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Preface

**An Exposition, With Practical Observations, of The Epistle of St. Paul to the Galatians**

This epistle of Paul is directed not to the church or churches of a single city, as some others are, but of a country or province, for so Galatia was. It is very probable that these Galatians were first converted to the Christian faith by his ministry; or, if he was not the instrument of planting, yet at least he had been employed in watering these churches, as is evident from this epistle itself, and also from Acts 18:23, where we find him going over all the country of Galatia and Phrygia in order, strengthening all the disciples. While he was with them, they had expressed the greatest esteem and affection both for his person and ministry; but he had not been long absent from them before some judaizing teachers got in among them, by whose arts and insinuations they were soon drawn into a meaner opinion both of the one and of the other. That which these false teachers chiefly aimed at was to draw them off from the truth as it is in Jesus, particularly in the great doctrine of justification, which they grossly perverted, by asserting the necessity of joining the observance of the law of Moses with faith in Christ in order to it: and, the better to accomplish this their design, they did all they could to lessen the character and reputation of the apostle, and to raise up their own on the ruins of his, representing him as one who, if he was to be owned as an apostle, yet was much inferior to others, and particularly who deserved not such a regard as Peter, James, and John, whose followers, it is likely, they pretended to be: and in both these attempts they had but too great success. This was the occasion of his writing this epistle, wherein he expresses his great concern that they had suffered themselves to be so soon turned aside from the faith of the gospel, vindicates his own character and authority as an apostle against the aspersions of his enemies, showing that his mission and doctrine were both divine, and that he was not, upon any account, *behind the very chief of the apostles*, 2 Co. 11:5. He then sets himself to assert and maintain the great gospel doctrine of justification by faith without the works of the law, and to obviate some difficulties that might be apt to arise in their minds concerning it: and, having established this important doctrine, he exhorts them to stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ had made them free, cautions them against the abuse of this liberty, gives them several very needful counsels and directions and then concludes the epistle by giving them a just description of those false teachers by whom they had been ensnared, and, on the contrary, of his own temper and behaviour. In all this his great scope and design were to recover those who had been perverted, to settle those who might be wavering, and to confirm such among them as had kept their integrity.

## Chapter 1

In this chapter, after the preface or introduction (v. 1-5), the apostle severely reproveth these churches for their defection from the faith (v. 6-9), and then proves his own apostleship, which his enemies had brought them to question, I. From his end and design in preaching the gospel (v. 10). II. From his having received it by immediate revelation (v. 11, 12). For the proof of which he acquaints them, 1. What his former conversation was (v. 13, 14). 2. How he was converted, and called to the apostleship (v. 15, 16). 3. How he behaved himself afterwards (v. 16 to the end).

### Verses 1-5

In these verses we have the preface or introduction to the epistle, where observe,

I. The person or persons from whom this epistle is sent—from Paul *an apostle, etc., and all the brethren that were with him*. 1. The epistle is sent from Paul; he only was the penman of it. And, because there were some among the Galatians who endeavoured to lessen his character and authority, in the front of it he gives a general account both of his office and of the manner in which he was called to it, which afterwards, in this and the following chapter, he enlarges more upon. As to his office, he was an apostle. He is not afraid to style himself so, though his enemies would scarcely allow him this title: and, to let them see that he did not assume this character without just ground, he acquaints them how he was called to this dignity and office, and assures them that his commission to it was wholly divine, for he was an apostle, *not of man, neither by man*; he had not the common call of an ordinary minister, but an extraordinary call from heaven to this office. He neither received his qualification for it, nor his designation to it, by the mediation of men, but had both the one and the other directly from above; for he was an apostle *by Jesus Christ*, he had his instructions and commission immediately from him, and consequently from *God the Father*, who was one with him in respect of his divine nature, and who had appointed him, as Mediator, to be the apostle and high priest of our profession, and as such to authorize others to this office. He adds, *Who raised him from the dead*, both to acquaint us that herein God the Father gave a public testimony to Christ's being his Son and the promised Messiah, and also that, as his call to the apostleship was immediately from Christ, so it was after his resurrection from the dead, and when he had entered upon his exalted state; so that he had reason to look upon himself, not only as standing upon a level with the other apostles, but as in some sort preferred above them; for, whereas they were called by him when on earth, he had his call from him when in heaven. Thus does the apostle, being constrained to it by his adversaries, magnify his office, which shows that though men should by no means be proud of any authority they are possessed of, yet at certain times and upon certain occasions it may become needful to assert it. But, 2. He joins all the brethren that were with him in the inscription of the epistle, and writes in their name as well as his own. By *the brethren that were with him* may be understood either the Christians in common of that place where he now was, or such as were employed as ministers of the gospel. These, notwithstanding his own superior character and attainments, he is ready to own as his brethren; and, though he alone wrote the epistle, yet he joins them with himself in the inscription of it. Herein, as he shows his own great modesty and humility, and how remote he was from an assuming temper, so he might do this to dispose these churches to a greater regard to what he

wrote, since hereby it would appear that he had their concurrence with him in the doctrine which he had preached, and was now about to confirm, and that it was no other than what was both published and professed by others as well as himself.

II. To whom this epistle is sent—to *the churches of Galatia*. There were several churches at that time in this country, and it should seem that all of them were more or less corrupted through the arts of those seducers who had crept in among them; and therefore Paul, on whom *came daily the care of all the churches*, being deeply affected with their state, and concerned for their recovery to the faith and establishment in it, writes this epistle to them. He directs it to all of them, as being all more or less concerned in the matter of it; and he gives them the name of *churches*, though they had done enough to forfeit it, for corrupt churches are never allowed to be churches: no doubt there were some among them who still continued in the faith, and he was not without hope that others might be recovered to it.

III. The apostolical benediction, v. 3. Herein the apostle, and the brethren who were with him, wish these churches *grace and peace from God the Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ*. This is the usual blessing wherewith he blesses the churches in the name of the Lord—*grace and peace*. Grace includes God's good-will towards us and his good work upon us; and peace implies in it all that inward comfort, or outward prosperity, which is really needful for us; and they come from God the Father as the fountain, through Jesus Christ as the channel of conveyance. Both these the apostle wishes for these Christians. But we may observe, First grace, and then peace, for there can be no true peace without grace. Having mentioned the Lord Jesus Christ, he cannot pass without enlarging upon his love; and therefore adds (v. 4), *Who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver*, etc. Jesus Christ gave himself for our sins, as a great sacrifice to make atonement for us; this the justice of God required, and to this he freely submitted for our sakes. One great end hereof was *to deliver us from this present evil world*; not only to redeem us from the wrath of God, and the curse of the law, but also to recover us from the corruption that is in the world through lust, and to rescue us from the vicious practices and customs of it, unto which we are naturally enslaved; and possibly also to set us free from the Mosaic constitution, for so *αιονη houtos* is used, 1 Co. 2:6, 8. From this we may note, 1. This present world is an evil world: it has become so by the sin of man, and it is so on account of the sin and sorrow with which it abounds and the many snares and temptations to which we are exposed as long as we continue in it. But, 2. Jesus Christ has died to deliver us from this present evil world, not presently to remove his people out of it, but to rescue them from the power of it, to keep them from the evil of it, and in due time to possess them of another and better world. This, the apostle informs us, he has done *according to the will of God and our Father*. In offering up himself a sacrifice for this end and purpose, he acted by the appointment of the Father, as well as with his own free consent; and therefore we have the greatest reason to depend upon the efficacy and acceptableness of what he has done and suffered for us; yea, hence we have encouragement to look upon God as our Father, for thus the apostle here represents him: as he is the Father of our Lord Jesus, so in and through him he is also the Father of all true believers, as our blessed Saviour himself acquaints us (Jn. 20:17), when he tells his disciples that he was ascending to his Father and their Father.

The apostle, having thus taken notice of the great love wherewith Christ hath loved us, concludes this preface with a solemn ascription of praise and glory to him (v. 5): *To whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen*. Intimating that on this account he is

justly entitled to our highest esteem and regard. Or this doxology may be considered as referring both to God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ, from whom he had just before been wishing grace and peace. They are both the proper objects of our worship and adoration, and all honour and glory are perpetually due to them, both on account of their own infinite excellences, and also on account of the blessings we receive from them.

### Verses 6-9

Here the apostle comes to the body of the epistle; and he begins it with a more general reproof of these churches for their unsteadiness in the faith, which he afterwards, in some following parts of it, enlarges more upon. Here we may observe, I. How much he was concerned at their defection: *I marvel*, etc. It filled him at once with the greatest surprise and sorrow. Their sin and folly were that they did not hold fast the doctrine of Christianity as it had been preached to them, but suffered themselves to be removed from the purity and simplicity of it. And there were several things by which their defection was greatly aggravated; as, 1. That they were *removed from him that had called them*; not only from the apostle, who had been the instrument of calling them into the fellowship of the gospel, but from God himself, by whose order and direction the gospel was preached to them, and they were invited to a participation of the privileges of it: so that herein they had been guilty of a great abuse of his kindness and mercy towards them. 2. That they had been *called into the grace of Christ*. As the gospel which had been preached to them was the most glorious discovery of divine grace and mercy in Christ Jesus; so thereby they had been called to partake of the greatest blessings and benefits, such as justification, and reconciliation with God here, and eternal life and happiness hereafter. These our Lord Jesus has purchased for us at the expense of his precious blood, and freely bestows upon all who sincerely accept of him: and therefore, in proportion to the greatness of the privilege they enjoyed, such were their sin and folly in deserting it and suffering themselves to be drawn off from the established way of obtaining these blessings. 3. That they were *so soon removed*. In a very little time they lost that relish and esteem of this grace of Christ which they seemed to have, and too easily fell in with those who taught justification by the works of the law, as many did, who had been bred up in the opinions and notions of the Pharisees, which they mingled with the doctrine of Christ, and so corrupted it; and this, as it was an instance of their weakness, so it was a further aggravation of their guilt. 4. That they were removed to *another gospel, which yet was not another*. Thus the apostle represents the doctrine of these judaizing teachers; he calls it another gospel, because it opened a different way of justification and salvation from that which was revealed in the gospel, namely, by works, and not by faith in Christ. And yet he adds, "*Which is not another*—you will find it to be no gospel at all—not really another gospel, but the perverting of the gospel of Christ, and the overturning of the foundations of that"—whereby he intimates that those who go about to establish any other way to heaven than what the gospel of Christ has revealed are guilty of a gross perversion of it, and in the issue will find themselves wretchedly mistaken. Thus the apostle endeavours to impress upon these Galatians a due sense of their guilt in forsaking the gospel way of justification; and yet at the same time he tempers his reproof with mildness and tenderness towards them, and represents them as rather drawn into it by the arts and industry of some that troubled them than as coming into it of their own accord, which, though it did not excuse them, yet was some extenuation of their fault. And hereby he teaches us that, in reproofing others, as we should be faithful, so we should also

be gentle, and endeavour *to restore them in the spirit of meekness*, ch. 6:1.

