

Reflections on Galatians

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Extracted from the Bible Treasury

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Introduction

The epistle to the Galatians has a character peculiarly its own. It is not an orderly doctrinal treatise as Romans, nor an unfolding of the eternal counsels of God as Ephesians, but an earnest effort on the part of the apostle (guided by the Holy Ghost) to recover to the truth souls who were being allured from it. Scripture has many uses, as we learn in 2 Tim. 3: 16, not the least important being "correction". It is to be noted that we owe a large measure of revealed truth (humanly speaking) to the failure and delusion of man. So wondrously does the goodness of God rise above man's evil.

Paul had planted the gospel of Christ in Galatia. Though through (or, in) infirmity of the flesh he preached to them, they received him as an angel of God, as Christ Jesus (Gal. 4: 13, 14). But alas! the enemy followed in his track. Men from Jerusalem, ever ready to subvert the heavenly testimony of the apostle insinuated themselves among them, telling them that, unless they added circumcision and the law of Moses to their faith in Christ, they could not be saved. In every direction Paul had to meet the same efforts: so ready is man to teach and to adopt that which puts honour on flesh.

Apostolic energy checked it to a large degree; but when this was removed, how widely and generally the Galatian leaven spread! The general condition of souls in Christendom in our own day tells a sorrowful tale. In connection with this Judaising, the law-teachers invariably called in question the apostleship of Paul as being independent of the twelve and of Jerusalem. This the apostle explains in Galatians 1 and Galatians 2, and speaks of his connections with the twelve specially with Peter, whom he had to publicly rebuke for dissimulation at Antioch.

In Galatians 3 he challenges them as to their reception of the Spirit, and his own working of miracles among them. On what principle had all this been — faith or works? Faith surely. The contrariety of the two principles is then plainly shown, and in connection with Abraham, the question is then raised as to the relation of law to promise. The law was added subsequently "because of transgression, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made". But what was the state of believers before the coming of

the Seed"? (Galatians 4) It was that of infancy. They were kept "under tutors and governors" — "were in bondage under the elements of the world". Believers now whether Jews or Gentiles are sons, and have the gift of the Spirit, "whereby we cry, Abba, Father". The apostle then appeals touchingly to them, reminding them of their happiness when he was among them.

He desires them to hear the law, i.e. the Old Testament Scriptures. Had they not heard of Sarah and Hagar? These set forth the two covenants. The fruit of the one was cast out, while the child of promise inherited the blessing "We are not children of the bondwoman but of the free".

The Galatians were to stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ makes free and not be entangled again in the yoke of bondage (Galatians 5). If they adopted circumcision they were debtors to do the whole law, and upon that ground Christ availed them nothing. This persuasion was not of God. He had not led them to this: they had been hindered in their race — turned aside by the enemy. But he had confidence in them through the Lord. Yet those who had beguiled them should bear their judgment.

At v. 13 the apostle enters upon another phase. If the law cannot justify, can it sanctify? Is it the believer's rule of life? Nay, Christians have been called in this respect also unto liberty. Such are to walk in the Spirit, and thus flesh is subdued. The law provokes sin — it does not produce holiness. But the Holy Spirit is in the believer to work this out. The works of the flesh are known, and to be shunned: the fruit of the Spirit is looked for in all in whom He dwells. But if any be overtaken in a fault (Galatians 6), the spiritual are to restore him in the spirit of meekness. The law of Christ is to be considered, not that of Moses. If responsibility cannot be shifted, godly care is to be exercised over each other. We get here God's standing governmental principle, "whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap". Was it flesh or spirit the Galatians were sowing to! Their law-teachers sought a fair show in the flesh, and to avoid persecution. As for the apostle, he would glory in nothing but the cross of the Lord Jesus. He bore in his body His stigmas (or, brands). Let none trouble him. Such, briefly, is our epistle.

As evidence of his deep concern for these brethren, and the grave light in which he regarded their departure, the apostle mentions that he wrote this letter with his own hand (Galatians 6: 11).

Galatians 1: 1-10

The opening address is remarkable for its singularity. "Paul an apostle (not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father Who raised Him from the dead), and all the brethren which are with me, unto the churches of Galatia." He is careful to assert his apostleship and the source of it, the Judaizing teachers of his day invariably calling it in question while seeking to undermine the doctrine of free grace (2 Cor. 11 to 13). It was an offence to such that Paul had not received his commission from the twelve and from Jerusalem. So petty and narrow is the human mind that it is slow to enter into the breadth of God's thoughts and the divine sovereignty of His action. These men would have had Christianity revolve around Jerusalem as a centre, and would have supplemented faith in Christ with circumcision and the ordinances of the law. But God's thoughts are not as men's thoughts. Christianity is no mere branch of Judaism (which had a divinely selected earthly centre), but a totally new order of blessing, founded upon the work of Christ, having its seat in heaven, where Christ sits as the glorified Head at the right hand of God.

It is true that Paul had not been called from Jerusalem. He was called to both grace and apostleship near Damascus, and when sent forth to evangelize the Gentile world, it was from Antioch. Thus early did God break in upon successional order. Therefore, while asserting his apostleship, he adds, "not of men,

neither by man." He sets man aside, as either the source or the channel of ministry. The source of all ministry is the risen Christ. "When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men. And he gave some apostles," etc. (Eph. 4). Here there is no room either for official men or the church. The authority of the former is in every case pretended, not real, while the latter has no place, according to Scripture, save as a receiver of all the blessing. It is an infringement of the rights of Christ for either to step in between Himself and His servants. Yet how general is the departure from scripture in this very respect! In what religious body in Christendom could ministry be described as "not of men, neither by man"? Many would probably assert that man is not the *source* of ministry, but can anyone say that man is not the universally recognized channel? Human authority, in one form or another, is looked for on all sides, ere a man can be regarded as a "regular" minister of Christ. Scripture furnishes no warrant whatever for such a notion, though it be ancient. Labourers are responsible to the Lord alone, Who fits, calls, and gives them to the church.

