means "abandon to vice." When used of a consumer it would mean "recklessly extravagant." One that is out of control in lifestyle would be the thought of it and that lifestyle being in the incorrect sexual direction.

Lasciviousness: Wantonness, filthy, and unbridled lust are a few of the terms used in the Lexicon. Given over to the filth of the world would be a good description for this word.

Idolatry: This is the worship of other gods. Wow, look where God puts idolatry, right between several terms describing sexual perversion and witchcraft. I think that rather well defines just how God feels about those that worship other gods.

Witchcraft: This is the sorcery that we would expect, but also relates to drugs and poisoning that goes with witchcraft.

There are those that tell us that witchcraft has changed, that it is for good now, and they even have another name for it. It is now whitewashed as the teachings of Wicken, not that nasty old word witchcraft.

Hatred: There is nothing unclear about this term, it is the hatred one feels toward someone that has deeply offended you or done you great physical or financial harm. It is that emotion that wants to get back at the person and do them great harm.

Variance: Strife, wrangling and contention. Sad to say this also describes pretty well some churches but we need to remember this is a list of the works of the flesh, not the Spirit. Not that believers don't get involved in things they ought not.

Emulations: This word threw me for a moment, as it is the word for zeal. It is also used of the negative side of an excited mind, that which drives to trouble out of the zealousness of mind. "The fierceness of indignation" is a phrase that is used in the Lexicon. Zealously wrongly acting out with the mind is a good way to view the word.

Wrath: This seems to be a close relative of emulations. It has the idea of angry, fierceness and relates to boiling up quickly. When I cook chicken and noodles, I put the water on the stove and dump in the chicken and turn my attention to making the noodles. I usually keep a close eye on the boiling chicken, because in the blink of an eye it can turn from a slow rolling boil to a smelly mess on the burner.

It is that anger that suddenly strikes out. We often see this in road rage today. A normally calm person that is suddenly transformed into a raving lunatic capable of firing a gun at another person over the simplest of provocations.

Often it is the result of buried anger and rage over something completely unrelated, but that one act by another is all it takes to pop the cork and watch the bottle overflow. The word reminds me of the current fad of dumping a tube of Mentos into a Liter of soft drink and watching the column of foam and liquid shoot high into the air.

Strife: Contention is the meaning of the word. Now, this is the Lexicons line of thought not mine - but it relates to electioneering or if you will campaigning for office. NOW, WE CERTAINLY HAVE THIS WORD IN THE RIGHT LIST DON'T WE! The campaign today is surely strife and trouble, sad to say.

The word is used by Aristotle of "self-serving pursuit of political office by unfair means."

Seditions: Division and dissension. Again, way too close to many churches today.

Heresies: This relates to the taking of a city, to the taking of minds, of false teachings that people follow. HUMMMMMM, we see this in the context of political wrong doing, the taking of minds wrongly.

Envyings: Simply envy - the desire for what is not yours or what you cannot have and it is placed right next to the act of murder, or the taking another's life - both relate to the desire to take that which is not theirs. I had never seen murder in that light before, but that is just what murder is, the taking of what is not yours.

Murders: This can relate not only to murder but to slaughter.

Drunkenness: Simply drunken or intoxicated. Out of control due to the ingestion of drink.

Revellings: This is the plural of the one before, it is drunken parties.

And such like -- and if I forgot anything throw that in as well, cuz there is plenty more like those.

I really don't know how Paul ever hopes to fit into the Ecumenical movement with rhetoric like this, indeed he probably wouldn't be welcome at most evangelical meetings these days; he would be labeled a legalist at the very least. He says after this long list of very gross and negative sins. "Of the which I tell you before, as I have also told [you] in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God."

He can't really mean that can he? Well, it looks like he said it so I suspect that he did mean it in some manner or the other and I would assume that it was on a literal level or none. He reminds them that he has told them this before and he is telling them again - plainly, if someone is involved in these activities they are not going to inherit the kingdom of God. They are of the flesh, they are of the Devil and they are none of God's

Here we go on the list of the do's or those things that are supposed to be a part of our lives.

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

Fruit is simply that which is born of the plant or the tree which naturally comes through the natural processes of life. In the spring in Oregon many of the trees spring forth in buds and soon follow with tiny flowers that turn the landscape to shades of pink and white. The petals last a few days and blow away as the snow in a blizzard if the winds are just right. They are followed by foliage and in some cases fruits.

It is interesting that even some of the ugly trees also produce fruit. We have a Tulip tree in our front yard. It is soft and always decorating our yard with broken limbs, and in the fall the huge leaves would kill off our grass if not removed. Yet, in the spring after the leaves are full, there

appear flowers all over the tree. There are green tulip like buds that grow to be fairly large. These buds turn to an ugly dried foliage that drops to the ground. If left to the wind and weather the foliage will blow away and leave a spike that I assume would grow into another ugly tree if planted.

The point, all of nature produces fruit of some sort, and all of nature whether beautiful or not so great is an integrated part of God's natural order. So, in the church every single person that has called on the name of Christ for salvation is an integrated part of what God wants to do in that assembly.

All will produce fruit of some sort, the good fruit being that which the Lord wants to use in the lives of others.

Love: This is goodness of heart rather than the fuzzy feeling within when we think cupid is in the air. It is goodness and kindness of heart.

Does that surprise anyone? This is usually put out as the love one another sort of love, not this idea of goodness and kindness, though love will produce those items.

Joy: Simply joy or gladness.

Years ago we had a fuel pump go out in the middle of the night and after an hour of trying to repair it; I had to walk to the next town for a part. Fortunately someone stopped and offered me a ride within a few blocks.

No part was to be found, so I called and my brother and father-in-law said they would pick one up and drive it out to us. I then trekked back toward the car, about a ten-mile walk. This time the Lord allowed me to do a lot of walking. I was almost back to the car when my brother and father-in-law stopped to pick me up. As I walked I could only think of the happiness that was within. I know, how stupid could I get, but at that moment in time when surrounded by serious problems, I was full of joy and gladness - mostly that I was a child of the King.

Peace: The outworking of what I was feeling that evening. A state of tranquility that rules the life.

Longsuffering: Constancy, steadfastness and perseverance.

Gentleness: Goodness, moral goodness and integrity are three thoughts of the word. Again I am surprised by the meaning of this word. It usually is presented as something along the lines of "we have to be gentle and passive in our lives to be good Christians." NOT seems to be a good comment at this point.

Goodness: Goodness and uprightness of heart. My goodness, this sounds like a lot of inward

mindsets, rather than a bunch of outward show of what is inside. The fact that what is inside will show forth is obvious, but it is just that, the inward moving outward to be the expression of what is within - THE SPIRIT OF GOD!

Faith: This is the usual word for faith, or the trusting and believing in what God says or does.

Meekness: Here we have some of the outward, this means to be meek, gentle or mild.

Temperance: The mastery over ones desires, especially their sensual appetites.

"Against such there is no law." In short you can do these things and not be held responsible for wrong action. Well in Paul's day, in our own day in the United States of America watch your step as the Supreme Court may prove Paul inaccurate any day now. It was recently reported that we can no longer keep children from internet pornography. It will be illegal to protect your child from smut, from the dregs of society and its media outlet.

America is fleeing from all that is Godly and making all it leaves behind illegal. The Christian in America is nearing some very serious choices in our coming days living in this nation raised up on Godly principles.

24 And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts.

We have crucified the flesh - when - at the cross when we met Christ - we are no longer under the law, nor under the flesh, nor under the Devil's dominion. We are free in all aspects of life.

25 If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.

If we are really believers, then let us walk like believers - when we deal with one another we must be walking in the Spirit and loving those that we know to be in our family - God's family.

Contemplate that for awhile, would you treat that not so nice lady the way you do if you viewed her as a child of the King, as a child of the same Father you worship - a sister in Christ. We need to understand all believers deserve the respect that we would have from our brothers and sisters in Christ. Not that we get that respect these days in the church, but we ought to and these are some of the things believers need to be working on in their lives today.

26 Let us not be desirous of vain glory, provoking one another, envying one another.

A little further encouragement not to desire glory in the church and not to provoke others, and certainly don't envy others in the church. This is the truth that we are all parts of the body, that we are all parts as defined and prepared by God Himself to fulfill the overall plan that he instituted before creation.

We are part of His plan for our little corner of the world, but so is Sister Highbrow, and so is brother Shabby dresser. We are all a part of His plan to minister to and mature us to the work that He has for us in our communities and in our work places and our homes as we have visitors. We are His prepared messengers, and we should live like it as well.

APPLICATION:

1. So, when Paul talks of our desire to do things we ought not, why do we desire those things? They are of the Devil, they are not of God, and they are wrong for us both in action and result in our life. Why on earth would we want to go against God and hinder ourselves in some way?

It is our bent toward satisfying ourselves. We desire what we can't have, we desire what we should not do, and we desire all that is of the Devil. We just seem to like life's little pleasures. Well the big ones too, the big screen TV, the big SUV, the big house, the big income, the

2. We are talking about "walking in the Spirit" a phrase that sounds right and good, but how do we do that? How do we walk with the Spirit of God? He is within us so it is automatic - this is key one. We walk with Him whether we live like it or not, but to walk in the Spirit or walk with the Spirit simply means that we are allowing Him to control our lives.