II. How confident he was that the gospel he had preached to them was the only true gospel. He was so fully persuaded of this that he pronounced an anathema upon those who pretended to preach any other gospel (v. 8), and, to let them see that this did not proceed from any rashness or intemperate zeal in him, he repeated it, v. 9. This will not justify our thundering out anathemas against those who differ from us in minor things. It is only against those who forge a new gospel, who overturn the foundation of the covenant of grace, by setting up the works of the law in the place of Christ's righteousness, and corrupting Christianity with Judaism, that Paul denounces this. He puts the case: "Suppose we should preach any other gospel; nay, suppose an angel from heaven should:" not as if it were possible for an angel from heaven to be the messenger of a lie; but it is expressed so the more to strengthen what he was about to say. "If you have any other gospel preached to you by any other person, under our name, or under colour of having it from an angel himself, you must conclude that you are imposed upon: and whoever preaches another gospel lays himself under a curse, and is in danger of laying you under it too."

#### **Verses 10-24**

What Paul had said more generally, in the preface of this epistle, he now proceeds more particularly to enlarge upon. There he had declared himself to be an apostle of Christ; and here he comes more directly to support his claim to that character and office. There were some in the churches of Galatia who were prevailed with to call this in question; for those who preached up the ceremonial law did all they could to lessen Paul's reputation, who preached the pure gospel of Christ to the Gentiles: and therefore he here sets himself to prove the divinity both of his mission and doctrine, that thereby he might wipe off the aspersions which his enemies had cast upon him, and recover these Christians into a better opinion of the gospel he had preached to them. This he gives sufficient evidence of,

I. From the scope and design of his ministry, which was *not to persuade men, but God*, etc. The meaning of this may be either that in his preaching the gospel he did not act in obedience to men, but God, who had called him to this work and office; or that his aim therein was to bring persons to the obedience, not of men, but of God. As he professed to act by a commission from God; so that which he chiefly aimed at was to promote his glory, by recovering sinners into a state of subjection to him. And as this was the great end he was pursuing, so, agreeably hereunto, *he did not seek to please men*. He did not, in his doctrine, accommodate himself to the humours of persons, either to gain their affection or to avoid their resentment; but his great care was to approve himself to God. The judaizing teachers, by whom these churches were corrupted, had discovered a very different temper; they mixed works with faith, and the law with the gospel, only to please the Jews, whom they were willing to court and keep in with, that they might escape persecution. But Paul was a man of another spirit; he was not so solicitous to please them, nor to mitigate their rage against him, as to alter the doctrine of Christ either to gain their favour or to avoid their fury. And he gives this very good reason for it, that, *if he yet pleased men, he would not be the servant of Christ*. These he knew were utterly inconsistent, and that no man could serve two such masters; and therefore, though he would not needlessly displease any, yet he dared not allow himself to gratify men at the expense of his faithfulness to Christ. Thus, from the sincerity of his aims and intentions in the discharge of his office, he proves that he was truly an apostle of Christ. And from

this his temper and behaviour we may note, 1. That the great end which ministers of the gospel should aim at is to bring men to God. 2. That those who are faithful will not seek to please men, but to approve themselves to God. 3. That they must not be solicitous to please men, if they would approve themselves faithful servants to Christ. But, if this argument should not be thought sufficient, he goes on to prove his apostleship,

II. From the manner wherein he received the gospel which he preached to them, concerning which he assures them (v. 11, 12) that he had it not by information from others, but by revelation from heaven. One thing peculiar in the character of an apostle was that he had been called to, and instructed for, this office immediately by Christ himself. And in this he here shows that he was by no means defective, whatever his enemies might suggest to the contrary. Ordinary ministers, as they receive their call to preach the gospel by the mediation of others, so it is by means of the instruction and assistance of others that they are brought to the knowledge of it. But Paul acquaints them that he had his knowledge of the gospel, as well as his authority to preach it, directly from the Lord Jesus: the gospel which he preached was not *after man; he neither received it of man, nor was he taught it by man*, but by immediate inspiration, or revelation from Christ himself. This he was concerned to make out, to prove himself an apostle: and to this purpose,

1. He tells them what his education was, and what, accordingly, his conversation in time past had been, v. 13, 14. Particularly, he acquaints them that he had been brought up in the Jewish religion, and *that he had profited in it above many his equals of his own nation*—that *he had been exceedingly zealous of the traditions of the elders*, such doctrines and customs as had been invented by their fathers, and conveyed down from one generation to another; yea, to such a degree that, in his zeal for them, *he had beyond measure persecuted the church of God, and wasted it*. He had not only been a rejecter of the Christian religion, notwithstanding the many evident proofs that were given of its divine origin; but he had been a persecutor of it too, and had applied himself with the utmost violence and rage to destroy the professors of it. This Paul often takes notice of, for the magnifying of that free and rich grace which had wrought so wonderful a change in him, whereby of so great a sinner he was made a sincere penitent, and from a persecutor had become an apostle. And it was very fit to mention it here; for it would hence appear that he was not led to Christianity, as many others are, purely by education, since he had been bred up in an enmity and opposition to it; and they might reasonably suppose that it must be something very extraordinary which had made so great a change in him, which had conquered the prejudices of his education, and brought him not only to profess, but to preach, that doctrine, which he had before so vehemently opposed.

2. In how wonderful a manner he was turned from the error of his ways, brought to the knowledge and faith of Christ, and appointed to the office of an apostle, v. 15, 16. This was not done in an ordinary way, nor by ordinary means, but in an extraordinary manner; for, (1.) God had *separated him hereunto from his mother's womb*: the change that was wrought in him was in pursuance of a divine purpose concerning him, whereby he was appointed to be a Christian and an apostle, before he came into the world, or had done either good or evil. (2.) he was *called by his grace*. All who are savingly converted are called by the grace of God; their conversion is the effect of his good pleasure concerning them, and is effected by his power and grace in them. But there was something peculiar in the case of Paul, both in the suddenness and in the greatness of the change

wrought in him, and also in the manner wherein it was effected, which was not by the mediation of others, as the instruments of it, but by Christ's personal appearance to him, and immediate operation upon him, whereby it was rendered a more special and extraordinary instance of divine power and favour. (3.) He had Christ *revealed in him*. He was not only revealed to him, but in him. It will but little avail us to have Christ revealed to us if he is not also revealed in us; but this was not the case of Paul. It pleased God *to reveal his Son in him*, to bring him to the knowledge of Christ and his gospel by special and immediate revelation. And, (4.) It was with this design, that he should preach him among the heathen; not only that he should embrace him himself, but preach him to others; so that he was both a Christian and an apostle by revelation.

3. He acquaints them how he behaved himself hereupon, from v. 16, to the end. Being thus called to his work and office, *he conferred not with flesh and blood*. This may be taken more generally, and so we may learn from it that, when God calls us by his grace, we must not consult flesh and blood. But the meaning of it here is that he did not consult men; he did not apply to any others for their advice and direction; *neither did he go up to Jerusalem, to those that were apostles before him*, as though he needed to be approved by them, or to receive any further instructions or authority from them: but, instead of that, he steered another course, and *went into Arabia*, either as a place of retirement proper for receiving further divine revelations, or in order to preach the gospel there among the Gentiles, being appointed to be the apostle of the Gentiles; and thence *he returned again to Damascus*, where he had first begun his ministry, and whence he had with difficulty escaped the rage of his enemies, Acts 9. It was not till *three years after* his conversion that *he went up to Jerusalem, to see Peter*; and when he did so he made but a very short stay with him, no more than *fifteen days*; nor, while he was there, did he go much into conversation; for *others of the apostles he saw none, but James, the Lord's brother*. So that it could not well be pretended that he was indebted to any other either for his knowledge of the gospel or his authority to preach it; but it appeared that both his qualifications for, and his call to, the apostolic office were extraordinary and divine. This account being of importance, to establish his claim to this office, to remove the unjust censures of his adversaries, and to recover the Galatians from the impressions they had received to his prejudice, he confirms it by a solemn oath (v. 20), declaring, as in the presence of God, that what he had said was strictly true, and that he had not in the least falsified in what he had related, which, though it will not justify us in solemn appeals to God upon every occasion, yet shows that, in matters of weight and moment, this may sometimes not only be lawful, but duty. After this he acquaints them that *he came into the regions of Syria and Cilicia*: having made this short visit to Peter, he returns to his work again. He had no communication at that time with the *churches of Christ in Judea*, they had not so much as *seen his face*; but, *having heard that he who persecuted them in times past now preached the faith which he once destroyed, they glorified God* because of him; thanksgivings were rendered by many unto God on that behalf; the very report of this mighty change in him, as it filled them with joy, so it excited them to give glory to God on the account of it.

## Chapter 2

The apostle, in this chapter, continues the relation of his past life and conduct, which he had begun in the former; and, by some further instances of what had passed between him and the other apostles, makes it appear that he was not beholden to them either for his knowledge of the gospel or his authority as an apostle, as his adversaries would insinuate; but, on the contrary, that he was owned and approved even by them, as having an equal commission with them to this office. I. He particularly informs them of another journey which he took to Jerusalem many years after the former, and how he behaved himself at that time (v. 1–10). And, II. Gives them an account of another interview he had with the apostle Peter at Antioch, and how he was obliged to behave himself towards him there. From the subject-matter of that conversation, he proceeds to discourse on the great doctrine of justification by faith in Christ, without the works of the law, which it was the main design of this epistle to establish, and which he enlarges more upon in the two following chapters.

### Verses 1-10

It should seem, by the account Paul gives of himself in this chapter, that, from the very first preaching and planting of Christianity, there was a difference of apprehension between those Christians who had first been Jews and those who had first been Gentiles. Many of those who had first been Jews retained a regard to the ceremonial law, and strove to keep up the reputation of that; but those who had first been Gentiles had no regard to the law of Moses, but took pure Christianity as perfective of natural religion, and resolved to adhere to that. Peter was the apostle to them; and the ceremonial law, though dead with Christ, yet not being as yet buried, he connived at the respect kept up for it. But Paul was the apostle of the Gentiles; and, though he was a Hebrew of the Hebrews, yet he adhered to pure Christianity. Now in this chapter he tells us what passed between him and the other apostles, and particularly between him and Peter hereupon.