But here we must distinguish between gift and office. Scripture speaks plainly of elders and deacons. Elders were chosen by the apostles, either personally or by delegate, to care for the spiritual state of the saints locally; deacons were nominated by the assembly to undertake the temporal affairs, as caring for widows, etc.. Both classes were apostolically appointed. But this was not for the ministry of the word. It was not an absolute requisite for men of either class to be able to labour in word and doctrine. No doubt, where this was, the labourer was worthy of double honour (Acts 14: 23, Acts 6: 3-6; 1 Tim. 5: 17).

But ministry, if Scripture is to be followed, is free, those who have received gifts being responsible to the Lord Jesus to exercise them. Good doctrine, not official appointment, was to be looked for (compare 3 John). When Apollos went to Ephesus, it was not his ordination that was enquired into, but his doctrine; and having approved himself there (after godly help), being "disposed to pass into Achaia, the brethren wrote exhorting the disciples to receive him" (Acts 19). And when at a later date, Paul greatly desired him to go to Corinth, it was not at all his will to go at that time (1 Cor. 16: 12). Liberty prevailed all round in apostolic days when the truth was held fast, as the apostle himself records.

Paul was not alone in his earnest protest to the Galatians, He adds, "and all the brethren which are with me." This was to silence objectors.

2 Cor. 11, 12 shows what base insinuations his opponents could throw out. Therefore he is careful to show that what he wrote was with the full concurrence of all who were associated with him in the work. He briefly addresses them as "the churches of Galatia." He does not add, "beloved of God," as to the Romans, nor "to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus," as to the Corinthians. It is the shortest possible address, unlike the general style of the affectionate apostle. How could it be otherwise? The souls were trifling with the very foundations of Christianity; what could he say for them? "I stand in doubt of you," he says farther on. Nothing was more serious, in his judgment, than to turn to the law after confession of faith in Christ, still his heart was towards them. If he was not so expressive as usual, he could wish most unfeignedly "Grace to you and peace from God the Father, and from our Lord Jesus Christ." This word is specially important, if only because of its constant repetition in the New Testament. But the Galatians could not enjoy either grace or peace while they trafficked with law. These are the precious fruits of the work of Jesus, and for the enjoyment of our souls day by day.

But the apostle adds of our Lord Jesus, "Who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world (age), according to the will of God and our Father; to whom be glory for ever and ever, Amen." What more could He give for our sins than Himself, and what else would have availed? He bare the sins of the many, and they are gone, cast into the depths of the sea. But was the

putting away of sins the only object of His work? Nay, there is more, "That he might deliver us from this present evil world." Is it strange that such a word should come in here? By no means. It was needed urgently in Galatia. To follow the law is an aspect of worldliness, however startling it may sound to some. Law was given to correct and restrain flesh, and to direct man viewed as living the world. But the Christian has died and is risen; so that Paul could say, "Why as though living in the world?" etc. (Col. 2: 20). Where this is understood, the heart is proof against legalism, because it enjoys a heavenly Christ as its only object. If the Galatians ever knew this, they were letting it slip.

The apostle expresses his astonishment at their early declension from the truth. "I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you in the grace of Christ unto a different gospel; which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ." Theirs was not gradual decay after long years of profession, but a very sudden turning aside. How could they be so fickle? To turn now to law was to turn from God. He had called them by Paul to grace, not law. Time was, when to follow the law was to walk with God. But faith is come, and those who were under the schoolmaster are so no longer. For Gentiles, after profession of faith in Christ, to turn to law, is to turn from God. No wonder the apostle stood in doubt of the Galatians! But he would not admit that it was another gospel. There were no glad tidings different from those preached by him with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven. It was a perversion of the gospel of Christ, and the men were troublers, and should bear their judgment.

Paul felt that the foundations were at stake, which made him vehement. "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." Faith working by love can speak strongly at times, when the truth of Christ is involved. The apostle would pronounce anathema upon himself if ever he corrupted the gospel committed to his trust.

But it was possible that those Judaisers might seek to persuade the Galatians that they had not received all the gospel and that what they taught was merely supplementary, and what the apostle would have set before them had he remained long enough. This would be plausible, but it is met, "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." Paul had taught them all, and they had received all; all pretended developments were but error. In speaking so strongly, the apostle had Christ before him, not men. "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." Paul had not learned the unwholesome principle of our day, that for unity's sake all sorts of error should be tolerated. None could be more careful than he not to unnecessarily wound any, nor could any be more considerate to souls who were slow in their growth in the truth; but when the foundations of Christianity were undermined or attacked, the apostle forgot men, and acted for Christ. An important principle for our souls at the present crisis.

Galatians 1: 11-24.

It was necessary that he should speak of his relations with the twelve. Had he received his instructions from them, or any sort of appointment from them? hearken: "But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ." Thus does he assert the entire independence of his ministry, and its heavenly origin. His gospel could not have been derived from the Jerusalem labourers, because, while not contradicting theirs in anywise, it went far beyond them.

It will be observed by every careful reader of scripture that the gospel as preached by Peter and Paul, though in both the Spirit's testimony to Christ, had decidedly different characteristics. Peter spoke of

One who had walked here well known by all the Jews, who had been crucified by wicked men, yet raised up by God and exalted to glory, in Whose name remission of sins is now preached to all. Paul, on the other hand, starts with His glory.* His testimony was not of One who walked here (though he speaks of his wondrous pathway as a pattern for our souls, Phil. 2). On the contrary, he wrote, "Henceforth know we no man after the flesh; yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we Him no more" (2 Cor. 5: 16).

** It is interesting to observe how the character of his call to grace and apostleship stamped itself upon all his after ministry. We see something analogous to Isaiah. At his call, he saw the glory of Jehovah and heard His holiness proclaimed (Isa. 6). No prophet speaks so largely of the display of that glory in the coming day, and none uses so freely the title, "the Holy One of Israel."*

His testimony was of One, Who, having accomplished redemption, is now in glory, the Second Man, head of a new race, in Whom believers are justified and accepted, and with Whom we are one body by the Holy Ghost. All this, and more, he had by revelation, not through a human medium. Not that Paul despised the fellowship of any of his brethren — his many appeals in his Epistles for their prayers prove the contrary; nor that he undervalued the counsel of those who had been longer engaged in the service of Christ than himself; but he would preserve intact his own direct responsibility to the Lord, as having been called and commissioned from above, altogether apart from man.