Again, how do we do that? How do we allow Him control when that stupid idiot pulls out in front of us and nearly causes a crash? The key is that we need to be allowing control before the idiot comes on the scene. All the time, He should be in control.

I used to struggle with this at times; I used to wonder just when is He in control and when am I on my own. This was especially true when I was younger and making a lot of decisions about school, family and finance. I would make decisions and then when things didn't go well I would second guess things - and wonder who made that decision.

I became quite frustrated with this process over time and sat down one day and just told the Lord that I was going to assume that he was in control in each situation and if He weren't to give me a heads up so that I would include Him in the process.

This has worked well for me over the years. If I know there is a decision coming I pray and seek the usual benefits of being a child of God. When a decision comes up in the immediate, make it now, I assume that He is directing unless He slaps me along side the head. I have asked Him to be my counsel in all decisions, and I try to walk with God at all times so that communication should and is always there - unless I purposely step away from Him and go my own way.

I might add also that decision making can be made easier if we take a little time to consider, think and evaluate all the options, then the decision often becomes quite clear.

As to those quick moments of living like that stupid idiot I mentioned earlier - we must attempt

to be ready for such situations and respond as Christ would respond - nope, haven't been able to get there as yet - getting better, but needs some work. I have always had a trigger temper and stupid idiots love to trigger it - in fact I think they prowl the streets looking for me so they can cause me due upset when I fail to allow Christ to appear through me.

I have found that knowing those situations are coming, and knowing I should respond as Christ, helps to give me a second of thought before responding which is time enough for a proper response. I have also found that realizing there are other people in the world besides me helps - it allows me to know there may have been a reason that the idiot cut me off - it may have been that he didn't see this idiot coming :-)

3. A second aspect of this walking with the Spirit is the idea of progress. When we walk we move from one point to another. This may be a little obvious, but it relates to the fact that as we walk with God He is able to assist us in our progress toward maturity. When that stupid idiot steps out in front of your car, God may be helping you grow spiritually. That incident may well occur for your maturation process. He wants us to progress from the point of immature to mature and we must walk with Him to get there.

As long as you make progress, don't be hard on yourself when you fail. Failure is a common theme in maturation even as a stumble and fall is natural now and then when learning to walk. He wants that progress, not necessarily the perfection you desire.

4. Constable declares that this is not a conflict between an old nature and a new nature, but a conflict between our old nature and the Spirit of God. This is more correct than the conflict of two natures in man, but still it is lacking, in that we no longer have an old nature if we are given a new nature. If I am made new, how can I still be half old? Not a logical conclusion. We are either new or old and the two cannot be merged together to create a feuding twosome that can't get its act together.

Deffinbaugh more correctly declares the conflict to be between the flesh and the Spirit. This I would agree with if he means that our bent toward self is our flesh.

We are a new creation with God living within us. We choose to satisfy our flesh, or walk with the Spirit - simple either or, no conflict nothing. We in our minds make that decision based on our desire at the moment - do I want to walk with God or thumb my nose at Him and do my own thing.

5. If you give some time and thought to the sins listed in this passage you will find that they line up in some interesting categories as though Paul sat down and made categories then listed the sins. They are sins of different sorts - not to say that it matters what sort of sin you are involved in, all are sin and shortcomings before God.

Constable breaks the sins into the following categories. Further study in this breakdown might

prove very interesting.

Sins of a sexual nature

Adultery

fornication

uncleanness

lasciviousness,

Sins of a religious nature

Idolatry

witchcraft

hatred

variance

Sins of a societal nature

emulations

wrath

strife

seditions

heresies

envyings

Sins of an intemperate nature

murders

drunkenness

revellings

Sins of other natures

and such like

You might make notice that all of these sins center on self.

6. Paul insists that anyone practicing these sins will not inherit the kingdom. There are two basic views to this.

a. Those that practice these sins, believers, will have less inheritance in the kingdom. Now, this is a nice little doctrine that allows us to sin a little to get a spiritual low if you will and still make it into the kingdom - we just won't have it quite as nice as Joe Spiritual that didn't have any fun here on earth.

Needless to say, this is not what the verse says and it doesn't make too much sense in the passage.

Can you imagine the computer program that God would have to develop to keep track of this system - one sin equals one less inheritance, two sins equals two less inheritances, if two sins are done twice do we take away double the inheritances :-)

b. Those that practice these sins, most likely are not true believers. I would opt for this choice. A believer walking in the Spirit will not be involved with the fleshly sins, thus one that is in the middle of these sins is most likely not a believer. If by chance, he is, he most certainly is not walking in the Spirit.

7. Fruit is in the singular, not several. If we walk with the Spirit we produce fruit in all these areas of life. Fruit is the natural production of salvation. It is any sort of fruit; it is any sort of good work, not just soul winning. Some suggest that if you aren't out soul winning weekly you are not a fruitful Christian, but here we see we produce a product - a singular fruit.

Soul winning may be a part of that fruit, but so is love, so is every other good work, so are all those other points related in this verse. We all produce fruit of some sort if we walk with the Spirit - how easy could He make it folks? He did all there was to do to save us, He now provides all we need to produce fruit, all we have to do to be saved is say okay, and all we have to do to produce fruit for Him is to say okay to the Spirits leading - an easier program could not be devised and still include free will.

8. Constable divides the fruit into some divisions as well.

Mental or God-ward

Love

Joy

Peace

Interpersonal or other-ward

Longsuffering

Gentleness

Goodness

General or self-ward

Faith,

Meekness

Temperance

He goes on to observe that there are laws against the works of the flesh because they are destructive, but there are no laws against the fruit of the Spirit because they can only cause good. Consider that for awhile. If you sin, you cause destruction; if you don't sin you cause good - again, just how easy is that?

9. Deffinbaugh has an interesting take on the passage. He goes into a lot of detail with how the Second World War was started. The first campaign was Poland. The battle was over in a week. It was observed that the Poles were fighting tanks and canons with horses and lances - the outcome was fairly predictable, indeed one must wonder why it took a powerful army like the Germans a full week to crush such little resistance.

Deffinbaugh observes that the Poles were using the wrong weapons for the war at hand. He further observes that the Judaizers also were using the wrong weapons to fight the spiritual warfare before them.

This passage clearly states the weapon of choice for this war - the Spirit of God, not our own flesh. We cannot win the war by doing it ourselves; we can win it only by allowing God to win it through us.

10. We need to note that the list of vices that Paul gave is a good description of the society that this church was living in. The Greek/Roman culture of this day was decadent at best. It was full of vice of every sort. There was little in the way of a moral code, there was no shame whatsoever. People did as they pleased; men normally had a mistress or two for their pleasure and a wife to

give their children legitimacy and to take care of the home front.

Hum, sounds rather like the world in which we live. Little shame can be found in our society. Our teenagers use sex as a social tool to gain the respect that they desire. There is little thought to the moral ramifications to their actions. With the political people and media preachers showing them the way, the youth of America have learned well I fear.

Now, imagine Paul introducing the fruit of the Spirit as the proper lifestyle - into that social climate - how radical can he get, yet this is the Biblical standard that believers in their society AND OURS should meet. Remember, we are to be a lighthouse to the darkness around.

11. One time I had a man - a Christian man - tell me of a Rabbi he once knew. He went into great detail as to the qualities of this Rabbi, which indicated to me he may have been a good Rabbi and even maybe a good Jewish person, but the man's description of the Rabbi was "He is the most spiritual man I have ever met!" I wanted to suggest that he had not yet met a spiritual man then, but refrained.

Just what is a spiritual person? What qualities must they possess?

Deffinbaugh lists some qualities of the Godly person, a list that comes from his understanding of the Word and from his experience with people. He specifies that these come from all theological walks of life. He also noted that in all theological circles there are those that are Godly and those that are not so godly as well as those that struggle to be Godly. Thus, his conclusion, though not stated, must have been that the spiritual life is not based on theological position, but on a relationship between your own flesh and the Spirit of God within.

I don't know that this list is concise, nor if it is complete, but it might well give you some guide to go by as you consider just how spiritual you might be at this point in life.

Take some time to consider these points and then try to define them to yourself - what did he mean by this. Then consider if these points describe people that you feel are spiritual.

"a heart for God"

"an intimacy with God"

"a hunger and thirst after righteousness"

"a grasp of the gospel"

"a consciousness of a conflict"

"a recognition of imperfection"

"a realization that the spiritual life is humanly impossible"

"a desire for selflessness and service"

"a sense of a broader community"

"a sense of anticipation and urgency"

"a passion for the Word of God"

12. The great missionary Carey once wrote a book - the title was nearly as long as the book. It always fascinated me for some reason. This morning I sat down to read from a commentary written by Gill. I think he and Carey must have been room mates in college. I write on a handheld computer and the screen dimmed in the middle of his sentence. I could not believe the length of the sentence - I think he may have outdone Paul. I will include it in case you need something to put you to sleep :-) though I'm not sure the truths of his thoughts won't keep you awake.