In these verses he informs us of another journey which he took to Jerusalem, and of what passed between him and the other apostles there, v. 1–10. Here he acquaints us,

I. With some circumstances relating to this his journey thither. As particularly, 1. With the time of it: that it was not till *fourteen years* after the former (mentioned ch. 1:18), or, as others choose to understand it, from his conversion, or from the death of Christ. It was an instance of the great goodness of God that so useful a person was for so many years preserved in his work. And it was some evidence that he had no dependence upon the other apostles, but had an equal authority with them, that he had been so long absent from them, and was all the while employed in preaching and propagating pure Christianity, without being called into question by them for it, which it may be thought he would have been, had he been inferior to them, and his doctrine disapproved by them. 2. With his companions in it: *he went up with Barnabas, and took with him Titus also*. If the journey here spoken of was the same with that recorded Acts 15 (as many think), then we have a plain reason why Barnabas went along with him; for he was chosen by the Christians at Antioch to be his companion and associate in the affair he went about. But, as it does not appear that Titus was put into the same commission with him, so the chief reason of his taking him along with him seems to have been to let those at Jerusalem see that he was neither ashamed nor afraid to own the doctrine

which he had constantly preached; for though Titus had now become not only a convert to the Christian faith, but a preacher of it too, yet he was by birth a Gentile and uncircumcised, and therefore, by making him his companion, it appeared that their doctrine and practice were of a piece, and that as he had preached the non-necessity of circumcision, and observing the law of Moses, so he was ready to own and converse with those who were uncircumcised. 3. With the reason of it, which was a divine revelation he had concerning it: *he went up by revelation*; not of his own head, much less as being summoned to appear there, but by special order and direction from Heaven. It was a privilege with which this apostle was often favoured to be under a special divine direction in his motions and undertakings; and, though this is what we have no reason to expect, yet it should teach us, in every thing of moment we go about, to endeavour, as far as we are capable, to see our way made plain before us, and to commit ourselves to the guidance of Providence.

II. He gives us an account of his behaviour while he was at Jerusalem, which was such as made it appear that he was not in the least inferior to the other apostles, but that both his authority and qualifications were every way equal to theirs. He particularly acquaints us,

1. That *he there communicated the gospel to them, which he preached among the Gentiles, but privately*, etc. Here we may observe both the faithfulness and prudence of our great apostle. (1.) His faithfulness in giving them a free and fair account of the doctrine which he had all along preached among the Gentiles, and was still resolved to preach that of pure Christianity, free from all mixtures of Judaism. This he knew was a doctrine that would be ungrateful to many there, and yet he was not afraid to own it, but in a free and friendly manner lays it open before them and leaves them to judge whether or no it was not the true gospel of Christ. And yet, (2.) He uses prudence and caution herein, for fear of giving offence. He chooses rather to do it in a more private than in a public way, and *to those that were of reputation*, that is, to the apostles themselves, or to the chief among the Jewish Christians, rather than more openly and promiscuously to all, because, when he came to Jerusalem, *there were multitudes that believed, and yet continued zealous for the law*, Acts 21:20. And the reason of this his caution was *lest he should run, or had run, in vain*, lest he should stir up opposition against himself and thereby either the success of his past labours should be lessened, or his future usefulness be obstructed; for nothing more hinders the progress of the gospel than differences of opinion about the doctrines of it, especially when they occasion quarrels and contentions among the professors of it, as they too usually do. It was enough to his purpose to have his doctrine owned by those who were of greatest authority, whether it was approved by others or not. And therefore, to avoid offence, he judges it safest to communicate it privately to them, and not in public to the whole church. This conduct of the apostle may teach all, and especially ministers, how much need they have of prudence, and how careful they should be to use it upon all occasions, as far as is consistent with their faithfulness.

2. That in his practice he firmly adhered to the doctrine which he had preached. Paul was a man of resolution, and would adhere to his principles; and therefore, though he had Titus with him, who was a Greek, yet he would not suffer him to be circumcised, because he would not betray the doctrine of Christ, as he had preached it to the Gentiles. It does not appear that the apostles at all insisted upon this; for, though they connived at the use of circumcision among the Jewish converts, yet they

were not for imposing it upon the Gentiles. But there were others who did, whom the apostle here calls *false brethren*, and concerning whom he informs us that they were *unawares brought in*, that is, into the church, or into their company, and that they came only to *spy out their liberty which they had in Christ Jesus*, or to see whether Paul would stand up in defence of that freedom from the ceremonial law which he had taught as the doctrine of the gospel, and represented as the privilege of those who embraced the Christian religion. Their design herein was *to bring them into bondage*, which they would have effected could they have gained the point they aimed at; for, had they prevailed with Paul and the other apostles to have circumcised Titus, they would easily have imposed circumcision upon other Gentiles, and so have brought them under the bondage of the law of Moses. But Paul, seeing their design, would by no means yield to them; he would not *give place by subjection, no, not for an hour*, not in this one single instance; and the reason of it was *that the truth of the gospel might continue with them*—that the Gentile Christians, and particularly the Galatians, might have it preserved to them pure and entire, and not corrupted with the mixtures of Judaism, as it would have been had he yielded in this matter. Circumcision was at that time a thing indifferent, and what in some cases might be complied with without sin; and accordingly we find even Paul himself sometimes giving way to it, as in the case of Timothy, Acts 16:3. But when it is insisted on as necessary, and his consenting to it, though only in a single instance, is likely to be improved as giving countenance to such an imposition, he has too great a concern for the purity and liberty of the gospel, to submit to it; he would not yield to those who were for the Mosaic rites and ceremonies, but would stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, which conduct of his may give us occasion to observe that what under some circumstances may lawfully be complied with, yet, when that cannot be done without betraying the truth, or giving up the liberty, of the gospel, it ought to be refused.

3. That, though he conversed with the other apostles, yet he did not receive any addition to his knowledge or authority from them, v. 6. By *those who seemed to be somewhat* he means the other apostles, particularly James, Peter, and John, whom he afterwards mentions by name, v. 9. And concerning these he grants that they were deservedly had in reputation by all, that they were looked upon (and justly too) as pillars of the church, who were set not only for its ornament, but for its support, and that on some accounts they might seem to have the advantage of him, in that they had seen Christ in the flesh, which he had not, and were apostles before him, yea, even while he continued a persecutor. But yet, *whatever they were, it was no matter to him*. This was no prejudice to his being equally an apostle with them; for God does not accept the persons of men on the account of any such outward advantages. As he had called them to this office, so he was at liberty to qualify others for it, and to employ them in it. And it was evident in this case that he had done so; for *in conference they added nothing to him*, they told him nothing but what he before knew by revelation, nor could they except against the doctrine which he communicated to them, whence it appeared that he was not at all inferior to them, but was as much called and qualified to be an apostle as they themselves were.

4. That the issue of this conversation was that the other apostles were fully convinced of his divine mission and authority, and accordingly acknowledged him as their fellow-apostle, v. 7–10. They were not only satisfied with his doctrine, but they saw a divine power attending him, both in preaching it and in working miracles for the confirmation of it: *that he who wrought*

*effectually in Peter to the apostleship of the circumcision, the same was mighty in him towards the Gentiles. And hence they justly concluded that the gospel of the uncircumcision was committed to Paul, as the gospel of the circumcision was to Peter. And therefore, perceiving the grace that was given to him (that he was designed to the honour and office of an apostle as well as themselves) they gave unto him and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship, a symbol whereby they acknowledged their equality with them, and agreed that these should go to the heathen, while they continued to preach to the circumcision, as judging it most agreeable to the mind of Christ, and most conducive to the interest of Christianity, so to divide their work. And thus this meeting ended in an entire harmony and agreement; they approved both Paul's doctrine and conduct, they were fully satisfied in him, heartily embraced him as an apostle of Christ, and had nothing further to add, only that they would remember the poor, which of his own accord he was very forward to do. The Christians of Judea were at that time labouring under great wants and difficulties; and the apostles, out of their compassion to them and concern for them, recommend their case to Paul, that he should use his interest with the Gentile churches to procure a supply for them. This was a reasonable request; for, if the Gentiles were made partakers of their spiritual things, it was their duty to minister to them in carnal things, as Rom. 15:27. And he very readily falls in with it, whereby he showed his charitable and catholic disposition, how ready he was to own the Jewish converts as brethren, though many of them could scarcely allow the like favour to the converted Gentiles, and that mere difference of opinion was no reason with him why he should not endeavour to relieve and help them. Herein he has given us an excellent pattern of Christian charity, and has taught us that we should by no means confine it to those who are just of the same sentiments with us, but be ready to extend it to all whom we have reason to look upon as the disciples of Christ.*

### **Verses 11-21**

I. From the account which Paul gives of what passed between him and the other apostles at Jerusalem, the Galatians might easily discern both the falseness of what his enemies had insinuated against him and their own folly and weakness in departing from that gospel which he had preached to them. But to give the greater weight to what he had already said, and more fully to fortify them against the insinuations of the judaizing teachers, he acquaints them with another interview which he had with the apostle Peter at Antioch, and what passed between them there, v. 11–14. Antioch was one of the chief churches of the Gentile Christians, as Jerusalem was of those Christians who turned from Judaism to the faith of Christ. There is no colour of reason for the supposition that Peter was bishop of Antioch. If he had, surely Paul would not have withstood him in his own church, as we here find he did; but, on the contrary, it is here spoken of as an occasional visit which he made thither. In their other meeting, there had been good harmony and agreement. Peter and the other apostles had both acknowledged Paul's commission and approved his doctrine, and they parted very good friends. But in this Paul finds himself obliged to appose Peter, for *he was to be blamed*, a plain evidence that he was not inferior to him, and consequently of the weakness of the pope's pretence to supremacy and infallibility, as the successor of Peter. Here we may observe,

1. Peter's fault. When he came among the Gentile churches, he complied with them, and did eat with them, though they were not circumcised, agreeably to the instructions which were given in particular to him (Acts 10), when he was warned by the heavenly vision *to call nothing common or unclean*. But, when there came some Jewish Christians from Jerusalem, he grew

more shy of the Gentiles, only to humour those of the circumcision and for fear of giving them offence, which doubtless was to the great grief and discouragement of the Gentile churches. Then *he withdrew, and separated himself*. His fault herein had a bad influence upon others, for *the other Jews also dissembled with him*; though before they might be better disposed, yet now, from his example, they took on them to scruple eating with the Gentiles, and pretended they could not in conscience do it, because they were not circumcised. And (would you think it?) Barnabas himself, one of the apostles of the Gentiles, and one who had been instrumental in planting and watering the churches of the Gentiles, *was carried away with their dissimulation*. Here note, (1.) The weakness and inconstancy of the best of men, when left to themselves, and how apt they are to falter in their duty to God, out of an undue regard to the pleasing of men. And, (2.) The great force of bad examples, especially the examples of great men and good men, such as are in reputation for wisdom and honour.