His early training in Judaism was in no sense a preparation for his apostolic ministry. He had been a persecutor, and a very extreme one. "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; and profited in the Jews' religion above many my equals in mine own nation, being more exceedingly jealous of the traditions of my fathers." The divine sovereignty in the choice of the vessel is strikingly seen. Who more suitable to write the Epistle to the Galatians? Who better fitted to enforce justification by faith alone, to the exclusion of works, thus pouring contempt on the first man, and all his efforts after righteousness? Who better fitted to show the believer's entire deliverance from law? Could a converted publican do it as well? I am not overlooking the Spirit's inspiration in writing thus, but merely drawing attention to the display of divine wisdom in the use of one who profited in Judaism above his contemporaries, blameless and zealous, to unfold Christianity in its highest aspect, setting the believer entirely free from law, and all that pertains to the first man.

Accordingly, when called by God, he conferred not with flesh and blood, nor sought human credentials, but went into Arabia, etc.. "But when it pleased God who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace to reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen; immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood; neither went I up to Jerusalem to them which were apostles before me; but I went into Arabia and returned again unto Damascus." Observe the peculiarity of the expression — "to reveal His Son *in* me". He is the only apostle who uses the phrase, and it is characteristic. To Peter the Father revealed His Son (Matt. 16); but Paul's word goes farther. It involves union with Christ, and of this truth Paul was the honoured exponent. He learned the elements of it in his conversion. The immense fact was brought to bear upon him that in persecuting the saints he was persecuting Christ, for the saints were in Him and He in them.

Having received such a call, the apostle acted upon his direct responsibility to the Lord, without any human medium. He went in to Arabia (after a brief testimony, it would seem, in the synagogues of Damascus, Acts 9), and thence returned to the scene of his conversion. What a passing by of those who were somewhat in the church! He did not go up to Jerusalem for some time, and then merely on a visit to the apostle of the circumcision; not to be instructed or appointed in any way. This he shows plainly.

"Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter and abode with him fifteen days. But other of the apostles saw I none save James the Lord's brother. Now the things which I write unto you, behold before God I lie not." It is clear that he was most anxious to show that there was no sort of subordination to the twelve, nor commission from them. It was so ordered that only two of the apostles were at home at the same time. It might be a reproach in the eyes of the Galatians; but Jerusalem and the twelve were certainly not the source of his ministry.

He was also, at least at first, very little known by the Jewish saints in general. Though he loved them well, and at a later date found pleasure in carrying to them Gentile offerings, his work did not lie among them, but in the regions beyond. Hence we read, "Afterwards I came into the regions of Syria and Cilicia, and was unknown by face unto the churches of Judæa which were in Christ; but they had heard only that he which persecuted us in times past, now preacheth the faith which once he destroyed. And they glorified God in me." How transforming is divine grace, turning a thief into a giver (Eph. 4: 28), and a persecutor into a preacher; but what a rebuke for the assemblies of Galatia! They were criticizing the devoted apostle, and slighting him because his ministry had not a Jewish source; while the assemblies of Judæa (from whom he might naturally expect more or less prejudice) glorified God for His admirable work of sovereign favour. Those who had been called to the grace of Christ by his means were positively behind brethren of the circumcision in such an important respect!

Galatians 2: 1-10.

The apostle proceeds to speak further of his connections with the twelve, and relates his second visit to Jerusalem. "Then fourteen years after, I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, and took Titus with me also" (ver. 1). The circumstances of this visit are detailed in Acts 15. While Paul and Barnabas were labouring at Antioch, certain men from Jerusalem got in among the brethren, and taught them that, unless they were circumcised after the manner of Moses, they could not be saved. This led to much dissension and disputation, for the apostle would not quietly suffer the foundations of the faith to be thus assailed; but God so ordered it that the question was not settled on the spot. Paul and Barnabas, with other deputies, were despatched to the Jewish metropolis to discuss the question with the apostles and elders. Thus did God preserve unity all round. He would cause the leaders of the Jewish brethren, resident in the very city from which the trouble emanated, to declare the entire freedom of Gentile believers from the law of Moses.

The discussion is given in Acts 15 where Peter describes the law as a yoke "which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear;" and concludes his speech with the memorable words, "But we believe that through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved, even as they." Remark, not "they even as we," but "we [Jews] as they" (Gentiles), all fleshly distinctions being now obliterated through the cross of Christ.

But if Acts 15 gives us the human and circumstantial side of Paul's journey, our epistle shows the divine side. "I went up by revelation." It was thus not merely a matter between Paul and the troubled assembly, or between Paul and the twelve; but he was directly sent of the Lord. He now seeks conference with those whom he had rather avoided before. "I communicated to them the 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" (ver. 2). Here we may see the wisdom of the apostle. He spoke privately to the leaders before the public discussion came on, that it might be manifest that there was no contradiction (whatever difference there might be) in the teaching of those who laboured, whether among Jews or Gentiles. He laid before the twelve the gospel which he preached among the Gentiles. Did they judge it

defective, as those who had seduced the Galatians? Did they add to him anything? The context shows that they did neither; but rather that they recognized thankfully the grace of God which wrought in him, even though his line was altogether different from their own. When the Spirit is working, there is no room for human pettiness.

Verse 3 should be read as a parenthesis. "But neither Titus who was with me, being a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised." In this Paul was very bold; yet it was not the boldness of defiance, but of Christian liberty. He took, in the face of all, an uncircumcised Gentile brother into the very centre of Judaism; and who that was taught of God (however full of Jewish feeling) could say him nay? Yet the apostle, we know, was always very considerate of Jewish scruples, making himself all things to all men for their blessing, as may be seen in his circumcision of Timothy in Acts 16, and in his instructions in Rom. 14. But Titus, unlike Timothy, was a pure Gentile, and it would have compromised the truth of the gospel to have circumcised him to please brethren among the Jews. Titus was saved *as a Gentile*, apart altogether from ordinances or works of law. This is brought forward here to show that even in Jerusalem was not required what the Galatians had proved themselves so ready to submit to.