"Verse 16. This I say then, walk in the Spirit,.... The advice the apostle thinks fit to give, and which he would have observed, is, to "walk in the Spirit," that is, either after the Spirit of God; making the word inspired by him the rule of behaviour, which as it is the standard of faith, so of practice, and is the lamp unto our feet, and the light unto our path; taking him himself for a guide, who not only guides into all truth, but in the way of holiness and righteousness unto the land of uprightness; and depending upon his grace and strength for assistance throughout the whole of our walk and conversation: or in the exercise of the graces of the Spirit of God; as in the exercise of faith upon the person and grace of Christ, of which the Spirit is the author; and in love to God, Christ, and one another, which is a fruit of the Spirit; and in humility, lowliness of mind, meekness and condescension; all which is to walk in the Spirit, or spiritually, and strengthens the argument for love the apostle is upon: and this he encourages to by observing, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh; he does not say there shall be no flesh, nor any lust of the flesh in them if they walk spiritually; or that the flesh should not act and operate in them; or that they should do no sinful action; all which is only true of Christ; and the contrary is to be found and observed in all true Christians, though ever so spiritual; but that they should not fulfil or perfect the lust of the flesh; should not give up themselves entirely to the power and dictates of the flesh, so as to be under it and at its command, and be obedient servants and slaves unto it; for, in this sense only, such that are spiritual do not, commit sin, they do not make a trade of it, it is not their constant employ or course of conversation."

13. Gill states that the phrase "led of the Spirit" in verse eighteen is used of leading a blind person. The Spirit leads us safely through all sorts of unknowns and we are comfortable allowing Him to do so and are confident in the safety that He offers.

I don't know for sure just how we come to rely on Him and not on our own superior leader type selves, but that is what we ought to be doing. He can do it - we believe it - but we live as if He

can't and that we don't believe it. Rather than take the hand of God for life's trials, we go it alone - kind of nonsense in reality, but we do it anyway.

14. When commenting on verse twenty-one Barnes unleashes with a barrage that is hard to argue with - a series of statements that moved me to near holler AMEN while sitting at Jack-in-the-box having coffee.

“In regard to this passage we may remark,”

"(1.) that it furnishes the most striking and unanswerable proof of human depravity. Paul represents these things as "the works of the flesh"-- the works of the unrenewed nature of man. They are such as human nature, when left to itself, everywhere produces. The world shows that such is the fact; and we cannot but ask, is a nature producing this to be regarded as pure? Is man an unfallen being? Can he save himself? Does he need no Saviour?

"(2.) This passage is full of fearful admonition to those who indulge in any or all of these vices. Paul, inspired of God, has solemnly declared that such cannot be saved. They cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven as they are. Nor is it desirable that they should. What would heaven be if filled up with adulterers, and fornicators, and idolaters, with the proud and envious, and with murderers and drunkards? To call such a place heaven, would be an abuse of the word. No one could wish to dwell there; and such men cannot enter into heaven.

"(3.) The human heart must be changed, or man cannot be saved. This follows, of course. If such is its tendency, then there is a necessity for such a change as that in regeneration, in order that man may be happy and be saved.

"(4.) We should rejoice that such men cannot, with their present characters, be admitted to heaven. We should rejoice that there is one world where these vices are unknown--a world of perfect and eternal purity. When we look at the earth; when we see how these vices prevail; when we reflect that every land is polluted, and that we cannot traverse a continent or an island, visit a nook or corner of the earth, dwell in any city or town, where these vices do not exist, oh how refreshing and invigorating is it to look forward to a pure heaven! How cheering the thought that there is one world where these vices are unknown; one world, all whose ample plains may be traversed, and the note of blasphemy shall never fall on the ear; one world, where virtue shall be safe from the arts of the seducer; one world, where we may for ever dwell, and not one reeling and staggering drunkard shall ever be seen; where there shall be not one family in want and tears, from the vice of its unfaithful head! With what joy should we look forward to that world! With what ardour should we pant that it may be our own!"

15. I would like to consider the thought of "envy" for a moment. What is the key to combating envy? Is there something which we could do in the church to help remove envy from all believers' lives? Is there a secret weapon to envy? Other than all of us living a life with the Spirit in control - the key of course, but on the surface is there something that might help us feel more

comfortable in the church?

How about helping ALL believers to understand that God loves every one of us the same, that God holds every one of us as very valuable, and that God sees every one of us as His adopted sons/daughters. When He looks at us, rich or poor, educated or uneducated, polished or unpolished, He sees someone that He loves, cherishes, and values. The poorest, the least educated, and the least polished are as valuable to Him as anyone else.

There is no difference between sons/daughters with Him. Value judgments are a human problem, not a Theocratic value. May we - may I - totally understand AND PRACTICE THIS.

16. Let's just consider one more area. Let's talk a moment about television, the movies and the books we read. Are you really sure that all you view and allow into your mind is there because the Spirit of God wants us to view it? Are we really walking in the Spirit when we sit down in front of the tube, are we really walking in the Spirit when that scantily clad person walks by our desk at work. Maybe that calendar we gaze upon - is that the Spirit leading you to study the art form etc.?

We are to walk in the Spirit all day, not just part of it. I think as Christians put that truth into their lives their viewing habits will definitely change. Maybe even some of the thought life that goes on behind those closed doors of your mind as well.

I would like to end with some thoughts from Gill on "vain glory" as I think this is one of the major problems of the "feel good" church of our day. I think this is the basis of some of the music we have in our churches. Some pastors have entered new pastorates knowing much better than the church leaders what sort of music is needed. Many are the pastors that have disregarded congregational wishes for their own "thought" on the subject. "Let us not be desirous of vain glory,.... Ambitious of being thought wiser, and richer, and more valuable than others; of having the preeminence in the management of all affairs, and of having honour, esteem, and popular applause from men: this may well be called vain glory, since it is only in outward things, as wisdom, riches, strength, and honour, and not in God the giver of them, and who can easily take them away; and therefore is but for a time, and is quickly gone, and lies only in the opinion and breath of men."

Then there are some of the performers of that music that are there to gain the glory of performance. I just heard that one of the Christian television outfits is introducing a "look alike" (read that looks like, sounds like, and seems to be the same as the worlds show of this type) television show that will find the most divine of voices from many contestants.

Week twelve: 6.1-10 Good works should be our goal

6:1 Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.

In this study I will be using the term confront in relation to this restoration process - there seems to be that form of let them know of their sin, but there is also the "what are we going to do about it" part.

Here we see one of the clearest expressions of church discipline that you can find, outside of the Matthew text which lays out the specific methods to be used. How much more clear might Paul have been? Yet, there are pastors and boards across the country that will not function in this capacity within their congregations. When it comes to trouble, leave it alone and it will go away, seems to be the mind set.

Yes, that action, or inaction as it really is, can work. Let that person's sin go, and then someone else will get involved in it and another and another, and soon the church won't notice that most of the congregation is living in sin.

Paul also addresses the issue in I and II Corinthians with the man that was involved in sin, removed from the assembly and then restored when his life was back to proper ways.

Remember this comment is still in the context of a letter to the Galatians where Paul mentioned that little nugget of truth that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump. Spouse these two are related? Well, Yaaaaa! As some would say.

Verse one is here so that the leavening process is stopped in its tracks. If you don't there will be ramifications within the congregation as well as the person's life. We owe it to our congregation and the individuals to root out sin as soon as it is known. Anything less is incompetence and slacking of duty.

Note first that "man" is a general word that can include the ladies as well. ANYONE overtaken in a fault is the clear idea of the verse.

It is of note that both times the word "tempted" is used it is in the passive voice, that is that the temptation snuck up on the person and hit them over the head. It was something that happened unexpectedly, without forethought. Something that just happened.

This is of note for two reasons. First, that the spiritual are to work closely with people in relation to their spiritual lives - keep them straight even when something comes out of nowhere and they get involved with it. Secondly, we ought to recognize that these things do happen, even to those that normally walk with God.

These short comings might include the sin that is related to something they did not know was sin. A new believer might well enter into activities that are not proper because they did not know that they were not proper. These sins might also include those things that creep up on us, like a sudden situation where your anger explodes. It might relate to situations where you are carried along with the crowd and they decide to take a turn down a wrong path and you just get into a mess.

Now, recognizing this does not give us license to let these situations happen, it gives us insight to be better prepared for such situations.

We need also to realize that the believer would not have been surprised by this sin had they not had their mind open to incorrect things. Sin is the action of the mind and without the mind in the wrong area of thought there most likely won't be any action.

I will close the thoughts on this verse with a grand reminder from Barnes. "In the spirit of meekness. With a kind, forbearing, and forgiving spirit. Not with anger; not with a lordly and overbearing mind; not with a love of finding others in fault, and with a desire for inflicting the discipline of the church; not with a harsh and unforgiving temper; but with love, and gentleness, and humility, and patience, and with a readiness to forgive when wrong has been done. This is an essential qualification for restoring and recovering an offending brother. No man should attempt to rebuke or admonish another who cannot do it in the spirit of meekness; no man should engage in any way in the work of reform who has not such a temper of mind."