2. The rebuke which Paul gave him for his fault. Notwithstanding Peter's character, yet, when he observes him thus behaving himself to the great prejudice both of the truth of the gospel and the peace of the church, he is not afraid to reprove him for it. Paul adhered resolutely to his principles, when others faltered in theirs; he was as good a Jew as any of them (for he was a Hebrew of the Hebrews), but he would magnify his office as the apostle of the Gentiles, and therefore would not see them discouraged and trampled upon. *When he saw that they walked not uprightly, according to the truth of the gospel*—that they did not live up to that principle which the gospel taught, and which they had professed to own and embrace, namely, that by the death of Christ the partition-wall between Jew and Gentile was taken down, and the observance of the law of Moses was no longer in force—when he observed this, as Peter's offence was public, so he publicly reproveth him for it: *He said unto him before them all, If thou, being a Jew, livest after the manner of the Gentiles, and not as do the Jews, why compellest thou the Gentiles to live as do the Jews?* Herein one part of his conduct was a contradiction to the other; for if he, who was a Jew, could himself sometimes dispense with the use of the ceremonial law, and live after the manner of the Gentiles, this showed that he did not look upon the observance of it as still necessary, even for the Jews themselves; and therefore that he could not, consistently with his own practice, impose it upon the Gentile Christians. And yet Paul charges him with this, yea, represents him as compelling the Gentiles to live as did the Jews—not by open force and violence, but this was the tendency of what he did; for it was in effect to signify this, that the Gentiles must comply with the Jews, or else not be admitted into Christian communion.

II. Paul having thus established his character and office, and sufficiently shown that he was not inferior to any of the apostles, no, not to Peter himself, from the account of the reproof he gave him he takes occasion to speak of that great fundamental doctrine of the gospel—That justification is only by faith in Christ, and not by the works of the law (though some think that all he says to the end of the chapter is what he said to Peter at Antioch), which doctrine condemned Peter for his symbolizing with the Jews. For, if it was the principle of his religion that the gospel is the instrument of our justification and not the law, then he did very ill in countenancing those who kept up the law, and were for mixing it with faith in the business of our justification. This was the doctrine which Paul had preached among the Galatians, to which he still adhered, and which it is his great business in this epistle to mention and confirm. Now concerning this Paul acquaints us,

1. With the practice of the Jewish Christians themselves: "We," says he, "*who are Jews by nature, and not sinners of the Gentiles* (even we who have been born and bred in the Jewish religion, and not among the impure Gentiles), *knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we ourselves have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law.* And, if we have thought it necessary to seek justification by the faith of Christ, why then should we hamper ourselves with the law? What did we believe in Christ for? Was it not that we might be justified by the faith of Christ? And, if so, is it not folly to go back to the law, and to expect to be justified either by the merit of moral works or the influence of any ceremonial sacrifices or purifications? And if it would be wrong in us who are Jews by nature to return to the law, and expect justification by it, would it not be much more so to require this of the Gentiles, who were never subject to it, since *by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified?*" To give the greater weight to this he adds (v. 17), "*But if, while we seek to be justified by Christ, we ourselves also are found sinners, is Christ the minister of sin?* If, while we seek justification by Christ alone, and teach others to do so, we ourselves are found giving countenance or indulgence to sin, or rather are accounted sinners of the Gentiles, and such as it is not fit to have communion with, unless we also observe the law of Moses, *is Christ the minister of sin?* Will it not follow that he is so, if he engage us to receive a doctrine that gives liberty to sin, or by which we are so far from being justified that we remain impure sinners, and unfit to be conversed with?" This, he intimates, would be the consequence, but he rejects it with abhorrence: "*God forbid,*" says he, "that we should entertain such a thought of Christ, or of his doctrine, that thereby he should direct us into a way of justification that is defective and ineffectual, and leave those who embrace it still unjustified, or that would give the least encouragement to sin and sinners." This would be very dishonourable to Christ, and it would be very injurious to them also. "*For,*" says he (v. 18), "*if I build again the things which I destroyed*—if I (or any other), who have taught that the observance of the Mosaic law is not necessary to justification, should now, by word or practice, teach or intimate that it is necessary—*I make myself a transgressor;* I own myself to be still an impure sinner, and to remain under the guilt of sin, notwithstanding my faith in Christ; or I shall be liable to be charged with deceit and prevarication, and acting inconsistently with myself." Thus does the apostle argue for the great doctrine of justification by faith without the works of the law from the principles and practice of the Jewish Christians themselves, and from the consequences that would attend their departure from it, whence it appeared that Peter and the other Jews were much in the wrong in refusing to communicate with the Gentile Christians, and endeavouring to bring them under the bondage of the law.

2. He acquaints us what his own judgment and practice were. (1.) That he was dead to the law. Whatever account others might make of it, yet, for his part, he was dead to it. He knew that the moral law denounced a curse against all that continue not in all things written therein, to do them; and therefore he was dead to it, as to all hope of justification and salvation that way. And as for the ceremonial law, he also knew that it was now antiquated and superseded by the coming of Christ, and therefore, the substance having come, he had no longer any regard to the shadow. He was thus dead to the law, *through the law itself;* it discovered itself to be at an end. By considering the law itself, he saw that justification was not to be expected by the works of it (since none could perform a perfect obedience to it) and that there was now no further need of the sacrifices and purifications

of it, since they were done away in Christ, and a period was put to them by his offering up himself a sacrifice for us; and therefore, the more he looked into it the more he saw that there was no occasion for keeping up that regard to it which the Jews pleaded for. But, though he was thus *dead to the law*, yet he did not look upon himself as *with law*. He had renounced all hopes of justification by the works of it, and was unwilling any longer to continue under the bondage of it; but he was far from thinking himself discharged from his duty to God; on the contrary, he was dead to the law, *that he might live unto God*. The doctrine of the gospel, which he had embraced, instead of weakening the bond of duty upon him, did but the more strengthen and confirm it; and therefore, though he was dead to the law, yet it was only in order to his living a new and better life to God (as Rom. 7:4, 6), such a life as would be more agreeable and acceptable to God than his observance of the Mosaic law could now be, that is, a life of faith in Christ, and, under the influence thereof, of holiness and righteousness towards God. Agreeably hereunto he acquaints us, (2.) That, as he was dead to the law, so he was alive unto God through Jesus Christ (v. 20): *I am crucified with Christ*, etc. And here in his own person he gives us an excellent description of the mysterious life of a believer. [1.] He is crucified, and yet he lives; the old man is crucified (Rom. 6:6), but the new man is living; he is dead to the world, and dead to the law, and yet alive to God and Christ; sin is mortified, and grace quickened. [2.] *He lives, and yet not he*. This is strange: *I live, and yet not I*; he lives in the exercise of grace; he has the comforts and the triumphs of grace; and yet that grace is not from himself, but from another. Believers see themselves living in a state of dependence. [3.] *He is crucified with Christ*, and yet *Christ lives in him*; this results from his mystical union with Christ, by means of which he is interested in the death of Christ, so as by virtue of that to die unto sin; and yet interested in the life of Christ, so as by virtue of that to live unto God. [4.] *He lives in the flesh*, and yet *lives by faith*; to outward appearance he lives as other people do, his natural life is supported as others are; yet he has a higher and nobler principle that supports and actuates him, that of faith in Christ, and especially as eyeing the wonders of his love in giving himself for him. Hence it is that, though he lives in the flesh, yet he does not live after the flesh. Note, Those who have true faith live by that faith; and the great thing which faith fastens upon is Christ's loving us and giving himself for us. The great evidence of Christ's loving us is his giving himself for us; and this is that which we are chiefly concerned to mix faith with, in order to our living to him.

*Lastly*, The apostle concludes this discourse with acquainting us that by the doctrine of justification by faith in Christ, without the works of the law (which he asserted, and others opposed), he avoided two great difficulties, which the contrary opinion was loaded with:—1. *That he did not frustrate the grace of God*, which the doctrine of the justification by the works of the law did; for, as he argues (Rom. 11:6), *If it be of works, it is no more of grace*. 2. That he did not frustrate the death of Christ; whereas, *if righteousness come by the law*, then it must follow *that Christ has died in vain*; for, if we look for salvation by the law of Moses, then we render the death of Christ needless: for to what purpose should he be appointed to die, if we might have been saved without it?

### Chapter 3

The apostle in this chapter, I. Reproves the Galatians for their folly, in suffering themselves to be drawn away from the faith of the gospel, and endeavours, from several considerations, to impress them with a sense of it. II. He proves the doctrine which he had reprov'd them for departing from—that of justification by faith without the works of the law, 1. From the example of Abraham's justification. 2. From the nature and tenour of the law. 3. From the express testimony of the Old Testament; and, 4. From the stability of the covenant of God with Abraham. Lest any should hereupon say, "Wherefore then serveth the law?" he answers, (1.) It was added because of transgressions. (2.) It was given to convince the world of the necessity of a Saviour. (3.) It was designed as a schoolmaster, to bring us to Christ. And then he concludes the chapter by acquainting us with the privilege of Christians under the gospel state.

#### Verses 1-5

The apostle is here dealing with those who, having embraced the faith of Christ, still continued to seek for justification by the works of the law; that is, who depended upon their own obedience to the moral precepts as their righteousness before God, and, wherein that was defective, had recourse to the legal sacrifices and purifications to make it up. These he first sharply reprov'd, and then endeavours, by the evidence of truth, to convince them. This is the right method, when we reprove any for a fault or an error, to convince them that it is an error, that it is a fault.

He reprov'd them, and the reproof is very close and warm: he calls them *foolish Galatians*, v. 1. Though as Christians they were Wisdom's children, yet as corrupt Christians they were foolish children. Yea, he asks, *Who hath bewitched you?* whereby he represents them as enchanted by the arts and snares of their seducing teachers, and so far deluded as to act very unlike themselves. That wherein their folly and infatuation appeared was that *they did not obey the truth*; that is, they did not adhere to the gospel way of justification, wherein they had been taught, and which they had professed to embrace. Note, It is not enough to know the truth, and to say we believe it, but we must obey it too; we must heartily submit to it, and stedfastly abide by it. Note, also, Those are spiritually bewitched who, when the truth as it is in Jesus is plainly set before them, will not thus obey it. Several things prov'd and aggravated the folly of these Christians.

1. *Jesus Christ had been evidently set forth as crucified among them*; that is, they had had the doctrine of the cross preached to them, and the sacrament of the Lord's supper administered among them, in both which Christ crucified had been set before them. Now, it was the greatest madness that could be for those who had acquaintance with such sacred mysteries, and admittance to such great solemnities, not to obey the truth which was thus published to them, and signed and sealed in that ordinance. Note, The consideration of the honours and privileges we have been admitted to as Christians should shame us out of the folly of apostasy and backsliding.

2. He appeals to the experiences they had had of the working of the Spirit upon their souls (v. 2); he puts them in mind that, upon their becoming Christians, *they had received the Spirit*, that many of them at least had been made partakers not only of the sanctifying influences, but of the miraculous gifts, of the Holy Spirit, which were eminent proofs of the truth of the

Christian religion and the several doctrines of it, and especially of this, that justification is by Christ only, and not by the works of the law, which was one of the peculiar and fundamental principles of it. To convince them of the folly of their departing from this doctrine, he desires to know how they came by these gifts and graces: Was it *by the works of the law*, that is, the preaching of the necessity of these in order to justification? This they could not say, for that doctrine had not then been preached to them, nor had they, as Gentiles, any pretence to justification in that way. Or was it by the *hearing of faith*, that is, the preaching of the doctrine of faith in Christ as the only way of justification? This, if they would say the truth, they were obliged to own, and therefore must be very unreasonable if they should reject a doctrine of the good effects of which they had had such experience. Note, (1.) It is usually by the ministry of the gospel that the Spirit is communicated to persons. And, (2.) Those are very unwise who suffer themselves to be turned away from the ministry and doctrine which have been blessed to their spiritual advantage.