Following upon the parenthesis, the apostle explains more fully the cause of his visit to Jerusalem at that time. "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; to whom we gave place by subjection, no, not for an hour; that the truth of the gospel might continue with you"(vers. 4, 5). Thus does he speak of the proceedings at Antioch, of the efforts of the enemy, and of his own earnest resistance of them. How soon did the church fall a prey to evil men through unwatchfulness, when apostolic energy was no more!

Still, as we have seen, even the great apostle of the Gentiles, was not permitted of the Lord to settle this momentous question without reference to Jerusalem; and this for unity's sake; a precious and important principle in the sight of the Lord. But did Paul learn anything in Jerusalem? Was his knowledge of Christianity perfected there among the twelve? "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" (ver. 6). How could the Jewish leaders add anything to Paul? His gospel was beyond theirs, as is plain. He started with Christ's glory, and proclaimed its immense results to all who believe; they testified of One Who walked here, Who was crucified, and raised again by the power of God. The testimonies were not contradictory, but Paul's was in advance, nevertheless.

Therefore, instead of disagreeing with Paul, or seeking to alter the character of his ministry, as though it were faulty, or not of God, the twelve gave over the work among the Gentiles to Paul and Barnabas, mutually agreeing each to keep to his own line. "But contrariwise, when they saw that the gospel of the uncircumcision was committed unto me, as the gospel of the circumcision was unto Peter (for he that wrought effectually in Peter to the apostleship of the circumcision, the same was mighty in me toward the Gentiles): and when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace which was given unto me, they gave to me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship; that we should go unto the heathen, and they unto the circumcision" (vers. 8, 9). Whether among Jews or Gentiles, it was God who wrought; and the labourers were but the vessels of His grace. It is happy to observe these brethren, equally called and commissioned of God, recognizing the grace given to each other, even though their line was essentially different, and though they had received no sort of authority from each other.

Peter's place is very clearly defined here — the apostleship of the circumcision. Strange that perverse men should have fastened upon him, of all the twelve, to be the reputed founder and head of the great

Gentile assembly of the West; and strange, too, that to this day the delusion should be maintained with all its soul-destroying appurtenances. Scripture speaks of but one apostle in Rome, Paul, not Peter; and that, not to found or head a church (there being an assembly there long before, and no apostle engaged in its foundation), but to be imprisoned and to die.

In giving up the Gentile work to Paul, the twelve expressed one important wish. "Only they would that ye should remember the poor; the same which I also was forward to do" (ver. 10). The loving compliance of the apostle may be seen in 2 Cor. 8 and 9. The dearth in Judæa furnished an occasion for the cementing of divine bonds, Gentile brethren coming forward with affectionate hearts to supply the need of fellow-members of the same body among the circumcision.

Galatians 2: 11-21.

Paul closes the series of personal incidents in connection with the twelve, by relating Peter's sorrowful declension at Antioch. Instead of being resisted by Peter because of teaching a defective gospel (as some adversaries might have expected), Paul had to withstand him for compromising the truth of the gospel. "But when Peter was come to Antioch, I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed. 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" (vers. 11, 12). What a poor thing is man apart from sustaining grace! When Hezekiah was left to himself for a moment, he betrayed his trust, man of faith though he was ordinarily (2 Chr. 32: 31). We only see perfection in One: He only has trodden the path unflinching and without defect. Where would the church have been if really built on Peter, as many say? At Antioch he completely broke down when the fundamental truth of the gospel was involved. During the early part of his stay there he enjoyed the fellowship of Gentile brethren, and felt perfectly free to go in and out of their houses, and eat with them. He enjoyed the liberty of grace, and regarded no man as common or unclean. But the fear of man bringeth a snare; and we soon beheld the humbling spectacle of the very chiefest of the twelve turning completely aside because of the coming of certain Jewish brethren from Jerusalem. He forgot for the moment the lesson taught him on the housetop at Joppa, and his own statements concerning the Gentiles in the council at Jerusalem (Acts 10 & 15); and by withdrawing himself from his brethren of the uncircumcision, he built again the things he had destroyed, making differences where God makes none.

The infection spread. "And the other Jews dissembled likewise with him: insomuch that Barnabas also was carried away with their dissimulation" (ver. 13). That the other Jews should follow their leader may not be a matter of surprise; but what can we say when we see even Paul's own fellow-labourer led astray! He who had laboured with Paul in the gospel, who had joined with him in planting Gentile assemblies in all quarters, and who had laboured with such acceptance and blessing in this very assembly — he of all persons should have been proof against such a thing as this. The Spirit describes him elsewhere as "a good man, full of the Holy Ghost and of faith" (Acts 11: 24). Paul found much comfort in his fellowship, and they were doubtless divinely mated. But "the son of consolation" was apt to be weak at a crisis, as we see in the matter of John Mark (Acts 15: 37). It is a great test for the saints when such men go astray. Satan knows how to beguile the lovely characters, that he may the better accomplish his unworthy ends. The personal qualities of such, their past faithful services, and the place they have won in consequence in the hearts of the saints, all combine to put the unwary off their guard, and thus to ensnare their souls. It is not safe to follow even "a good man," as many in our own days can sorrowfully testify. In such crises, the eye must be off men, and fixed upon the Lord, in order to arrive at a sound judgment.

But, thanks be to God, there was at least one faithful man at Antioch at that time. Painful as it doubtless was to the apostle, he promptly rebuked Peter publicly. The wounds of a friend are kind. "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? We who are Jews by nature, and not sinners of the Gentiles, 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" (vers. 14-16). In so simple a matter as refusing to eat at table with brethren of the uncircumcision, Paul saw the truth of the gospel at stake. A straw is sufficient to show the course of a stream, and so the apostle judged. Peter had been living after the manner of the Gentiles, and had eaten and drunk all things in liberty; why, because some from James had come upon the scene, should he make a difference, and impose bondage upon the Gentiles? Paul reminded his Jewish brother of the ground on which they all stood before God. Had they ever found justification by law? Had the law ever done anything for them but condemn them? Had not both Peter and himself believed in Jesus Christ that they might be justified by faith? Had they not both learned that by works of law no flesh shall be justified? Then why deny all this, and put a yoke upon the necks of the disciples that none had yet been able to bear? The apostle then reasons with the Galatians. If they really were under law, they were sinners; for law convicts of sin all who are under it; and in linking together Christ and law, they virtually made Him responsible for such a condition. "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" (ver. 17). Probably they had not thought of this. Satan in leading souls astray generally means more than they mean. To get under his power in any way is to have one's susceptibilities blunted, and the vision dimmed.