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

This is one of those items where the church often falls down on the job. When another person is having a hard time, they are not the most pleasant person to be around. You feel uncomfortable because you don't know how to help, indeed, often you can't help. Sometimes the person is in a bad mood and strikes out at anyone that is around. It also takes time to get involved, and it often means you will be involved in the suffering to some extent. You may well begin to hurt with the person if it is related to death or injury.

HOWEVER, Paul tells us to do it. That is part of the support system of the church. We are to uphold one another so that we are all strong and standing for God.

One thing I give the Mormon Church - they know this principle and they practice it. If one of their people has a problem, they all have a problem until the trouble is over. They support their folks well in time of trouble.

This ability to care for everyone requires not only a willingness to become involved, but it requires that the church have some system of caring, of knowing when someone has a need. When a problem arises, many believers will just tuff it through on their own. Unless someone knows of the problem, the church can do nothing to assist.

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

Now, don't we all know someone like this? Someone that is so full of himself that they have convinced themselves they are great and go around trying to convince everyone else of the same.

Reminds me greatly of a few presidential candidates, so sure they are the answer that they set themselves up and take months of time and millions of dollars trying to convince others of the same.

On the backside of this problem is the other problem, those that think so little of themselves that are really great. This is the better side to be on for sure, but we need to see how we measure up before God so that we can find our own standing as it is in reality. God's value measurement is the one that counts.

I think there are many today that allow others to puff them up as well - this is not a good thing. Some of the "preferred" authors/speakers of our times have been elevated to near deity in print, yet they are still only mortal man. Read that as tongue in cheek. I once saw an ad of one author's notes on the Bible as "The man that makes the Bible live." Now, the last I heard it was God that did that in the words themselves, rather than some mortal doing it via some notes at the bottom of the page.

Beware how you and others puff up your importance - you may have to answer to the shortcoming someday either before God or before man. Personally, I could adapt to some embarrassment before man, but to gain some before God would not be the pleasant thing that I would desire.

4 But let every man prove his own work, and then shall he have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another. 5 For every man shall bear his own burden.

Simply put, keep your eyes on your own work and value it personally as you will, but don't put too much stock in what others tend to say about you. You will be held responsible for your own work, and your own perception of that work, not for someone else's view of your work.

This relates in a couple of ways. First, in the way we have suggested, but also to the negative values that some might put on your work. If someone views you as worthless, as trouble, as inadequate to your job, don't pay them a moments notice, it is you that will stand before God to give answer for your works and how you evaluated them.

Because someone calls you glorious or worthless matters little to God, it is what you do for God and what He thinks that is of value to your life. It is also God's "glorious" or "worthless" that we should be considering.

That should free up a lot of us that have allowed negative reactions from others to slow our work

for God. Negatives are negative only if we submit and subscribe to the supposed truth of them. If we hear a negative we should evaluate in light of God's leading and Word. If we find ourselves lacking then remedy it, but if we find that the negative is untrue, set it aside and attempt to go on as if it never was voiced.

Not that putting aside these negatives is easy. They hurt and they hinder and they harm, but they are "false" negatives, they have no standing, they are falsehood, yet we all too often take them upon ourselves as if they were granted to us by God. He says in this passage "prove his own work" and not try to find rejoicing in the eyes of another.

You might find the following references of interest as well (Rom. 14:5, 10, 12; cf. 2 Cor. 5:10).

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

A new concept for the Galatian folks. The Jews were required to tithe (actually almost three tithes) and out of that money came the pay for teachers etc. The Gentiles had to pay taxes for all of their services as well. Here, Paul is suggesting that they honor their teachers out of love, rather than duty or requirement.

Uhhhh, got that churches and congregations? Support your pastor out of love, not requirement. Uhhhh, got that pastors? The church is to support you out of love not by way of what you require.

A friend told me of a young man that candidated in a small country church in the northwest. The church extended a call to the man offering him \$20,000 a year, a parsonage, and a large freezer that would never be empty. This was many years ago when \$20,000 wasn't bad income without the parsonage and frills that he had been offered. He turned them down because it wasn't enough money.

Now, I hope the church relied on our previous verse for their joy, for they had done well in their labor, but the candidate's negative did not reflect reality and the congregation should have been proud to have offered so nice a subsistence to the man. They were taking verse six to heart, they were communicating unto the prospect "in all good things."

I don't for a moment think this verse is basis for high pay for pastors. It is a principle, however, that if someone communicates the word to you, you should communicate in return "in all good things" which might include money, but it might also include helping him paint his house or taking them a meal when they are burdened with a hectic schedule.

Our present day "pay package" mentality in the pulpit is not Biblical, nor is it logical. A congregation should certainly care for their pastor if they opt for a full time man. However, that "care" need not be only in the area of money.

Another application of this principle might run along the lines of the large church that has

multiple staff. When the giving is good and if this is the congregations will, then let them be paid, however if the giving drops and the congregation wants certain programs to continue but there isn't enough money because it is going to salary, might it not be time for someone to move on? Often this possibility is not thought of, or just rejected out of hand by the leadership.

Multiple staff is usually based on need of hands to stir the pot, but if the pot is getting smaller, there is less need for the same number of hands to do the labor - someone should go stir elsewhere.

I might also step on the toes of the church and suggest that they hold their staff accountable to that phrase "taught in the word." Many churches I have attended have men that are not teaching the word. They are teaching every philosophy under the sun and very precious little of the Word. These ought not enjoy the communication from the congregation.

I once sat and listened to a man that read a verse and said he was using it for a jumping off point. Literally it was a jumping off point, because he never once referred to it or its principle again. Indeed, he never mentioned Scripture again. He carefully linked one story into another and into another until the time was gone.

After the service, I was having coffee and the buzz was about this great sermon that we had just heard. I contained myself for awhile, and then asked a few questions. What was the point of this message, what Scripture did he use, how did he use the Scripture, did he make a point from the Scripture? The silence was beyond silence. Finally a couple of the young men saw that little light bulb go on over their head and realized that it was a good story time, but as a sermon, a message from God it was lacking in the grandest fashion.

The congregation needs to watch their use of what they have. God will hold them accountable for how they use that which God blesses them with.

I would add one other thought to this section. I personally believe that Paul was discerning in accepting money. I believe he taught that one feeding should be remunerated in some way. I also personally believe that the paid full time pastor is not Biblical, but allowable if a congregation chooses to do so. I think there are more beneficial ways to use the money and also believe that most laymen could preach and teach as good a sermon as many I've heard in churches.

I was working in a small rural work on a part time basis and being paid a small sum each week. When I elaborated my beliefs on this subject one of the women said after the message, "Well, if you really believe that we just won't pay you any more." I told her that was up to the church. That week was the last check that I received from that congregation - be careful who you share your beliefs with :-) (She happened to be the church treasurer.)

7 Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.

This is a grand principle of the Word, and it is a grand principle of nature. If you sow oats, you reap oats, if you sow corn, you reap corn, if you sow sin, you reap sin. Imagine the farmer that sowed corn and went out with his corn picker and found a field of wheat. Hum, do you think he would be a tad confused? I think we all know the reality of this verse well. We can't live in sin and expect grand blessings from the God we thumb our nose at.

The politician that constantly lies cannot wonder why he is labeled a liar, the worker that steals from his employer, cannot wonder why he is labeled a thief, and the bookkeeper that takes from the boss, cannot wonder why he is labeled an embezzler. So, the Christian that lives in sin cannot wonder why God labels him carnal or sinful. One results in the other, no matter how much we would desire it to be otherwise.

The young Christian couple that is living together that says God is leading them - NOT - God does not lead His people into sin! Rather takes sin to the edge when you sin as you please and then blame it on God. Talk of the height of arrogance.

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

Let me be blunt here for Paul seems to be. If a man and a woman, outside the bounds of marriage, decide to have a little pleasure in the flesh, they cannot wonder why they reap a child in nine months. Many couples are like Aaron when he declared that he dumped a bunch of gold into the fire and out came this golden idol - like how did that happen?

Man is infamous for declaring innocence, but this verse calls us to understand that principle of God and of life - you sow - you will reap in like kind no matter how hard you want or try to make that principle change - it will not.

The reverse of sowing to flesh or sin is to sow to the spiritual side of the equation. Sow spiritual and you shall reap life everlasting. I might add that if you sow to the spiritual you will reap abundance in the spiritual realm as well. You may leave this life a pauper, a despised individual, and one that seemingly has failed in life, but you will enter a life that is so full of abundance that the lackings of this life will matter little.

9 And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.

The antidote for coming up at the end in the negative - "well doing" is the key. If we sow "well doing" we will reap "well doing." No other possibility exists nor can exist. Sow well, and you will reap well - it can't be any other way, for God has set the principle and here He promises that principle will stand.

Your good works will be rewarded with Good. Now, it might be that the reward is a long time off in the future, but it will come. God guarantees it.

Many weary in good works, for they do not immediately see the good reward, but we should continue in good works and allow God to have His time table for reward.