3. He calls upon them to consider their past and present conduct, and thence to judge whether they were not acting very weakly and unreasonably (v. 3, 4): he tells them that *they had begun in the Spirit*, but now were seeking *to be made perfect by the flesh*; they had embraced the doctrine of the gospel, by means of which they had received the Spirit, and wherein only the true way of justification is revealed. And thus they had begun well; but now they were turning to the law, and expected to be advanced to higher degrees of perfection by adding the observance of it to faith in Christ, in order to their justification, which could end in nothing but their shame and disappointment: for this, instead of being an improvement upon the gospel, was really a perversion of it; and, while they sought to be justified in this way, they were so far from being more perfect Christians that they were more in danger of becoming no Christians at all; hereby they were pulling down with one hand what they had built with the other, and undoing what they had hitherto done in Christianity. Yea, he further puts them in mind that they had not only embraced the Christian doctrine, but suffered for it too; and therefore their folly would be the more aggravated, if now they should desert it: for in this case all that they had suffered would be in vain-it would appear that they had been foolish in suffering for what they now deserted, and their sufferings would be altogether in vain, and of no advantage to them. Note, (1.) It is the folly of apostates that they lose the benefit of all they have done in religion, or suffered for it. And, (2.) It is very sad for any to live in an age of services and sufferings, of sabbaths, sermons, and sacraments, in vain; in this case former righteousness shall not be mentioned.

4. He puts them in mind that they had had ministers among them (and particularly himself) who came with a divine seal and commission; for they had *ministered the Spirit to them, and wrought miracles among them*: and he appeals to them whether they did it *by the works of the law or by the hearing of faith*, whether the doctrine that was preached by them, and confirmed by the miraculous gifts and operations of the Spirit, was that of justification by the works of the law or by the faith of Christ; they very well knew that it was not the former, but the latter; and therefore must needs be inexcusable in forsaking a doctrine which had been so signally owned and attested, and exchanging it for one that had received no such attestations.

### **Verses 6-18**

The apostle having reproved the Galatians for not obeying the truth, and endeavoured to impress them with a sense of their

folly herein, in these verses he largely proves the doctrine which he had reproved them for rejecting, namely, that of justification by faith without the works of the law. This he does several ways.

I. From the example of Abraham's justification. This argument the apostle uses, Rom. 4. *Abraham believed God, and that was accounted to him for righteousness* (v. 6); that is, his faith fastened upon the word and promise of God, and upon his believing he was owned and accepted of God as a righteous man: as on this account he is represented as the father of the faithful, so the apostle would have us to know *that those who are of faith are the children of Abraham* (v. 7), not according to the flesh, but according to the promise; and, consequently, that they are justified in the same way that he was. Abraham was justified by faith, and so are they. To confirm this, the apostle acquaints us that the promise made to Abraham (Gen. 12:3), *In thee shall all nations be blessed*, had a reference hereunto, v. 8. The scripture is said to *foresee*, because he that indited the scripture did foresee, that God would justify the heathen world in the way of faith; and therefore in Abraham, that is, in the seed of Abraham, which is Christ, not the Jews only, but the Gentiles also, should be blessed; not only blessed in the seed of Abraham, but blessed as Abraham was, being justified as he was. This the apostle calls *preaching the gospel to Abraham*; and thence infers (v. 9) that *those who are of faith*, that is, true believers, of what nation soever they are, *are blessed with faithful Abraham*. They are blessed with Abraham the father of the faithful, by the promise made to him, and therefore by faith as he was. It was through faith in the promise of God that he was blessed, and it is only in the same way that others obtain this privilege.

II. He shows that we cannot be justified but by faith fastening on the gospel, because the law condemns us. If we put ourselves upon trial in that court, and stand to the sentence of it, we are certainly cast, and lost, and undone; *for as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse*, as many as depend upon the merit of their own works as their righteousness, as plead not guilty, and insist upon their own justification, the cause will certainly go against them; *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*, v. 10, and Deu. 27:26. The condition of life, by the law, is perfect, personal, and perpetual, obedience; the language of it is, *Do this and live*; or, as v. 12, *The man that doeth them shall live in them*: and for every failure herein the law denounces a curse. Unless our obedience be universal, continuing in all things that are written in the book of the law, and unless it be perpetual too (if in any instance at any time we fail and come short), we fall under the curse of the law. The curse is wrath revealed, and ruin threatened: it is a separation unto all evil, and this is in full force, power, and virtue, against all sinners, and therefore against all men; for all have sinned and become guilty before God: and if, as transgressors of the law, we are under the curse of it, it must be a vain thing to look for justification by it. But, though this is not to be expected from the law, yet the apostle afterwards acquaints us that there is a way open to our escaping this curse, and regaining the favour of God, namely, through faith in Christ, who (as he says, v. 13) *hath redeemed us from the curse of the law*, etc. A strange method it was which Christ took to redeem us from the curse of the law; it was *by his being himself made a curse for us*. Being made sin for us, he was made a curse for us; not separated from God, but laid for the present under that infamous token of the divine displeasure upon which the law of Moses had put a particular brand, Deu. 21:23. The design of this was *that the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus*

*Christ*—that all who believed on Christ, whether Jews or Gentiles, might become heirs of Abraham's blessing, and particularly of that great promise of the Spirit, which was peculiarly reserved for the times of the gospel. Hence it appeared that it was not by putting themselves under the law, but by faith in Christ, that they become the people of God and heirs of the promise. Here note, 1. The misery which as sinners we are sunk into—we are under the curse and condemnation of the law. 2. The love and grace of our Lord Jesus Christ towards us—he has submitted to be made a curse for us, that he might redeem us from the curse of the law. 3. The happy prospect which we now have through him, not only of escaping the curse, but of inheriting the blessing. And, 4. That it is only through faith in him that we can hope to obtain this favour.

III. To prove that justification is by faith, and not by the works of the law, the apostle alleges the express testimony of the Old Testament, v. 11. The place referred to is Habak. 2:4, where it is said, *The just shall live by faith*; it is again quoted, Rom. 1:17, and Heb. 10:38. The design of it is to show that those only are just or righteous who do truly live, who are freed from death and wrath, and restored into a state of life in the favour of God; and that it is only through faith that persons become righteous, and as such obtain this life and happiness—that they are accepted of God, and enabled to live to him now, and are entitled to an eternal life in the enjoyment of him hereafter. Hence the apostle says, *It is evident that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God*. Whatever he may be in the account of others, yet he is not so in the sight of God; for *the law is not of faith*—that says nothing concerning faith in the business of justification, nor does it give life to those who believe; but the language of it is, *The man that doeth them shall live in them*, as Lev. 18:5. It requires perfect obedience as the condition of life, and therefore now can by no means be the rule of our justification. This argument of the apostle's may give us occasion to remark that justification by faith is no new doctrine, but what was established and taught in the church of God long before the times of the gospel. Yea, it is the only way wherein any sinners ever were, or can be, justified.

IV. To this purpose the apostle urges the stability of the covenant which God made with Abraham, which was not vacated nor disannulled by the giving of the law to Moses, v. 15, etc. Faith had the precedence of the law, for Abraham was justified by faith. It was a promise that he built upon, and promises are the proper objects of faith. God entered into covenant with Abraham (v. 8), and this covenant was firm and steady; even men's covenants are so, and therefore much more his. When a deed is executed, or articles of agreement are sealed, both parties are bound, and it is too late then to settle things otherwise; and therefore it is not to be supposed that by the subsequent law the covenant of God should be vacated. The original word *diatheukē* signifies both a covenant and a testament. Now the promise made to Abraham was rather a testament than a covenant. When a testament has become of force by the death of the testator, it is not capable of being altered; and therefore, the promise that was given to Abraham being of the nature of a testament, it remains firm and unalterable. But, if it should be said that a grant or testament may be defeated for want of persons to claim the benefit of it (v. 16), he shows that there is no danger of that in this case. Abraham is dead, and the prophets are dead, but the covenant is made with Abraham and his seed. And he gives us a very surprising exposition of this. We should have thought it had been meant only of the people of the Jews. "Nay," says the apostle, "it is in the singular number, and points at a single person—*that seed is Christ*," So that the covenant is still in force; for Christ abideth for ever in his person, and in his spiritual seed, who are his by faith. And if it be objected that

the law which was given by Moses did disannul this covenant, because that insisted so much upon works, and there was so little in it of faith or of the promised Messiah, he answers that the subsequent law could not disannul the previous covenant or promise (v. 18): *If the inheritance be of the law, it is no more of promise; but, says he, God gave it to Abraham by promise, and therefore it would be inconsistent with his holiness, wisdom, and faithfulness, by any subsequent act to set aside the promise, and so alter the way of justification which he had thus established. If the inheritance was given to Abraham by promise, and thereby entailed upon his spiritual seed, we may be sure that God would not retract that promise; for he is not a man that he should repent.*

### **Verses 19-29**

The apostle having just before been speaking of the promise made to Abraham, and representing that as the rule of our justification, and not the law, lest they should think he did too much derogate from the law, and render it altogether useless, he thence takes occasion to discourse of the design and tendency of it, and to acquaint us for what purposes it was given. It might be asked, "If that promise be sufficient for salvation, wherefore then serveth the law? Or, Why did God give the law by Moses?" To this he answers,

I. The law *was added because of transgressions*, v. 19. It was not designed to disannul the promise, and to establish a different way of justification from that which was settled by the promise; but *it was added* to it, annexed on purpose to be subservient to it, and it was so *because of transgressions*. The Israelites, though they were chosen to be God's peculiar people, were sinners as well as others, and therefore the law was given to convince them of their sin, and of their obnoxiousness to the divine displeasure on the account of it; *for by the law is the knowledge of sin* (Rom. 3:20), and *the law entered that sin might abound*, Rom. 5:20. And it was also intended to restrain them from the commission of sin, to put an awe upon their minds, and be a curb upon their lusts, that they should not run into that excess of riot to which they were naturally inclined; and yet at the same time it was designed to direct them to the true and only way whereby sin was to be expiated, and wherein they might obtain the pardon of it; namely, through the death and sacrifice of Christ, which was the special use for which the law of sacrifices and purifications was given.