Moreover to turn back to law, after having left it, is to constitute oneself a transgressor. "For if I build again the things which I destroyed, I make myself a transgressor" (ver. 18). Nothing can be plainer than this; and the principle is worthy of the deepest consideration in this day. If God brings souls out from under law, it is transgression to return to it in any form; while, on the other hand, if God does not thus deliver, it is transgression to leave it. Let the Galatians solve the question before God. Was He leading them there, or the enemy?

True deliverance from law is by death, as the apostle shows. "For I through the law died to the law that I might live unto God" (ver. 19). Law is a killing power, a ministration of death, and but for divine intervention in grace, it would have been the eternal ruin of all who were under it. But Christ has come, death has come in — His death is ours. The sentence has taken full effect in Him for us — we have died, and that through law. But having thus died through the law, we are necessarily death to it — it has no further claim, as Rom 7 fully establishes. The law has nothing to do with dead men. We live unto God, and bring forth fruit, in complete contrast to the former condition, when the motions of sins which were by the law wrought in our members to bring forth fruit unto death. We were then in the flesh; we are now in the Spirit.

Therefore the apostle says, "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me" (ver. 20). Here we get Christian life in a nutshell. Crucified with Christ, the old life closed with all its appurtenances; a new life possessed — Christ. The life is sustained by faith in its heavenly object, the Son of God. How blessed is this for the Christian! A positive new life implanted in the soul from God, indestructible, eternal, and divine; and its true object set before it. This is put too in the most touching possible way, for the apostle adds, "Who loved me, and gave himself for me." This

draws out the affections, and produces heavenly fruit for God. Who would not be for ever adoringly occupied with such an One? What a contrast to mere cold legalism! Yet the heart is ever ready to return there, to its own loss and the Lord's dishonour.

To speak and act thus is not to frustrate divine grace. "I do not frustrate the grace of God; for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ died in vain" (ver. 21). The soul must be brought to this. If flesh were at all competent to attain to righteousness by law-keeping, the death of Christ was needless; but if (as was indeed the case) we were altogether without strength, grace (and that alone) can avail before our God. The soul that has learnt in any measure its ruin by nature is thankful and content to take its place as an object of abounding grace — grace founded upon the atoning death of the Lord Jesus.

Galatians 3: 1-9.

The apostle enters now upon a different mode of dealing with the erring Galatians. In Galatians 1 & Galatians 2 he has been mainly occupied with the divine source and character of his ministry, these having been called in question because not received from the twelve. In the various incidents brought forward, we have seen that he was in no way appointed by the Jewish apostles, and that he had not been instructed by them. But we also see that there was no disagreement. They had given him the right hand of fellowship, that he and Barnabas should evangelize the heathen, while they pursued their work among the circumcision. Instead of being opposed and corrected by them, Paul shows that on one occasion he had to be the objector, and this in connection with no less a person than Peter. The twelve and himself were agreed that justification is by faith alone, not by works of law, and that the Gentiles were entirely free from law's obligations, however slow Jewish brethren might be to learn the lesson as regards themselves.

The apostle breaks out, "O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you*, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you" (ver. 1)? We learn here the particular form the apostle's ministry had taken in those parts. Considerable variety in style is to be remarked in Paul's labours. Among the Thessalonians the Lord's coming was a very prominent theme; among the Athenians, stress was laid upon man's original relation to God as His creature; in Galatia and in Corinth the cross was to the front. It will be noticed that sometimes we read in the New Testament of the blood of Christ, sometimes of the death, and in other places of the cross. This is not in vain. The Spirit has a different line of truth for our souls in each of these varied expressions. The blood as particularly found (though not exclusively) in Hebrews, where the main theme is the atonement and its mighty results; the death of Christ is dwelt upon in Romans as the end of His life below, in which faith finds the end of the old man and all that pertains to him; the cross is before us in Galatians as an emblem of shame. The cross pours contempt on man and all his efforts, and is thus to the Jews a stumbling block, and to the Greeks foolishness (1 Cor. 1: 23).

The apostle wished to press this upon the Galatians, as upon the Corinthians at another time for a different reason. He then puts in contrast the two principles of law and faith — this down to verse 14; and appeals to them as to the ground upon which they had received all their blessings from God. "This only would I learn of you, Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?" (ver. 2). Failing people though they were, they had received the gift of the Spirit. It is important to distinguish between "the hearing of faith," and the reception of the Holy Ghost. A soul hears the gospel of salvation, and believes it; and thus is cleansed, and receives the remission of sins. This precedes the Spirit's seal. It is not denied that all that precedes is His work. This is unquestionable. A man never

sorrows for sin, nor bends his ear to the gospel, and certainly never confides in the Lord Jesus for salvation, apart from the gracious work of the Holy Ghost. Such fruit has never been borne by the old man since the world began. The old man is corrupt according to the lusts of deceit, and never produces anything but what is hateful to God. His Spirit must work in conscience and heart, ere there can be anything that is well-pleasing in His sight. But while all this is true, the gift of the Spirit to dwell in the vessel is a totally distinct thing. It is as if a man first built a house, and then took up his abode in it. The Spirit is God's great gift to every Christian, and in this important respect those who believe during this present period of time are signally favoured of God. It is because of His infinite delight in the person and work of His beloved Son. When He took His seat on high, the Spirit descended, according to His word to His own ere He suffered.

Some in this day seem to regard the indwelling of the Spirit as a kind of attainment, and speak of it as though only the advanced and spiritual were thus favoured. But this is to ignore scripture. What was the practical state of the Corinthians when Paul wrote, "Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost, which is in you which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?" (1 Cor. 6: 19). Let the whole epistle answer. And where were the Galatians when Paul wrote as in chapter 3? In every way both the Corinthians and Galatians were going on unsatisfactorily, yet they had received the Spirit. Every saint should earnestly heed the injunction, "Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God"; but let none suppose that He is ever withdrawn; for in the very verse last quoted the apostle proceeds to say, "whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption" (Eph. 4: 30).