Barnes on the subject: "We shall reap, if we faint not. If we do not give over, exhausted and disheartened. It is implied here, that unless a man perseveres in doing good to the end of life, he can hope for no reward. He who becomes disheartened, and who gives over his efforts; he that is appalled by obstacles, and that faints on account of the embarrassments thrown in his way; he that pines for ease, and withdraws from the field of benevolence, shows that he has no true attachment to the cause, and that his heart has never been truly in the work of religion. He who becomes a true Christian, becomes such FOR ETERNITY. He has enlisted, never to withdraw. He becomes pledged to do good and to serve God always. No obstacles are to deter, no embarrassments are to drive him from the field. With the rigour of his youth, and the wisdom and influence of his riper years; with his remaining powers when enfeebled by age; with the last pulsation of life here, and with his immortal energies in a higher world, he is to do good. For that he is to live. In that he is to die; and when he awakes in the resurrection with renovated powers, he is to awake to an everlasting service of doing good, as far as he may have opportunity, in the kingdom of God."

10 As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all [men], especially unto them who are of the household of faith.

Another principle of life. Do good to all men, but to Christians do even more.

Now, that is a hard one in this day. Christians are no more than worldly often times, and it is hard to distinguish the believer from the world. I mention from time to time how much the church is like the world. I won't take further space to prove that point here, but know that it is a principle - we need to find out just who it is that is a believer, even though it is a hard job for us to do.

I think this passage also tells us that we need not go looking and searching for ways to do good, but as we walk through life, we need to do good as we go "as we have therefore opportunity." When we have a chance, grab it and fulfill it.

One might wonder why we are to do good to ALL. We are all God's creation and as such we ought to treat each other as such, but to the Christian, our brother or sister in Christ, we ought to do more, do as we would to our earthly brothers and sisters.

In our present society this is a hard one to apply. We have so many today that are working the system, that are abusing the system of welfare, of charity, of being kind to one another. We have panhandlers that are making more than we are at work by begging on the street - people that could hold a regular job, but choose not to.

We have Christians going from church to church seeking assistance from brothers with no compunction against abusing their relationship in the Lord.

How do we cope with this Scripture in this climate? Do good to all and more for the believer. The passage is clear in its commandment, and it is not stated that we should concern ourselves of the outcome.

A man knocked on our door one evening needing money to buy gas for his car. He said he would pay it back the next day. I had my doubts, but felt he might be telling the truth so gave him the money. He turned as he left and said, "May the Lord Bless." I said, He does, that is why you have the money in your hand. He knew full well it was God that would deal with it from there and I fear the man will have a lot to answer for when God deals with him.

Do good and let God care for the results.

APPLICATION:

1. In 6.1 the one confronting is warned of being tempted. How does this tempting come to be in the person's life? Is it seeing the person is enjoying their sin and actually getting away with the sin thus far, and the spiritual person becomes tempted to dabble in the same incorrect activity? Or, is it that the one that is not spiritual might have rationalizations that sound so good that the spiritual is tempted to buy into the falsehood?

I suspect both of these would be dangers. The term tempted has two ways of being used. In the usual thought of someone tempting you trying to get you to do something that you ought not. It is also used in a positive sense of trying something to see if you can do it. If you have never gone skydiving, you have no idea whether you could take that first step or not, so you might tempt yourself, or try it to see if you actually have the courage to step out into nothingness.

The warning may relate to Paul not wanting them to try some of these sins to see if they were up to the challenge or not, whether they could actually do it or not.

When we confront another we need to be sure we aren't in the same boat as the one we would confront.

2. Again, in 6.1 we are told to do it in meekness. The meekness may extend both directions in the verse. Being meek in the confrontation and if we are meek, we might not think ourselves great enough to tempt ourselves with this sin.

I have only been confronted a time or two, and it was always from some of the most arrogant people I've met. Their confrontation was of little value, because they were loaded down with sins of their own, and their approach to me was that I was the sinner of sinners. Yes, I took some time and considered their accusations before the Lord, but took little extended thought to the situations.

3. Verse one through five is quite usable as individual verses, but they seem to be a unit. They

seem to be one line of thought. If you know of a brother in sin, confront him, however when you are considering yourself, be sure to know that you will stand before God yourself, as will the brother.

Verse four may relate back to the word "tempted" in verse one. Also, the thought of thinking one self great when you aren't may well relate to the idea of thinking you are spiritual when you are not and that you probably shouldn't be confronting someone else that is not spiritual. Verse four may also relate to the meekness of verse one.

4. Verse six has been used to discuss paying pastors, but in the context it may well relate to some communication from the one confronted to the spiritual one that is confronting him. If you are taught in the word you need to communicate back - you must give a due response, rather than to blow the spiritual man off. Indeed, the term communicated has the idea of coming into fellowship with, or the idea of sharing or becoming a partner.

The verse may indicate that the confronted and the spiritual are to come to partnership to care for the sin of the sinner. To become a part of the cure. This would seem also, to be the reason for the warning - because you are in such a close partnership don't allow the sin to taint your life.

You might find the word translated communicate of interest. It is the verb form of the term usually translated fellowship - koinonia - they are to share together in some manner.

5. In verse nine we are told that good will come if we "faint not" and in other passages the term "overcomer" is used. There is indication that continuing in hard times, suffering all that is sent, and the pressing on toward the mark is a desired attitude - that if we hang in there, good will come.

The question will probably come up, what if you don't continue, or what if you don't suffer, or you don't press on? What will happen, will you be lost? Never will you be lost, but lost will be your reward might be the possibility, if not probability.

6. When I read verse three and its challenge not to think more highly of yourself than you ought, it struck me rather funny - all those detractors of mine over the years, all those negative comments about me, and all those tales behind my back, were sin to the one involved, yet good for me, because I tended toward beating myself down - taking upon myself the truth of what they said, without evaluating the validity. Maybe this was one way God saw to it that I did not value myself too highly.

I would guess the real sin of over estimating your own value would be the raising up of yourself toward God - an impossible task, yet isn't that about what is at work in the back of our minds - trying to make ourselves look better to God. If not that, surely the problem is raising ourselves up above others.

7. Barnes takes a hard view on verse one and it is of note, because it is a view that many of the older men of God take toward sin. He suggests that the idea of being overcome relates to being caught off guard by some temptation and falling into sin. This, indeed, is the thought of the passage - something that just happens in a moment of temptation - a good reason to constantly check on who it is you are walking with, God or self.

Barnes goes on to say quite clearly that this needs to be the case, because no Christian would ever knowingly step off into sin. A Christian does not sin unless his temptation catches him off guard. In a sense this is true as true can be. If we are walking with God, we surely will not say "Hang on a sec Lord, I gotta go commit adultery - get back to ya!"

8. The spiritual one confronting, must be spiritual, he must also have the reputation of being spiritual, and he must have been spiritual for a time. If one in sin is confronted by someone of this stature, there will be serious contemplation before rejecting their words. On the other hand if someone that was drunk yesterday confronts a drunk today, the listening might not be too long, and the confrontation might well be quite short.

9. The whole of this passage pictures spiritual Christians, standing along side sinning Christians in an attempt to bring them out of their sin in a meek, yet sure way. It is a grand picture of standing one with another - strength standing with weakness, pure standing with impure and ministering standing with ministered to - what a beautiful picture of the Church.

Not only do we have that picture but we also have a picture of a church with sin in it - people that are impure, yet the work is on to bring about the final grand picture, of purity in the church.

What a goal to have as a church, to seek to attain purity in the church by assisting those that are having problems into a proper life of purity.

Now, consider your own church. How do you and your fellow members stand up to this picture? Is this picture even on your radar screen? Is there a concerted effort to assist those in sin, rather than to just condemn them? Is there a concerted effort to bring about purity of the assembly? Is there a concerted effort to raise up Godly, spiritual people that can minister to others in this manner?

10. In relation to this evaluation of one's self: Prov. 14.14 mentions "... and a good man [shall be satisfied] from himself." I think we as believers need to take on this concept of self evaluation, and then self estimation. We need to look to the Word constantly to see how we measure up to it, we need to look to God in prayer to see how He values us, and we then need to consider all we are before God and His Word and come to some estimation of who we are.

This automatically blocks out the negative, the back biting, and the tearing down of others when it comes to our character. Yes, be sure to evaluate, yes, be sure to measure, yes be sure to come to a conclusion as to your own character - this character that we present to the world must come

from within, rather than from someone else.

Teens, where are you on this, in most cases the individual teen looks to their peers for value, for estimation of their worth, however Proverbs says it MUST come from within. AND don't get upset teens, because I know wayyyyyy too many adults that do the same thing as you - look to peers for value instead of to God.

It puzzles me just why we look to peers for value - we have a God that thinks we are special enough to be rewarded for our lives here on earth, special enough to make us heirs, and special enough to send His Son to die on the cross for, so why in the world would we look away from Him for value and look toward people that are phony, two faced, and opinionated?

Now, if that hasn't convinced you maybe the words of an old timer will give you an assist. Barnes mentions: "The sentiment is, that he will find in himself a source of pure joy. He will not be dependent on the applause of others for happiness. In an approving conscience; in the evidence of the favour of God; in an honest effort to lead a pure and holy life, he will have happiness. The source of his joys will be within; and he will not be dependent--as the man of ambition, and the man who thinks of himself more highly than he ought, will--on the favours of a capricious multitude, and on the breath of popular applause."

Now, if that isn't enough let me just quote a little more of Barnes comments on the passage. "He will not be dependent on others for happiness, Here is the true secret of happiness. It consists,

"(1.) in not forming an improper estimate of ourselves; in knowing just what we are, and what is due to us; in not thinking ourselves to be something, when we are nothing.