The apostle adds that the law was given for this purpose *till the seed should come to whom the promise was made*; that is, either till Christ should come (the principle seed referred to in the promise, as he had before shown), or till the gospel dispensation should take place, when Jews and Gentiles, without distinction, should, upon believing, become the seed of Abraham. The law was added because of transgressions, till this fulness of time, or this complete dispensation, should come. But when the seed came, and a fuller discovery of divine grace in the promise was made, then the law, as given by Moses, was to cease; that covenant, being found faulty, was to give place to another, and a better, Heb. 8:7, 8. And though the law, considered as the law of nature, is always in force, and still continues to be of use to convince men of sin and to restrain them from it, yet we are now no longer under the bondage and terror of that legal covenant. The law then was not intended to discover another way of justification, different from that revealed by the promise, but only to lead men to see their need of the promise, by showing them the sinfulness of sin, and to point them to Christ, through whom alone they could be pardoned and

justified.

As a further proof that the law was not designed to vacate the promise, the apostle adds, *It was ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator*. It was given to different persons, and in a different manner from the promise, and therefore for different purposes. The promise was made to Abraham, and all his spiritual seed, including believers of all nations, even of the Gentiles as well as the Jews; but the law was given to the Israelites as a peculiar people, and separated from the rest of the world. And, whereas the promise was given immediately by God himself, the law was given *by the ministry of angels, and the hand of a mediator*. Hence it appeared that the law could not be designed to set aside the promise; for (v. 20), *A mediator is not a mediator of one*, of one party only; *but God is one*, but one party in the promise or covenant made with Abraham: and therefore it is not to be supposed that by a transaction which passed only between him and the nation of the Jews he should make void a promise which he had long before made to Abraham and all his spiritual seed, whether Jews or Gentiles. This would not have been consistent with his wisdom, nor with his truth and faithfulness. Moses was only a mediator between God and the spiritual seed of Abraham; and therefore the law that was given by him could not affect the promise made to them, much less be subversive of it.

II. The law was given to convince men of the necessity of a Saviour. The apostle asks (v. 21), as what some might be willing to object, *"Is the law then against the promises of God? Do they really clash and interfere with each other? Or do you not set the covenant with Abraham, and the law of Moses, at variance with one another?"* To this he answers, *God forbid*; he was far from entertaining such a thought, nor could it be inferred from what he had said. The law is by no means inconsistent with the promise, but subservient to it, as the design of it is to discover men's transgressions, and to show them the need they have of a better righteousness than that of the law. That consequence would much rather follow from their doctrine than from his; *for, if there had been a law given that could have given life, verily righteousness would have been by the law*, and in that case the promise would have been superseded and rendered useless. But that in our present state could not be, *for the scripture hath concluded all under sin* (v. 22), or declared that all, both Jew and Gentile, are in a state of guilt, and therefore unable to attain to righteousness and justification by the works of the law. The law discovered their wounds, but could not afford them a remedy: it showed that they were guilty, because it appointed sacrifices and purifications, which were manifestly insufficient to take away sin: and therefore the great design of it was *that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to those that believe*, that being convinced of their guilt, and the insufficiency of the law to effect a righteousness for them, they might be persuaded to believe on Christ, and so obtain the benefit of the promise.

III. The law was designed for *a schoolmaster, to bring men to Christ*, v. 24. In the foregoing verse, the apostle acquaints us with the state of the Jews under the Mosaic economy, that *before faith came*, or before Christ appeared and the doctrine of justification by faith in him was more fully discovered, *they were kept under the law*, obliged, under severe penalties, to a strict observance of the various precepts of it; and at that time they were shut up, held under the terror and discipline of it, as prisoners in a state of confinement: the design of this was that hereby they might be disposed more readily to embrace *the faith which should afterwards be revealed*, or be persuaded to accept Christ when he came into the world, and to fall in with that

better dispensation he was to introduce, whereby they were to be freed from bondage and servitude, and brought into a state of greater light and liberty. Now, in that state, he tells them, *the law was their schoolmaster, to bring them to Christ, that they might be justified by faith*. As it declared the mind and will of God concerning them, and at the same time denounced a curse against them for every failure in their duty, so it was proper to convince them of their lost and undone condition in themselves, and to let them see the weakness and insufficiency of their own righteousness to recommend them to God. And as it obliged them to a variety of sacrifices, etc., which, though they could not of themselves take away sin, were typical of Christ, and of the great sacrifice which he was to offer up for the expiation of it, so it directed them (though in a more dark and obscure manner) to him as their only relief and refuge. And thus it was their schoolmaster, to instruct and govern them in their state of minority, or, as the word *paidagogos* most properly signifies, their *servant*, to lead and conduct them to Christ (as children were wont to be led to school by those servants who had the care of them); that they might be more fully instructed by him as their schoolmaster, in the true way of justification and salvation, which is only by faith in him, and of which he was appointed to give the fullest and clearest discoveries. But lest it should be said, If the law was of this use and service under the Jewish, why may it not continue to be so under the Christian state too, the apostle adds (v. 25) that *after faith has come*, and the gospel dispensation has taken place, under which Christ, and the way of pardon and life through faith in him, are set in the clearest light, *we are no longer under a schoolmaster*—we have no such need of the law to direct us to him as there was then. Thus the apostle acquaints us for what uses and purposes the law served; and, from what he says concerning this matter, we may observe,

1. The goodness of God to his people of old, in giving the law to them; for though, in comparison of the gospel state, it was a dispensation of darkness and terror, yet it furnished them with sufficient means and helps both to direct them in their duty to God and to encourage their hopes in him.
2. The great fault and folly of the Jews, in mistaking the design of the law, and abusing it to a very different purpose from that which God intended in the giving of it; for they expected to be justified by the works of it, whereas it was never designed to be the rule of their justification, but only a means of convincing them of their guilt and of their need of a Saviour, and of directing them to Christ, and faith in him, as the only way of obtaining this privilege. See Rom. 9:31, 32; 10:3, 4.
3. The great advantage of the gospel state above the legal, under which we not only enjoy a clearer discovery of divine grace and mercy than was afforded to the Jews of old, but are also freed from the state of bondage and terror under which they were held. We are not now treated as children in a state of minority, but as sons grown up to a full age, who are admitted to greater freedoms, and instated in larger privileges, than they were. This the apostle enlarges upon in the following verses. For, having shown for what intent the law was given, in the close of the chapter he acquaints us with our privilege by Christ, where he particularly declares,  
(1.) That *we are the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus*, v. 26. And here we may observe, [1.] The great and excellent privilege which real Christians enjoy under the gospel: *They are the children of God*; they are no longer accounted servants, but *sons*; they are not now kept at such a distance, and under such restraints, as the Jews were, but are allowed a nearer and

freer access to God than was granted to them; yea, they are admitted into the number, and have a right to all the privileges, of his children. [2.] How they come to obtain this privilege, and that is *by faith in Christ Jesus*. Having accepted him as their Lord and Saviour, and relying on him alone for justification and salvation, they are hereupon admitted into this happy relation to God, and are entitled to the privileges of it; for (Jn. 1:12) *as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to those that believe on his name*. And this faith in Christ, whereby they became the children of God, he reminds us (v. 27), was what they professed in baptism; for he adds, *As many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ*. Having in baptism professed their faith in him, they were thereby devoted to him, and had, as it were, put on his livery, and declared themselves to be his servants and disciples; and having thus become the members of Christ, they were through him owned and accounted as the children of God. Here note, *First*, Baptism is now the solemn rite of our admission into the Christian church, as circumcision was into that of the Jews. Our Lord Jesus appointed it to be so, in the commission he gave to his apostles (Mt. 28:19), and accordingly it was their practice to baptize those whom they had discipled to the Christian faith; and perhaps the apostle might take notice of their baptism here, and of their becoming the children of God through faith in Christ, professed therein, to obviate a further objection, which the false teachers might be apt to urge in favour of circumcision. They might be ready to say, "Though it should be allowed that the law, as given at mount Sinai, was abrogated by the coming of Christ the promised seed, yet why should circumcision be set aside too, when that was given to Abraham together with the promise, and long before the giving of the law by Moses?" But this difficulty is sufficiently removed when the apostle says, *Those who are baptized into Christ have put on Christ*; for thence it appears that under the gospel baptism comes in the room of circumcision, and that those who by baptism are devoted to Christ, and do sincerely believe in him, are to all intents and purposes as much admitted into the privileges of the Christian state as the Jews were by circumcision into those of the legal (Phil. 3:3), and therefore there was no reason why the use of that should still be continued. Note, *Secondly*, In our baptism we put on Christ; therein we profess our discipleship to him, and are obliged to behave ourselves as his faithful servants. Being baptized into Christ, we are baptized into his death, that as he died and rose again, so, in conformity thereunto, we should die unto sin, and walk in newness of life (Rom. 6:3, 4); it would be of great advantage to us did we oftener remember this.

(2.) That this privilege of being the children of God, and of being by baptism devoted to Christ, is now enjoyed in common by all real Christians. The law indeed made a difference between Jew and Greek, giving the Jews on many accounts the pre-eminence: that also made a difference between *bond and free*, master and servant, and between *male and female*, the males being circumcised. But it is not so now; they all stand on the same level, *and are all one in Christ Jesus*; as the one is not accepted on the account of any national or personal advantages he may enjoy above the other, so neither is the other rejected for the want of them; but all who sincerely believe on Christ, of what nation, or sex, or condition, soever they be, are accepted of him, and become the children of God through faith in him.

(3.) That, *being Christ's, we are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise*. Their judaizing teachers would have them believe that they must be circumcised and keep the law of Moses, or they could not be saved: "No," says the apostle, "there is no need of that; for *if you be Christ's*, if you sincerely believe on him, who is the promised seed, in whom all the

nations of the earth were to be blessed, you therefore become the true *seed of Abraham*, the father of the faithful, and as such *are heirs according to the promise*, and consequently are entitled to the great blessings and privileges of it." And therefore upon the whole, since it appeared that justification was not to be attained by the works of the law, but only by faith in Christ, and that the law of Moses was a temporary institution and was given for such purposes as were only subservient to and not subversive of the promise, and that now, under the gospel, Christians enjoy much greater and better privileges than the Jews did under that dispensation, it must needs follow that they were very unreasonable and unwise, in hearkening to those who at once endeavoured to deprive them of the truth and liberty of the gospel.

## Chapter 4

The apostle, in this chapter, is still carrying on the same general design as in the former—to recover these Christians from the impressions made upon them by the judaizing teachers, and to represent their weakness and folly in suffering themselves to be drawn away from the gospel doctrine of justification, and to be deprived of their freedom from the bondage of the law of Moses. For this purpose he makes use of various considerations; such as, I. The great excellence of the gospel state above the legal (v. 1-7). II. The happy change that was made in them at their conversion (v. 8–11). III. The affection they had had for him and his ministry (v. 12–16). IV. The character of the false teachers by whom they had been perverted (v. 17, 18). V. The very tender affection he had for them (v. 19, 20). VI. The history of Isaac and Ishmael, by a comparison taken from which he illustrates the difference between such as rested in Christ and such as trusted in the law. And in all these, as he uses great plainness and faithfulness with them, so he expresses the tenderest concern for them.