The apostle then challenges the Galatians; on what principle had the Spirit been given? There could be but one answer. The sacred oil could not be poured on flesh (Ex. 30: 32). Never since time began was such a gift conferred as the reward of human works, though often and regularly as the crown of God's grace under the gospel.

"Are ye so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh? Have ye suffered so many things in vain, if it be yet in vain?" (vers. 3, 4). If the works of the flesh never yet brought blessing to any, why should the Galatians turn to them? Were they really prepared to surrender all they had suffered for? Ordinances and legalism do not entail persecution and suffering. The natural man can enter into and appreciate them, and when those who bear the Lord's Name sink to this level, the world and themselves are agreed, and can walk together. How sorrowfully and long has this been true in Christendom! Had the apostle preached circumcision, and blended Judaism generally with the Christianity he taught, he would have been spared much, as he himself says, "Then is the offence of the cross ceased." But against all this he ever resolutely set his face, at all cost to himself, and other faithful men who stood with him.

Another question is now put, "He therefore that ministereth to you the Spirit, and worketh miracles among you, doeth he it by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?" (ver. 5). He it was who had laboured among them, and wrought works of power to confirm the word. The gospel is "the ministration of the Spirit," as also of righteousness; not the law, which on the contrary is a ministration of death and condemnation (2 Cor. 3). Paul preached the gospel to them, not the law; as a result of "the hearing of faith," they had received the Spirit.

It is well to observe that the apostle distinguishes between the gift of the Spirit, and the working of miracles. They are often spoken of as though they were substantially the same thing. But they are distinct. The Holy Ghost is God's seal upon every believer, quite apart from mighty works, and abides today, spite of the church's declension and ruin. Miracles were but accompaniments of His presence, and were vouchsafed in early days in confirmation of the word preached (Heb. 2: 4). These have

ceased, the necessity for them having passed away — and perhaps one may add the fallen condition of the church not justifying their continuance or revival. But the Spirit remains with the church until the end.

The great point is that all had been wrought on the principle of faith, not works. The apostle now enforces the truth in another way. He brings forward Abraham, the root of circumcision, as also in Romans 4. On what principle did God account him righteous before Him? "Even as Abraham believed God, and it was accounted unto him for righteousness" (ver. 6). Even Abraham then, of whom all legalists boasted, knew nothing of works as a ground of blessing! God pronounced him righteous, not only before the law was given, but before circumcision was instituted. This was brought in later as "a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had being yet uncircumcised" (Rom. 4: 11). Consequently, if they felt it an honour to range themselves under him, works must be abandoned, and faith take their place. "Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham" (ver. 7). Not "they which are circumcised," as they seemed to suppose, "but they which are of faith." Mere fleshly claims God entirely rejects; faith is looked for in all who would stand before Him. This is no new thing with God. He always had purposes of blessing for Gentiles apart from works and ordinances; indeed, He spoke of it to Abraham himself. "And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed. So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham"(vers. 8, 9).

Thus early did God let out what was in His heart, however humbling to the seed of Abraham according to the flesh. They would have liked to confine blessing within their own circle, doling out to others as they thought well, and in entire subordination to themselves; but God had larger thoughts. Blessing is for all alike, the Gentile may be saved and justified without becoming a Jew, or submitting to ordinances; while those who contend for merely natural descent find themselves excluded altogether, and disowned of God, as we read, "He is not a Jew, which is one outwardly" (Rom. 2: 28). The apostle merely speaks here of the ground of blessing, and does not state to the full what present blessing is. Our union with Christ as members of one body must be sought elsewhere; and in this the patriarch has no place; nevertheless he and we are blessed in one common ground before God. This is the point in Galatians; the apostle scarcely goes beyond it in this Epistle.

Galatians 3: 10-14.

The apostle continues his contrast of the two principles — law and faith. Faith brings into blessing, the father of circumcision being witness; law only curses and condemns all who have to do with it. This is at this point very solemnly shewn. "For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse; for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them" (Gal. 3: 10). None can escape the keen edge of this — all who are under the law are under a curse. Notice that the apostle does not say, "as many as break the law," but "as many as are of the works of the law." It is taken for granted that those who undertake to fulfil its obligations utterly fail; consequently as many as go on that principle are in this solemn state before God. The quotation here is from Deut. 27 and is very striking. There Moses instructs the people that they were to set up and plaster great stones when they had gone over Jordan, and write upon them all the words of the law, setting them up in mount Ebal. There we get that six tribes, Simeon, etc., were to stand upon Gerizim to bless the people, and six tribes upon mount Ebal to curse. The Levites were then to say with a loud voice unto all the men of Israel, "Cursed," etc. But where are the blessings? Not to be found in the chapter at all. Many have sought to get over the difficulty by blending Deut. 28 with Deut. 27; but this is confusion. The following chapter proceeds on a different ground altogether, and speaks merely of

governmental blessings and curses of a temporal character. The two portions are entirely distinct. Why then are the blessings from mount Gerizim not named? Because God well knew they would never be wanted. Persons under the law are necessarily under the curse, so complete is the ruin and depravity of flesh.

What a solemn position for the Galatians to place themselves in, after having believed in Christ! Some may say, 'Yes, but they were believers and therefore could take up the law and yet be exempt from the curse.' But this is false reasoning. The law cannot be taken as men think proper. The law takes us, if we have anything to say to it at all. It does not ask a man whether he is converted or not, it is not in its nature so to do; it takes the man as it finds him, and says, 'Do this and live,' with the solemn alternative of death and condemnation if there be failure. Therefore how serious for believers to place themselves in such a position! It is neither our means of justification before God, nor any means of sanctification. We were made dead to it by the body of Christ, and have therefore passed out of the sphere where it applies.