"(2.) In leading such a life that it may be examined to the core; that we may know exactly what we are, without being distressed or pained. That is, in having a good conscience, and in the honest and faithful discharge of our duty to God and man.

"(3.) In not being dependent on the fickle applause of the world for our comfort. The man who has no internal resources, and who has no approving conscience; who is happy only when others smile, and miserable when they frown, is a man who can have no security for enjoyment. The man who has a good conscience, and who enjoys the favour of God, and the hope of heaven, carries with him the source of perpetual joy. He cannot be deprived of it. His purse may be taken, and his house robbed, but the highwayman cannot rob him of his comforts. He carries with him an unfailling source of happiness when abroad, and the same source of happiness abides with him at home: he bears it into society, and it remains with him in solitude; it is his companion when in health, and when surrounded by his friends; and it is no less his companion when his friends leave him, and when he lies upon a bed of death."

11. Verse seven tells us that God is not mocked - not that He can't be, not that He isn't, but that He will not be - He will not stand for it. Certainly we can mock Him, certainly we can abuse His

character, and certainly we can receive just recompense for it.

As I see the ads for some of the trash on the television I wonder how long God will allow the mockery to continue. The networks have taken sin and made a joke of it, they have taken sin and made it common place, and they have taken sin and uplifted it to the place where sin is rather a mute item in our society. Nothing is wrong, nothing is sin, and nothing is off limits.

The media will one day answer for their abuses and mockery of Almighty God. I do not want to see the results. I dread that day for them even though they have not the wisdom to know it is coming. God will not be mocked forever - take that one to the bank.

12. One must wonder at the situation that Paul had heard about at Galatia that brought about this series of thoughts in his letter. Some must have been spiritual in the assembly and others must have been faltering. It may well be that he is speaking of the Judaizers problems in this text. You that are spiritual, those that haven't accepted this false doctrine, meekly and gently assist those that have accepted it to find their way out of the web they are in.

One commentary related this to the thought that legalists were trying to confront the sinners of the church, but I feel that would require the legalists to be the spiritual and Paul has just taken five chapters to rip on the legalist. Why in the world would he see them as spiritual? He would not.

13. It is with great glee that some hold this passage out to prove that sinless perfection is not possible. They go on to suggest that if we are sinlessly perfect, why would Paul have to include this passage. It is for this situation precisely Paul would insert it. If one is walking with God sinlessly, there is no guarantee that sin won't find its way in - then this passage is necessary. Not that I believe in sinless perfectionism as taught by many, but the logic of some commentators needs to be picked up at the door where they must have checked it when they came in.

One such logician continued on to discuss the "WAR" that goes on in the person and the impossibility of not sinning. Guess he hasn't read that the Holy Spirit is within to give us the victory rather than the Devil to bring us to defeat.

14. In verse two we have a phrase that we need to deal with. "fulfil the law of Christ." Just what will we do with this phrase? Tear it out of all our Bibles? Black it out? It can't really belong here because everyone tells us that we can't have a list of do's and don'ts to live by else we be legalists.

Surprise, Christ has a list of do's and don'ts - He has a law that we are supposed to follow. My goodness, what a shock to the system this must be when those folks read it.

We need to be clear that we aren't under the Law of Moses, but we are under some requirements left to us by the Lord Jesus.

15. In verse six the word translated "that is taught" is the Greek word from which the English word Catechism is drawn. We, in the fundamental circles, tend to shy away from that term today because we don't want to be associated with the Roman or Reform churches, however the thought of a Catechism might not be too bad considering some of the refuse being offered up in churches today. Sunday school lessons for kids can be based on anything - well almost anything, most avoid using the Bible I fear, but anything else works.

You can find curriculum in all sorts of odd and varied formats today.

The catechism is not a four-letter word; it is simply a way of teaching. Some of the older Bible Institutes used this method of question and answer to train their students. Indeed, I was asked if I didn't teach like a SEMINarian! rather than as a Bible institute teacher, because I used questions to elicit thoughts of a topic or passage from the students mind rather than from a root book of questions and answers.

A catechism would be much preferred than a lesson based on an overweight purple dinosaur. Sorry if that offends, but God is going to require of us more than animal stories - HE GAVE US THE WORD FOR HELPING US TRAIN others. Others have reportedly used the TV show "The Simpsons" to teach spiritual things, and even others use "Harry Potter" books.

Isn't that about the height of arrogance and stupidity to take the Word of God, set it aside and pick up tools of the world to try to teach spiritual truth?

Week thirteen: 6.11-18 We walk in freedom because of Christ (review/overview)

11 Ye see how large a letter I have written unto you with mine own hand.

We all know that Paul had some physical impairment that caused him trouble over many years. It was not only a source of trial for him, but it is also a source of proof that the gift of healing was inactive even in His lifetime. He could not heal himself even though many were healed by the simple touch of a handkerchief that had been from him. Acts 19.12 "So that from his body were brought unto the sick handkerchiefs or aprons, and the diseases departed from them, and the evil spirits went out of them."

Timothy was told to take a little wine for his stomach sake, thus there was a lack of healing with both men. I Tim. 5.23 "Drink no longer water, but use a little wine for thy stomach's sake and thine often infirmities."

Paul also left Trophimus unhealed in II Tim 4.20 "but Trophimus have I left at Miletum sick."

I have discussed this with people that believe in the gift of healing and they have never brought forth an argument for this. It may be that I usually tie this with the fact that in Mark, tongues is lumped with snakes and drinking poison, and since tongues and healing are normally joined at the hip little is suggested to counter the comments. Well, it might relate some to the invitation that I usually give at the end of my comments - to come to my city and empty the hospitals if they really have this gift. (Mark 16.17 And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; 18 They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover.)

It seems he gives a last call to them to realize the reality of his effort, the depth of his love and the strength of his character as he attempts to draw them away from the false teaching and back to the truth of grace.

The word translated "large" relates to bigness more than to numbers, it relates to largeness geometrically as opposed to largeness arithmetically. A simpler way to say it would be volume as opposed to number of pages. I used to print very small before my computer days. I could jam more information on a page than most small font typewriters. I could do volume rather than numbers. When writing for myself, "volume" was my talent, when it was the ten page term paper due the next day, I could do "numbers" very well with my huge handwriting.

Paul has given his very best effort to convince them, he has even handwritten this large letter to them - most likely at the cost of great difficulty for those he was very concerned about.

Some quibble about what this large letter idea means, one translator makes it "See what large letters" to indicate the individual letter size rather than the whole of the letter. This will be

covered a little more later.

12 As many as desire to make a fair shew in the flesh, they constrain you to be circumcised; only lest they should suffer persecution for the cross of Christ.

In Paul's day Christianity was viewed by most as a sect of Judaism. It was an upstart bunch of radicals that were following this radical Jesus. It seems from this verse that the Judaizers were attempting to avoid persecution as believers by making themselves look more like Jews - you know, they were trying to get under the radar screen of the persecutors. They were trying to blend into the woodwork. They were trying to avoid what certainly would come from those that saw them as followers of Christ.

This may well be the answer to several questions asked in this study relating to why the Judaizers were teaching these things.

It is easier to tack some simple belief on top of your Christianity to get along with the crowd - I won't take time to develop that one right now, but aren't believers doing the same thing?

When the Roman persecution really got under way the believers were taken before Caesar and told to worship him as god. It would be easy to say a few words in subservience to a worldly ruler - you know you aren't really worshipping Caesar; you really weren't setting aside Christ as they wanted you to do. Indeed, many believers did this very thing and rationalized their way to favor with the Romans. However, those that took this easy way out were not accepted by believers that knew it to be wrong. Many gave their lives for the Lord rather than diminish their testimony for him.

The avoidance of persecution should never be an influence upon our theology and belief system. I rather suspect that many allowed their system of belief to be bent during the Second World War since the religious system failed to raise warning or negativity against Hitler and his persecution of the Jews, or the many other atrocities that were carried out.

Indeed, the survival of these systems under his dominion seems proof enough that there was compromise of some sort.

13 For neither they themselves who are circumcised keep the law; but desire to have you circumcised, that they may glory in your flesh.

It seems that Paul thought the Judaizers were requiring circumcision, in part, so that they could have glory in their accomplishment. This would, I assume to be the accomplishment of making converts to their line of thought.

14 But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.

Paul goes on to suggest that we should only find glory in the cross of the Lord. Nothing that we do in this life should be the focus, but rather the cross.

Application of this might run along the lines of a pastor that has pioneered a work, nurtured it and lead it into growth to a large number. He should take no credit but rather give credit to Christ for the church is His. It might run along the line of great authors that have reached millions with their books - however glory should be given to the Christ that allowed the production of those books.

He goes on to say that the world is of none effect on him and a rather interesting statement, that he is crucified to the world - dead, of none effect. He realizes that only the cross and Christ's work on it will last, and anything we might "accomplish" in this life will be lost. Remember, that few will remember you existed in a generation after your death.