### Verses 1-7

In this chapter the apostle deals plainly with those who hearkened to the judaizing teachers, who cried up the law of Moses in competition with the gospel of Christ, and endeavored to bring them under the bondage of it. To convince them of their folly, and to rectify their mistake herein, in these verses he prosecutes the comparison of a child under age, which he had touched upon in the foregoing chapter, and thence shows what great advantages we have now, under the gospel, above what they had under the law. And here.

I. He acquaints us with the state of the Old-Testament church: it was like a child under age, and it was used accordingly, being kept in a state of darkness and bondage, in comparison of the greater light and liberty which we enjoy under the gospel. That was indeed a dispensation of grace, and yet it was comparatively a dispensation of darkness; for as the heir, in his minority, is *under tutors and governors till the time appointed of his father*, by whom he is educated and instructed in those things which at present he knows little of the meaning of, though afterwards they are likely to be of great use to him; so it was with the Old-Testament church—the Mosaic economy, which they were under, was what they could not fully understand the meaning of; for, as the apostle says (2 Co. 3:13), *They could not stedfastly look to the end of that which is abolished*. But to the church, when grown up to maturity, in gospel days, it becomes of great use. And as that was a dispensation of darkness, so of bondage too; for *they were in bondage under the elements of the world*, being tied to a great number of burdensome rites and observances, by which, as by a kind of first rudiments, they were taught and instructed, and whereby they were kept in a state of subjection, like a child under tutors and governors. The church then lay more under the character of *a servant*, being obliged to do every thing according to the command of God, without being fully acquainted with the reason of it; but the service under the gospel appears to be more reasonable than that was. The time appointed of the Father having come, when the church was to arrive at its full age, the darkness and bondage under which it before lay are removed, and we are under a dispensation of greater light and liberty.

II. He acquaints us with the much happier state of Christians under the gospel-dispensation, v. 4-7. *When the fulness of time*

*had come*, the time appointed of the Father, when he would put an end to the legal dispensation, and set up another and a better in the room of it, *he sent forth his Son*, etc. The person who was employed to introduce this new dispensation was no other than the Son of God himself, the only-begotten of the Father, who, as he had been prophesied of and promised from the foundation of the world, so in due time he was manifested for this purpose. He, in pursuance of the great design he had undertaken, submitted to be *made of a woman*—there is his incarnation; and to be *made under the law*—there is his subjection. He who was truly God for our sakes became man; and he who was Lord of all consented to come into a state of subjection and to take upon him the form of a servant; and one great end of all this was *to redeem those that were under the law*—to save us from that intolerable yoke and to appoint gospel ordinances more rational and easy. He had indeed something more and greater in his view, in coming into the world, than merely to deliver us from the bondage of the ceremonial law; for he came in our nature, and consented to suffer and die for us, that hereby he might redeem us from the wrath of God, and from the curse of the moral law, which, as sinners, we all lay under. But that was one end of it, and a mercy reserved to be bestowed at the time of his manifestation; then the more servile state of the church was to come to a period, and a better to succeed in the place of it; for he was sent to redeem us, *that we might receive the adoption of sons*—that we might no longer be accounted and treated as servants, but as sons grown up to maturity, who are allowed greater freedoms, and admitted to larger privileges, than while they were under tutors and governors. This the course of the apostle's argument leads us to take notice of, as one thing intended by this expression, though no doubt it may also be understood as signifying that gracious adoption which the gospel so often speaks of as the privilege of those who believe in Christ. Israel was God's son, his first-born, Rom. 9:4. But now, under the gospel, particular believers receive the adoption; and, as an earnest and evidence of it, they have together therewith the Spirit of adoption, putting them upon the duty of prayer, and enabling them in prayer to eye God as a Father (v. 6): *Because you are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying Abba, Father*. And hereupon (v. 7) the apostle concludes this argument by adding, *Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son; and, if a son, then an heir of God through Christ*; that is, Now, under the gospel state, we are no longer under the servitude of the law, but, upon our believing in Christ, become the sons of God; we are thereupon accepted of him, and adopted by him; and, being the sons, we are also heirs of God, and are entitled to the heavenly inheritance (as he also reasons Rom. 8:17), and therefore it must needs be the greatest weakness and folly to turn back to the law, and to seek justification by the works of it. From what the apostle says in these verses, we may observe,

1. The wonders of divine love and mercy towards us, particularly of God the Father, in sending his Son into the world to redeem and save us,—of the Son of God, in submitting so low, and suffering so much, for us, in pursuance of that design,—and of the Holy Spirit, in condescending to dwell in the hearts of believers for such gracious purposes.
2. The great and invaluable advantages which Christians enjoy under the gospel; for, (1.) *We receive the adoption of sons*. Whence note, It is the great privilege which believers have through Christ that they are adopted children of the God of heaven. We who by nature are children of wrath and disobedience have become by grace children of love. (2.) *We receive the Spirit of adoption*. Note, [1.] All who have the privilege of adoption have the Spirit of adoption—all who are received into the number

partake of the nature of the children of God; for he will have all his children to resemble him. [2.] The Spirit of adoption is always the Spirit of prayer, and it is our duty in prayer to eye God as a Father. Christ has taught us in prayer to eye God as our Father in heaven. [3.] If we are his sons, then his heirs. It is not so among men, with whom the eldest son is heir; but all God's children are heirs. Those who have the nature of sons shall have the inheritance of sons.

### Verses 8-11

In these verses the apostle puts them in mind of what they were before their conversion to the faith of Christ, and what a blessed change their conversion had made upon them; and thence endeavours to convince them of their great weakness in hearkening to those who would bring them under the bondage of the law of Moses.

I. He reminds them of their past state and behaviour, and what they were before the gospel was preached to them. Then *they knew not God*; they were grossly ignorant of the true God, and the way wherein he is to be worshipped: and at that time they were under the worst of slaveries, for *they did service to those which by nature were no gods*, they were employed in a great number of superstitious and idolatrous services to those who, though they were accounted gods, were yet really no gods, but mere creatures, and perhaps of their own making, and therefore were utterly unable to hear and help them. Note, 1. Those who are ignorant of the true God cannot but be inclined to false gods. Those who forsook the God who made the world, rather than be without gods, worshipped such as they themselves made. 2. Religious worship is due to none but to him who is by nature God; for, when the apostle blames the doing service to such as by nature were no gods, he plainly shows that he only who is by nature God is the proper object of our religious worship.

II. He calls upon them to consider the happy change that was made in them by the preaching of the gospel among them. Now *they had known God* (they were brought to the knowledge of the true God and of his Son Jesus Christ, whereby they were recovered out of the ignorance and bondage under which they before lay) *or rather were known of God*; this happy change in their state, whereby they were turned from idols to the living God, and through Christ had received the adoption of sons, was not owing to themselves, but to him; it was the effect of his free and rich grace towards them, and as such they ought to account it; and therefore hereby they were laid under the greater obligation to adhere to the liberty wherewith he had made them free. Note, All our acquaintance with God begins with him; we know him, because we are known of him.

III. Hence he infers the unreasonableness and madness of their suffering themselves to be brought again into a state of bondage. He speaks of it with surprise and deep concern of mind that such as they should do so: *How turn you again*, etc., says he, v. 9. "How is it that you, who have been taught to worship God in the gospel way, should not be persuaded to comply with the ceremonial way of worship? that you, who have been acquainted with a dispensation of light, liberty, and love, as that of the gospel is, should now submit to a dispensation of darkness, and bondage, and terror, as that of the law is?" This they had the less reason for, since they had never been under the law of Moses, as the Jews had been; and therefore on this account they were more inexcusable than the Jews themselves, who might be supposed to have some fondness for that which had been of such long standing among them. Besides, what they suffered themselves to be brought into bondage to were but *weak and beggarly elements*, such things as had no power in them to cleanse the soul, nor to afford any solid satisfaction to the mind, and

which were only designed for that state of pupillage under which the church had been, but which had now come to a period; and therefore their weakness and folly were the more aggravated, in submitting to them, and in symbolizing with the Jews in observing their various festivals, here signified by *days, and months, and times, and years*. Here note, 1. It is possible for those who have made great professions of religion to be afterwards drawn into very great defections from the purity and simplicity of it, for this was the case of these Christians. And, 2. The more mercy God has shown to any, in bringing them into an acquaintance with the gospel, and the liberties and privileges of it, the greater are their sin and folly in suffering themselves to be deprived of them; for this the apostle lays a special stress upon, that after they had known God, or rather were known of him, they desired to be in bondage under the weak and beggarly elements of the law.

IV. Hereupon he expresses his fears concerning them, *lest he had bestowed on them labour in vain*. He had been at a great deal of pains about them, in preaching the gospel to them, and endeavouring to confirm them in the faith and liberty of it; but now they were giving up these, and thereby rendering his labour among them fruitless and ineffectual, and with the thoughts of this he could not but be deeply affected. Note, 1. A great deal of the labour of faithful ministers is labour in vain; and, when it is so, it cannot but be a great grief to those who desire the salvation of souls. Note, 2. The labour of ministers is in vain upon those who begin in the Spirit and end in the flesh, who, though they seem to set out well, yet afterwards turn aside from the way of the gospel. Note, 3. Those will have a great deal to answer for upon whom the faithful ministers of Jesus Christ bestow labour in vain.

#### **Verses 12-16**

That these Christians might be the more ashamed of their defection from the truth of the gospel which Paul had preached to them, he here reminds them of the great affection they formerly had for him and his ministry, and puts them upon considering how very unsuitable their present behaviour was to what they then professed. And here we may observe,

I. How affectionately he addresses himself to them. He styles them brethren, though he knew their hearts were in a great measure alienated from him. He desires that all resentments might be laid aside, and that they would bear the same temper of mind towards him which he did to them; he would have them *to be as he was, for he was as they were*, and moreover tells them that *they had not injured him at all*. He had no quarrel with them upon his own account. Though, in blaming their conduct, he had expressed himself with some warmth and concern of mind he assured them that it was not owing to any sense of personal injury or affront (as they might be ready to think), but proceeded wholly from a zeal for the truth and purity of the gospel, and their welfare and happiness. Thus he endeavours to mollify their spirits towards him, that so they might be the better disposed to receive the admonitions he was giving them. Hereby he teaches us that in reproofing others we should take care to convince them that our reproofs do not proceed from any private pique or resentment, but from a sincere regard to the honour of God and religion and their truest welfare; for they are then likely to be most successful when they appear to be most disinterested.