Moreover, law and faith cannot be blended, being entirely different principles. "But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God is evident, for the just shall live by faith. And the law is not of faith; but the man that doeth them shall live in them" (vers. 11, 12). Here we are carried back to Habakkuk 2: 4). The prophet in his sorrow over the ruin of His people, and the (to him) mysterious dealings of Jehovah in not hastening deliverance, was told that "the just shall live by his faith." The word is used three times in the New Testament, and each time for a different purpose. If Romans 1 be consulted, it will be seen that the emphasis is on "just"; in Heb. 10 on the word "live"; in Gal. 3 on "faith". The law does not speak thus, but in a precisely opposite way — the man that doeth shall live. How vain then to try and mix the two principles! and yet this is done from one end of Christendom to the other. It is the exception to find souls that are not under law in one way or another. So little has the Epistle to the Galatians been heeded!

But the apostle could write with a grateful heart, "Christ has 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" (v. 13).

Notice carefully the "us." This is important in many of his Epistles. He and his Jewish fellow-believers had been under law, but had been brought out from hence by the Lord Jesus. The Galatians had never had to do with it, being Gentiles. Consequently they were not included in the "us." The same thing may be observed in chap. 4. "Even as we, when we were children, were in bondage." This means Jewish believers. As to Gentiles, "when ye knew not God, ye did service unto them which by nature are no gods." This would not be true of Jews. Thus are both distinguished as to their former state. Look also at Col. 2: 9, "blotting out the hand-writing of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us and took it out of the way nailing it to his cross." He does not include the Colossians in this statement, but shows the former condition of Jewish saints, and the deliverance through the work of Christ.

What inexpressible grace that Christ should take upon Him the curse of a broken law! Himself the beloved One of the Father, holy and without blemish in all His ways, yet going to such unutterable depths that souls might be delivered and blessed! The marvellous result is that the blessing of Abraham comes upon all who believe, whether Gentile or Jew. All were similarly needy and afar from God; the work of Christ is the foundation of blessing for all. "That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith" (ver. 14). Thus, as faith alone was the principle of blessing for Abraham, nothing else brings blessing to any. But the highest favours are bestowed where faith is, not the least being the gift of the Holy Ghost.

In the first fourteen verses of this chapter, the apostle has established very plainly two things; (1) that

law never yet brought into blessing any who have been under it; (2) that the Holy Spirit was never given in connection with it.

Galatians 3: 15-20.

Now another subject is treated — the relation of the law to the promises of God. Law having come, is it the true ground of blessing, to the setting aside of the promises made of old to Abraham? No one could question that the Gentiles have an interest in the promises, at least in those to which the apostle here refers, "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" (ver. 15). Such is the apostle's simple method of dealing with the matter. Would God do less than man? Even man holds to a confirmed covenant. When once the document is signed and sealed, the matter is closed, it cannot be set aside or added to. "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. And this I say, that the covenant that was confirmed before of God to Christ, the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect" (vers. 16, 17).

It is of moment to understand the particular promises to which the apostle here alludes. It is beyond question that some of the promises refer solely to the natural seed, but these are not before us in this place. The apostle is speaking of those which involve blessing for Gentiles. In Genesis 12 God said to Abraham, "In thee shall all families of the earth be blessed." None can limit such a word as this. It shews how the heart of God went out to all even in earliest times, and that blessing for Gentiles was ever before His mind. But on what ground? Certainly not that of law, to which the foolish Galatians were vainly turning; for the law had no existence when God thus expressed himself to the father of the faithful. The promise was unconditional and depends on God alone for fulfilment. It was not drawn forth by anything in man, nor even in Abraham individually; it flowed solely from the grace of His heart.

Moreover He confirmed the word many years after, and who can annul a confirmed covenant? Observe carefully the occasion of its confirmation. It is found in Genesis 22. There we see Abraham offering up his only begotten son, and receiving him again from the dead (in figure); expressive type of the dead and risen Christ. This being all accomplished, the angel of Jehovah called to him out of heaven and said, "By myself have I sworn, saith Jehovah . . . in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed." This must not be mixed up with the word in the previous verse. There Abraham is told that his seed should be multiplied as the stars of heaven, and as the sand upon the seashore, and that they should possess the gate of their enemies. This clearly refers to Israel and includes no blessing for the Gentiles, but rather the reverse. This will be fully realized in a day yet to come, when Israel shall be led in triumph over all their foes, and all shall be subdued under them. But this is not what the apostle is reasoning upon in Galatians. His mind is fixed upon the precious word, "In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed." The seed here, he argues, is singular, not plural — it is Christ. What minute attention we should pay to scripture, if so much depends on a single letter! "He saith not, And to seeds, as of many, but as of one, And to they seed, which is Christ." The omissions of the Spirit of God are as instructive as His words, to such as have eyes to see, and ears to hear.

The substance of the argument is this; that the promise concerning Gentile blessing was altogether unconditional on God's part, and that it is settled and sure in Christ dead and risen. Consequently, the law, which was given of God at Sinai four hundred and thirty years later, cannot disannul it, "For if the inheritance be of law, it is no more of promise; but God gave it to Abraham by promise" (ver. 18). The

two principles are opposed in nature and character. If the inheritance is on the principle of works, it becomes a matter of debt, not of promise at all; whereas it is clear that God gave it to the patriarch by promise. If blessing really is through law then the promises of God are expunged. Man can never merit them.

Thus were the Galatians carried back to the beginning of things, that they might see the unreasonableness of the position they were taking up. Why turn to something given four centuries later than the original promise? Why rest their blessing on such precarious ground? Especially as they ought to know that law had never brought blessing to Israel; their scattered and servile condition being a standing warning to all. On the ground of law nothing is certain, such is the condition of man; but when God comes in, in the wonderful grace of His heart, the soul that rests in Him, as helpless and needy, finds everything sure and stable; the righteous ground being the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus.