This idea of dead to all but the Lord has real relations to our day. On an internet forum the subject of pastoral pay packages came up. There was no thought to sacrifice for your Lord, it was all about the pastor isn't a second class citizen and he should receive at least the average of his congregation's income. Most were talking sixty thousand plus benefits as a minimum acceptable amount.

No concept of - let me live on less so we can give more to missions - you know - an example of how all of us should live, but rather, I should live as well as you do.

15 For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature.

Again, he emphasizes the salvation of the soul - that important occurrence that changes the person, is the all including requirement. Circumcision or none - no matter, only the cross and the individual's salvation.

That includes all that man tries to find favor with God with - no good works, no good life will do, only the cross.

16 And as many as walk according to this rule, peace [be] on them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God.

Paul seeks peace and mercy for all that are in Christ. He adds an interesting phrase. "And upon the Israel of God." What does he mean by that? Is he suggesting some link back to Israel? Only the link that Christ is the blessing promised, He is the peace and He is only peace because of His mercy upon us.

17 From henceforth let no man trouble me: for I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus.

This seems to be a declaration that he has done his best with them and that he is finished trying to work with the situation - accept my word or reject it but don't bother me with it anymore. I know some pastors that know just how he felt at this point. They, like Paul had the marks of the Lord in their bodies.

I was asked to a missions conference in California and on the first night I found that the pastor had just resigned from his position. I talked with him about it for awhile and I asked him if he was glad to be leaving or if he had mixed feelings. He smiled and said that he was very glad to be moving on and that the ministry was finished. He explained that he had struggled with the people for years, trying to get them to mature in the Lord, but that little had been accomplished over the years.

He went on to tell me of some of the trouble he had with his deacons. Some had just been hateful to him, I won't go into detail, but hateful seems a very impotent word. One of them could deserve the terms very nasty.

You can do so much with a people before you have done all that you can - then it is time to move on to other possibilities.

18 Brethren, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ [be] with your spirit. Amen.

If you look at Paul's other letters, you will know that this is a very abrupt ending. I believe the explanation of the previous verse is part of that shortness, but also we might realize that his physical problem, may well have made this large letter a real and heavy burden upon him - especially to pen it himself.

You don't think the added blessing of "grace" was a final nail in the coffin of the Judaizers do you? Just one last emphasis on grace as opposed to the law. I suspect that may have crossed their minds if it didn't Paul's.

The blessing being placed on their "spirit" may well be another measured comment to remind them one final time that it is the spirit that God wants to deal with, not the body - not that the spirit correctly matured won't control the body!

Amen, or so be it. It is closed. Not unlike the formula recent presidents and candidates have adopted, "and may God bless America." - well if they can say that to millions, why can't we talk about God in the schools might be a line of thought to pursue.

APPLICATION:

1. Do we add a little on top of our Christianity to blend into the crowd - INTO THE WORLD IS THE TRUE NATURE OF THE QUESTION?

2. In verse sixteen we see that Paul mentions Israel. He has just torn apart the line of teaching that the law is part of our work toward salvation, and has surely set the law aside in the people's minds as having any importance, yet he brings Israel back into the picture.

Why? I suggest that Paul is still in these days looking for a restoration of Israel. In the book of Acts we see that he is preaching the kingdom in the closing days of his life. He seemed to be looking for the culmination of God's working with Israel - the kingdom. Acts 28.23 "And when they had appointed him a day, there came many to him into [his] lodging; to whom he expounded and testified the kingdom of God, persuading them concerning Jesus, both out of the law of Moses, and [out of] the prophets, from morning till evening." and Acts 28.31 "Preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ, with all confidence, no man forbidding him."

Quite the verses to consider after reading a book like Galatians that has laid the law aside, beat it a little and basically made it of no account.

He wasn't beating the law, but rather misapplication of it in the church. He knew that God was not finished with Israel; he knew that Israel still had an existence, and he knew that God wanted to finish His business with them. His preaching of the kingdom was in response to that belief and that commitment to his own people.

3. Okay, we have a strong doctrinal message, with a very abrupt end. How do we apply this? Okay pastors, one more time, say what ya got tu say and shut up :-) I love writing for the internet where people understand informality and a sense of humor - pastors - I mean you no disrespect, I have tremendous respect for you and your ministry - just wish you'd shorten things up now and then :-)

This especially in invitations. I've seen guest speakers give an adequate and stirring invitation, only to have a pastor get up and give another one or two just in case the Holy Spirit was slow in moving the people in their hearts.

On a more serious note. I've seen many men say what they had to say and perceiving they may not have convinced the people set out with more rhetoric to make things better, only to lay further ground work for doubt. If you don't get it accomplished the first time, you probably won't get it done the second or third time.

I feel some speakers forget that the Holy Spirit is within, and that these people in the pew actually can think. Some of the explanations of doctrine I hear are geared to three year olds, not adults.

4. Barnes makes a good list relating to the glory of the cross.

"(1.) of the love of Him who suffered there;

"(2.) of the purity and holiness of his character, for the innocent died there for the guilty;

"(3.) of the honour there put on the law of God by his dying to maintain it unsullied;

"(4.) of the reconciliation there made for sin, accomplishing what could be done by no other oblation, and by no power of man;

"(5.) of the pardon there procured for the guilty;

"(6.) of the fact that through it we become dead to the world, and are made alive to God;

"(7.) of the support and consolation which goes from that cross to sustain us in trial; and,

"(8.) of the fact that it procured for us admission into heaven, a title to the world of glory. All is glory around the cross. It was a glorious Saviour who died; it was glorious love that led him to die; it was a glorious object to redeem a world; and it is unspeakable glory to which he will raise lost and ruined sinners by his death. Oh, who would not glory in such a Saviour!"

5. In verse seventeen Paul makes mention of the marks in his body. This is the Greek word stigma, the word "stigmata" is from. You may have heard this term in relation to the Roman church. They believe that Christ puts His marks on the bodies of special ones in this life. Every now and then you will hear reports of bleeding hands, or bleeding sides, or bleeding foreheads from the wounds of the crown of thorns on Christ's brow.

This IS NOT what Paul was talking about. There is no basis for any of this in Scripture. A general reading of this passage cannot come to the conclusion that Paul was bleeding all the time he was writing and doing as he did day in day out.

In reality slaves were often branded and idol worshipers often took upon themselves the name of their God to show devotion.

Paul may have been relating to physical scars he had suffered due to his stand for Christ. It is not uncommon for men to be glad that they have scars to remind them and others of their devotion to something or someone. Men from the wars of recent generations wear their wounds proudly and well they should. They have served their country well in its defense.

6. Barnes elaborates on Paul's physical infirmity by quoting the two references that mention it, though I had never heard the Galatians text tied directly to the infirmity.

"And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure." 2 Corinthians 12:7.

"And my temptation which was in my flesh ye despised not, nor rejected; but received me as angel of God, even as Christ Jesus. Where is then the blessedness ye spake of? for I bear you record, that, if it had been possible, ye would have plucked out your own eyes, and have given them to me." Galatians 4:14,15.

"ST. PAUL'S infirmity was one well known in hot climates, a chronical ophthalmia. Hence he was what is called "blear-eyed," and was often perhaps obliged to wear a shade. It made his personal appearance mean; it was a visible infirmity in his flesh; it hindered his usefulness, and therefore he besought the Lord anxiously that it might depart from him. It made it, for the most part, painful and difficult to write; hence he generally employed an amanuensis, and regarded it as a great matter when he used his own pen. The calling it "a messenger of Satan" is perfectly consistent with its being a bodily disease. Satan, in fifty places, is represented as the immediate author of corporeal defects and maladies."

He goes on to suggest that this may have occurred on the occasion of his salvation experience when he was blinded. To suggest that such a physical impairment could accompany such a spiritual repair at first seems inconsistent, though it may be that Christ wanted him in a humble and contrite spirit both physically and spiritually.

Barnes also mentions that this particular eye problem gives forth with much pain and it is similar to the sticking of a thorn.

7. Some suggest that Paul's mention of big letter relates to writing the ending only in his own hand and because he could not see well unless the letters were huge.

Others suggest that the apostle was not acquainted with writing in Greek so that the letters were large and crude. Neither of these are supported in the text to any degree.

8. This idea of works and the cross might be summed up in the following thought. To accept the cross is salvation, to take up the cross is living. Two very separate and different items.

To accept there is nothing to do, but to take up there is everything to do. Christ supplies all that is needed in acceptance, and we supply all that is needed in taking up. Neither is required. Acceptance increases greatly your enjoyment of eternity, and taking up the cross will do the same through the rewards that you may receive.

9. I might add a short note about letters, letter writing and letter reception. To many of our teenagers that have never received a letter, these things of antiquity were once prized for their interest and content. In today's email, text messaging, and instant messenger messages, we have totally lost the art of letter writing. Many today have no idea of what letters were like in the good ole days - back when the computer was still a figment of someone's imagination.

A letter took time, you had to think of what you wanted to say, you had to think of how you were

going to say it, you then had to write it down on paper, then reread what you had written and assure yourself that it was clear as you have presented it.

In an email you may or may not go through some of these processes. Usually you just jot down what comes to mind and you hit send.