Another question arises out of this. If law cannot bring souls into blessing, if it really only ruins all who place themselves under it, why was it given? A serious question surely. "Wherefore then serveth the law? It was added because of transgression, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made; and it was ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator" (ver. 19). The apostle always jealously vindicates the law, while contending for the liberty of the believer in Jesus. In Romans 3: 31 he is careful to show that the principle of faith does not nullify the law, but that rather it is established, all its righteous sentence having been endured by Christ for us. In Romans 7: 7, he shows that the law is not sin, that we turned away from it, but that it is holy and just and good. Here the same care may be observed. The law was God's perfect rule for man; but man is corrupt and bad, and therefore it can only condemn and curse him. It was added because, or for the sake of, transgressions. It makes manifest man's true state. Sin was in the world before the law was given, consequently none can impiously assert that law made man a sinner. It came by the way, as it were, after the promise and before the fulfilment of it, to demonstrate man's real state in the sight of God. Yet so blind are men as to their true condition, that they have taken up that which was intended to make plain their ruin, and have endeavoured to attain to righteousness and life by means of it. It is long since Paul wrote his Epistles to the Romans and to the Galatians, but the illusion is not dispelled to this hour.

Law cannot justify, nor can it sanctify. It is God's plumb-line making manifest man's crookedness; His mirror shewing up his vileness.

The promised Seed has come, Christ has died and is risen; why turn back to law? Why abandon a sure ground for one so unsafe and uncertain?

The apostle adds some interesting remarks here, as to the giving of the law. "It was ordained through angels." Stephen says, "who have received the law by the disposition of angels" (Acts 7: 53).

God did not act immediately on the solemn day of Sinai. There were angels, and there was a mediator — Moses. What a contrast to Christianity! Through Christ's work, believers are brought to God, cleansed from all their sins, set down in His blessed presence in cloudless favour. We are loved by the Father with the same love wherewith He loves His Son, and are pronounced clean every whit, meet for the inheritance of the saints in the light. Nothing of this could be known and enjoyed under law. God spoke out of the thick darkness, His people quaked and trembled at the foot of the fiery mount; and angels and a mediator were between them and Himself.

The principle of promise does not need a mediator in this sense, there being but one party engaged; hence we read, "Now a mediator is not a mediator of one, but God is one" (ver. 20). The unity of God was the great fundamental truth that Israel was responsible to confess before the nations around, who

had all departed into idolatry (Deut. 6: 4). Thus God will make good His unconditional promises. Man may fail, but He never. We do not need a Moses and a host of angels between our souls and such a God.

Galatians 3: 21-29.

Another difficulty is now gone into and settled by the apostle. If law, instead of helping man to attain to righteousness, only brings out transgression, is it against the promises of God? "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 law" (ver. 21). Life was set before those who were under the law, as vers. 12 shews; but it must be attained to by human righteousness. But the law was weak through the flesh. Flesh is so utterly antagonistic to God that it will not walk in His ways. Its whole course is marked by self-will and sin. Hence the law could not give life. It could only condemn and slay law-breakers. Therefore righteousness is not on the principle of law for any. "But the scripture hath concluded (or, shut up) all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe" (ver. 22). Jew and Gentile were alike sinners before God, the one breaking the known commands of God; the other giving loose rein to his passions and lusts. All are brought in guilty, the matter being gone into fully in Romans 1 - 3. But now the promise is accomplished to all who believe. The Jew has not exclusive claims certainly, being in the same prison-house as the Gentiles, as it were, through guilt. Grace makes the promise good to all believers, whoever they may be; righteousness is imputed on the principle of faith in Jesus Christ.

Now before Christ came to accomplish this great work on behalf of man that all who believe in Him risen and glorified might be justified, believers, especially among the Jews were kept shut up in the school-house of the law. "But before faith came, we were kept under law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed" (ver. 23). They were waiting really until God brought in His better thing. Meanwhile they were kept under restraint and in separation from the heathen around them by the possession of the law. "Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster" (vers. 24, 25). All this should appeal powerfully to the Galatians. Those who believed before their day had been under the hand of the legal pedagogue; Christianity having come they had been set free. And were Gentiles going after that which even Jews had left as suited only to an infantine condition? What utter misunderstanding of the mind of God! What serious surrender of the surpassingly excellent place that belongs to the Christian!

"For ye are all children (sons) of God by faith in Christ Jesus" (ver. 26). What an immensely superior place and relationship to that of an infant under law! Notice again in this place, the apostle's use of the pronouns: "*We* were kept under the law," "the law was *our* schoolmaster." He refers to himself and to his fellow Jewish saints, and does not include the brethren of the uncircumcision to whom he was writing. But when he speaks of privilege and blessing, these are as much for the believing Greek as for the Jew, hence he says "Ye." We are called to have part with Christ, to enter into His relationship with the Father, the power of which is made good in our souls by the Holy Ghost.

Baptism is here brought in, being a sign of our having part thus with the dead and risen Christ. "For as many of you as have been baptized unto Christ have put on Christ" (ver. 27). It is not implied that some had not been baptized. No such idea must be inferred from this passage. In early days, when love was fresh and warm, and the commands of the Lord were more exactly obeyed, those who were used of God in the gospel of His Son baptized forthwith those who believed, or saw to the matter, that it was

done by other approved men. J.N.D.'s reading may be preferred in this place, "for ye, as many as have been baptized unto Christ, etc." The apostle means the whole body of those to whom he was writing. He shews them by the well-known ordinance of baptism, that they had part with Christ, as a rebuke to their hankering after a bygone state of things — the bondage of law.

In Christ all fleshly distinctions disappear. "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" (ver. 28). All these differences pertain to the old creation. All are brought into equal blessing and privilege in the risen Christ. It is a question of our place and portion in Him. Let us be careful to confine the passage thus. Ere this, it has been used to set aside or slight the relationships of life; and it has been brought forward as justifying the woman in taking the man's place in the services of God. But this is to utterly pervert the plain words of the apostle. All the relationships of life are sanctioned by God in Christianity as previously, and are all regulated in the Epistles of the New Testament. And it must not be forgotten that the woman's place was ordered and settled before the fall, and has not been touched by it, save that bitterness and sorrow have come in, as solemn results.

Here, however, we are considering, not our relative places on earth, but our position now before God in Christ. We have His place, through grace. "And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, heirs according to the promise" (ver. 29). The apostle has been reasoning earlier that Christ is the true seed of Abraham. Here He brings us into the same place. We share it. All that is true of Him, as the risen and accepted Man is true of every one that believes. He has given us His standing and portion, and we are to inherit all things with Him in the coming day. Let us not lose sight of it, nor look to the things behind, as the Galatians to their hurt and sorrow.