When I was in the Navy at electronics school I would go to the post office to check my mail daily, even at times twice a day - not that there was ever any there for me. The letter was very important to me - to hear from someone that I knew and cared for. The letters usually, when they came, contained information of what was going on at home, how the family was doing etc.

Letters in the old days were of great interest and of great importance. Many today miss that personal contact from the mail as opposed to the cold quickness of the internet.

Paul's letter must have meant a lot to these folks. They knew him and would have been concerned for his welfare; they loved him because he was their spiritual father. This letter had to have been a mixed blessing, the goodness of hearing from their Paul, but the discomfort of being reprimanded by him.

Application of this might go along the following line: Continue to write letters or emails, but give a little more thought to the content and the way you word things. May our communications with one another be more meaningful and personal.

10. Verse thirteen mentions that those requiring circumcision did not necessarily follow the law in other areas. You do what I say, but I do what I want might be the idea set forth. Often you will see this inconsistency in leadership.

Years ago we knew of a church where the pastor decided it was wrong to watch television. He preached often on the sins of television. He even had some of the members selling their television sets - of course they used the church bulletin board for advertising - I won't go into that for the purpose of this account is to let you know that of course the pastor needed to watch television so he would know what was going on in the world.

Yes, to a point he is right, but isn't he questioning the congregations ability to discern as well as he can?

Many in the "God wants all believers to be rich" movement try and try to give until they are rich, but it is usually only the leadership that gets rich, not the average congregant.

If you are going to teach something, be sure you are willing to live by the same standard that you set for others.

11. In verse fourteen we read "by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world." - a

strong declaration by Paul, a declaration of fact, not hope so, not I think so, but fact.

Some would argue that, no, Paul could not mean that the world was crucified; he only meant that each morning he crucified the world. This is not the thrust of the text. The verb is a perfect passive. Perfect means an action that is continuing on into the future to a point of completion. He is crucified today, he will still be crucified tomorrow and he will always be crucified until he is with the Lord. Passive means that the person acted upon is not involved in the action. He is crucified from without, not of his own will, nor of any works of the mind.

This really does not fit with a lot of theology around today in case you don't know. Most feel the old nature and the new nature are battling it out daily and often during the day. Others clarify it a little and say that it is self or the old nature battling with the Spirit of God. This is closer to the truth but yet far from it. If we are made new as the Word tells us we are, how can we have old within us.

Our bent as human beings is to satisfy ourselves. It is this bent that struggles for control of the persons life. We either choose to follow the Spirit with our life, or we decide to follow our own wants and desires.

This passage tends to indicate that once made this decision is carried along - this is what Paul talked about earlier - walking in the Spirit. When we make that decision the Spirit then moves us along with Him. This supports my thought earlier in the book that we should ask the Spirit for guidance in those pop up situations where we have to make a snap decision. If we are with the Spirit and make a decision based on what He is doing in our life, then it will be a good decision. On the other hand if we are doing what we want we often will make decisions that take best advantage for our own desires rather than what God might want.

As we come to a close in our study I would like to consider the freedom we have in Christ, the freedom that Paul sets forth so clearly. Just a little consideration of what "free" really means. It means to me that we are free to do as we will, and that we are free from the Mosaic Law. There is further application that we are free from any set system of doing or thinking that is required for salvation in the person's mind.

Now, that we are free from all these encumbrances, we are free to do as we please, right? Not quite so fast. We are free from what we have listed but we are not free from all those things that Christ told us to do. We are not free from caring for the poor, we are not free from the great commission - to evangelize the world, we are not free from loving one another, and we are not free from any of the New Testament commands and limitations placed on the believer.

We are free to submit ourselves to the control of the Spirit, we are free to offer ourselves on the alter of sacrifice of service; we are free to submit ourselves to the Master and Owner of our lives. In truth complete subservience to Christ is where we find freedom as believers. We don't have to follow some magical formula, we don't have to follow some list of laws, and we have only to

follow the Spirit within us to a life of service to our King.

Some would call this servitude, slavery or something worse, but the apostle tells us this is freedom in Christ. I will take Paul's view as I believe via inspiration; it is indeed God's view.

I know many Christians that live their lives not doing certain things because they think if they do, God will get them. Not so. We are free to walk with Him and within that framework we are free to do all that we want and all that He leads us to do.

To me this life of not doing is a life of fear, not of freedom. It leads to viewing God as one that is out to get you if you don't tow the line. Paul describes a God that loves us and wants us to walk with Him.

Kind of like God walking in the Garden of Eden with Adam and Eve. Contemplate that scene, that experience, that possibility. Walking and talking with God as if He were a close friend. That is what we are free to do. That is what Paul seems to describe in his letters. That is what we have available if we will only make that decision to walk in the Spirit.

It gives you freedom to talk to Him at any time, about any topic, and about any need. We don't have to take ten minutes relating our sin, our sorrow and seek His forgiveness, we have nothing to confess, we have been walking with Him and He has certainly not led us into sin.

We can know that decisions we make are with His assistance because we have been with Him all the time. Freedom to some may be servitude, but to me it is pure pleasure, pure freedom to know I am doing right before my God.

Before leaving this book I would like to take a look at one point that is really only loosely related to the book of Galatians, but very related to Paul and his life. He was totally committed to the ministry even before he was saved. He was totally committed to persecuting Christians, then after salvation he was totally committed to the Gospel and its cause.

We saw a number of times that Paul mentioned the cross and his commitment to it. There are a number of times in the other epistles that show us that his commitment was totally real and totally total - he was given over to living for and serving his Savior.

Now, to the application. Many men and women in every generation have made this same commitment. Some have totally given themselves over to serving God and His people. They have committed their life, their fortune (which normally is in the unearned stage :-)) and their time to doing what God has given them to do. These people left all that they could be and became what God asked them to become. Missionarys, pastors, teachers, doctors nurses and many other occupations. They have gone off to Bible College and/or seminary to learn what they need to do the ministry of God.

Now, I wonder if Paul ever stopped to consider his life on some starry night in the middle of nowhere, just what his life had been all about. Or maybe on one of those dark cold nights in prison after praying, I wonder if he took stock of what he had been all about. I am not suggesting he questioned his God, God's direction, nor God's plan for his life. I am not suggesting that he regretted in any way what he had done with his life.

Just wondering if he ever considered what had passed. What he had not accomplished for himself - his desires, his plans, and his wishes for life. What might have been had he not been started down that spiritual path. Would he have become a great philosopher, a great orator, a great politician? Would he have become involved in marriage, had a family, raised grand kids?

I raise this question, because I know for a fact some modern day men/women of God go through these questions. They aren't regretting their decisions, they are not questioning God, nor are they doubting the life that they have lead. They just take a little time to wonder what might have been.

I raise the question to set some minds at ease. You aren't the only one that has gone through this process even though you most likely have gone through it alone or maybe with a loving spouse.

What you have done is not wrong, I think it is probably natural as long as it doesn't come to doubt or questioning of God's ways in your life.

I don't think many that go through this process do much more than do it and dwell on it for contemplations sake and then move on to realize the glorious life that God has allowed them to lead. It is not an earth moving experience, just some realization of what is.

I doubt I am doing this topic due service. I trust there is some encouragement in this for some that have taken this journey.

I think these thoughts often rise when we talk to someone or see a television program that jogs our minds to think for a moment. Most high school graduates have thoughts of grandeur and dreams, and wishes that they want to fulfill, yet these folks that I am speaking of set all those items aside and follow their Lord.

It has been my observation that God directs many things along life's path and many of these youthful desires come to pass in your life even though you are serving Him. Many that wanted families have had great families in the process. Others that have had desires of other things have found that God allows those items to fall into place along with the things He wants accomplished.

I think there is also a truth in that some that had those great dreams couldn't have accomplished anything had they been left to their efforts; but on the other hand, God has taken those lives and allowed those to accomplish great things in the spiritual realm. What a joy for those to know that God picked them to do great things for Him.

The key in all of these lives is that God is in control, and that God has their full commitment for all that He desires for them to do. The cross was Christ's grand work, what might be yours. Don't ever allow thoughts of what might have been to interfere with what might be. We can't change the past, and often can't change the present, but we can - with God's help do grand things in the future.

While considering what might have been, time must be given to what is - what you have been able to do for God. Consider well that there are many things that you have accomplished that you may never hear about until eternity. That young child you led to the Lord in Sunday school class - you have no idea what that child grew into as an adult. That person you helped along side the road and left a tract with - you have to let God decide what is to come of that. You have no idea what might be accomplished through your little effort.

One must wonder just how many people's lives were changed by this letter to the Galatians. Both to the original readers and to those through the centuries that have been blessed by it. Paul exerted great effort to write the letter and left the results up to the One that directed his course. It might be observed that he had no idea that anyone but a few believers of his own day would read it.

Imagine Albert Barnes and other great commentators - they wrote for their own readers not knowing that anyone else outside their generation would have an interest. Barne's Notes has become a standard in conservative circles - someone to check when wondering about your line of thought.

Now, in conclusion, remember these final thoughts just set down are actually describing the freedom in Christ that we have. What more could we want in life? How can a grand house compare with that? How can the finest SUV stack up to that? How can popularity and position match the position we have in Him? How can riches in this life outweigh the rewards in the next for all eternity?