II. How he magnifies their former affection to him, that hereby they might be the more ashamed of their present behaviour towards him. To this purpose, 1. He puts them in mind of the difficulty under which he laboured when he came first among

them: *I knew, says he, how, through infirmity of the flesh, I preached the gospel unto you at the first.* What this *infirmity of the flesh* was, which in the following words he expresses by *his temptation that was in his flesh* (though, no doubt, it was well known to those Christians to whom he wrote), we can now have no certain knowledge of: some take it to have been the persecutions which he suffered for the gospel's sake; others, to have been something in his person, or manner of speaking, which might render his ministry less grateful and acceptable, referring to 2 Co. 10:10, and to ch. 12:7–10. But, whatever it was, it seems it made no impression on them to his disadvantage. For, 2. He takes notice that, notwithstanding this his infirmity (which might possibly lessen him in the esteem of some others), they did not despise nor reject him on the account of it, but, on the contrary, *received him as an angel of God, even as Christ Jesus.* They showed a great deal of respect to him, he was a welcome messenger to them, even as though an angel of God or Jesus Christ himself had preached to them; yea, so great was their esteem of him, that, if it would have been any advantage to him, *they could have plucked out their own eyes, and have given them to him.* Note, How uncertain the respects of people are, how apt they are to change their minds, and how easily they are drawn into contempt of those for whom they once had the greatest esteem and affection, so that they are ready to pluck out the eyes of those for whom they would before have plucked out their own! We should therefore labour to be accepted of God, *for it is a small thing to be judged of man's judgment,* 1 Co. 4:3.

III. How earnestly he expostulates with them hereupon: *Where is then, says he, the blessedness you spoke of?* As if he had said, "Time was when you expressed the greatest joy and satisfaction in the glad tidings of the gospel, and were very forward in pouring out your blessings upon me as the publisher of them; whence is it that you are now so much altered, that you have so little relish of them or respect for me? You once thought yourselves happy in receiving the gospel; have you now any reason to think otherwise?" Note, Those who have left their first love would do well to consider, Where is now the blessedness they once spoke of? What has become of that pleasure they used to take in communion with God, and in the company of his servants? The more to impress upon them a just shame of their present conduct, he again asks (v. 16), *"Am I become your enemy, because I tell you the truth?"* How is it that I, who was heretofore your favourite, am now accounted your enemy? Can you pretend any other reason for it than that I have told you the truth, endeavoured to acquaint you with, and to confirm you in, the truth of the gospel? And, if not, how unreasonable must your disaffection be!" Note, 1. It is no uncommon thing for men to account those their enemies who are really their best friends; for so, undoubtedly, those are, whether ministers or others, who tell them the truth, and deal freely and faithfully with them in matters relating to their eternal salvation, as the apostle now did with these Christians. 2. Ministers may sometimes create enemies to themselves by the faithful discharge of their duty; for this was the case of Paul, he was accounted their enemy for telling them the truth. 3. Yet ministers must not forbear speaking the truth, for fear of offending others and drawing their displeasure upon them. 4. They may be easy in their own minds, when they are conscious to themselves that, if others have become their enemies, it is only for telling them the truth.

### **Verses 17-18**

The apostle is still carrying on the same design as in the foregoing verse, which was, to convince the Galatians of their sin and folly in departing from the truth of the gospel: having just before been expostulating with them about the change of their

behaviour towards him who endeavoured to establish them in it, he here gives them the character of those false teachers who made it their business to draw them away from it, which if they would attend to, they might soon see how little reason they had to hearken to them: whatever opinion they might have of them, he tells them they were designing men, who were aiming to set up themselves, and who, under their specious pretences, were more consulting their own interest than theirs: "*They zealously affect you,*" says he; "they show a mighty respect for you, and pretend a great deal of affection to you, *but not well*; they do it not with any good design, they are not sincere and upright in it, for *they would exclude you, that you might affect them*. That which they are chiefly aiming at is to engage your affections to them; and, in order to this, they are doing all they can to draw off your affections from me and from the truth, that so they may engross you to themselves." This, he assures them, was their design, and therefore they must needs be very unwise in hearkening to them. Note, 1. There may appear to be a great deal of zeal where yet there is but little truth and sincerity. 2. It is the usual way of seducers to insinuate themselves into people's affections, and by that means to draw them into their opinions. 3. Whatever pretences such may make, they have usually more regard to their own interest than that of others, and will not stick at ruining the reputation of others, if by that means they can raise their own. On this occasion the apostle gives us that excellent rule which we have, v. 18, *It is good to be zealously affected always in a good thing*. What our translation renders *in a good man*, and so consider the apostle as pointing to himself; this sense, they think, is favoured both by the preceding context and also by the words immediately following, *and not only when I am present with you*, which may be as if he had said, "Time was when you were zealously affected towards me; you once took me for a good man, and have now no reason to think otherwise of me; surely then it would become you to show the same regard to me, now that I am absent from you, which you did when I was present with you." But, if we adhere to our own translation, the apostle here furnishes us with a very good rule to direct and regulate us in the exercise of our zeal: there are two things which to this purpose he more especially recommends to us:—(1.) That it be exercised only upon that which is good; for zeal is then only good when it is in a good thing: those who are zealously affected to that which is evil will thereby only to do so much the more hurt. And, (2.) That herein it be constant and steady: it is good to be zealous always in a good thing; not for a time only, or now and then, like the heat of an ague-fit, but, like the natural heat of the body, constant. Happy would it be for the church of Christ if this rule were better observed among Christians!

### **Verses 19-20**

That the apostle might the better dispose these Christians to bear with him in the reproofs which he was obliged to give them, he here expresses his great affection to them, and the very tender concern he had for their welfare: he was not like them—one thing when among them and another when absent from them. Their disaffection to him had not removed his affection from them; but he still bore the same respect to them which he had formerly done, nor was he like their false teachers, who pretended a great deal of affection to them, when at the same time they were only consulting their own interest; but he had a sincere concern for their truest advantage; he sought not theirs, but them. They were too ready to account him their enemy, but he assures them that he was their friend; nay, not only so, but that he had the bowels of a parent towards them. He calls them *his children*, as he justly might, since he had been the instrument of their conversion to the Christian faith; yea, he styles them

his *little children*, which, as it denotes a greater degree of tenderness and affection to them, so it may possibly have a respect to their present behaviour, whereby they showed themselves too much like little children, who are easily wrought upon by the arts and insinuations of others. He expresses his concern for them, and earnest desire of their welfare and soul-prosperity, by the pangs of a travailing woman: *He travailed in birth for them*: and the great thing which he was in so much pain about, and which he was so earnestly desirous of, was not so much that they might affect him as *that Christ might be formed in them*, that they might become Christians indeed, and be more confirmed and established in the faith of the gospel. From this we may note, 1. The very tender affection which faithful ministers bear towards those among whom they are employed; it is like that of the most affectionate parents to their little children. 2. That the chief thing they are longing and even travailing in birth for, on their account, is that Christ may be formed in them; not so much that they may gain their affections, much less that they may make a prey of them, but that they may be renewed in the spirit of their minds, wrought into the image of Christ, and more fully settled and confirmed in the Christian faith and life: and how unreasonably must those people act who suffer themselves to be prevailed upon to desert or dislike such ministers! 3. That Christ is not fully formed in men till they are brought off from trusting in their own righteousness, and made to rely only upon him and his righteousness.

As further evidence of the affection and concern which the apostle had for these Christians, he adds (v. 20) that *he desired to be then present with them*—that he would be glad of an opportunity of being among them, and conversing with them, and that thereupon he might find occasion *to change his voice* towards them; for at present *he stood in doubt of them*. He knew not well what to think of them. He was not so fully acquainted with their state as to know how to accommodate himself to them. He was full of fears and jealousies concerning them, which was the reason of his writing to them in such a manner as he had done; but he would be glad to find that matters were better with them than he feared, and that he might have occasion to commend them, instead of thus reproofing and chiding them. Note, Though ministers too often find it necessary to reprove those they have to do with, yet this is no grateful work to them; they had much rather there were no occasion for it, and are always glad when they can see reason to change their voice towards them.

### **Verses 21-31**

In these verses the apostle illustrates the difference between believers who rested in Christ only and those judaizers who trusted in the law, by a comparison taken from the story of Isaac and Ishmael. This he introduces in such a manner as was proper to strike and impress their minds, and to convince them of their great weakness in departing from the truth, and suffering themselves to be deprived of the liberty of the gospel: *Tell me*, says he, *you that desire to be under the law, do you not hear the law?* He takes it for granted that they did hear the law, for among the Jews it was wont to be read in their public assemblies every sabbath day; and, since they were so very fond of being under it, he would have them duly to consider what is written therein (referring to what is recorded Gen. 16 and 21), for, if they would do this, they might soon see how little reason they had to trust in it. And here, 1. He sets before them the history itself (v. 22, 23): *For it is written, Abraham had two sons*, etc. Here he represents the different state and condition of these two sons of Abraham—that the one, Ishmael, *was by a bond-maid*, and the other, Isaac, *by a free-woman*; and that whereas the former *was born after the flesh*, or by the ordinary

course of nature, the other *was by promise*, when in the course of nature there was no reason to expect that Sarah should have a son. 2. He acquaints them with the meaning and design of this history, or the use which he intended to make of it (v. 24–27): *These things*, says he, *are an allegory*, wherein, besides the literal and historical sense of the words, the Spirit of God might design to signify something further to us, and that was, That these two, Agar and Sarah, *are the two covenants*, or were intended to typify and prefigure the two different dispensations of the covenant. The former, Agar, represented that which was given from mount Sinai, and *which gendereth to bondage*, which, though it was a dispensation of grace, yet, in comparison of the gospel state, was a dispensation of bondage, and became more so to the Jews, through their mistake of the design of it, and expecting to be justified by the works of it. *For this Agar is mount Sinai in Arabia* (mount Sinai was then called Agar by the Arabians), *and it answereth to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children*; that is, it justly represents the present state of the Jews, who, continuing in their infidelity and adhering to that covenant, are still in bondage with their children. But the other, Sarah, was intended to prefigure Jerusalem which is above, or the state of Christians under the new and better dispensation of the covenant, which is free both from the curse of the moral and the bondage of the ceremonial law, and *is the mother of us all*—a state into which all, both Jews and Gentiles, are admitted, upon their believing in Christ. And to this greater freedom and enlargement of the church under the gospel dispensation, which was typified by Sarah the mother of the promised seed, the apostle refers that of the prophet, Isa. 54:1, where 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 who hath a husband*. 3. He applies the history thus explained to the present case (v. 28); *Now we, brethren*, says he, *as Isaac was, are the children of the promise*. We Christians, who have accepted Christ, and rely upon him, and look for justification and salvation by him alone, as hereby we become the spiritual, though we are not the natural, seed of Abraham, so we are entitled to the promised inheritance and interested in the blessings of it. But lest these Christians should be stumbled at the opposition they might meet with from the Jews, who were so tenacious of their law as to be ready to persecute those who would not submit to it, he tells them that this was no more than what was pointed to in the type; for *as then he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit*, they must expect it would be *so now*. But, for their comfort in this case, he desires them to consider what the scripture saith (Gen. 21:10), *Cast out the bond-woman and her son, for the son of the bond-woman shall not be heir with the son of the free-woman*. Though the judaizers should persecute and hate them, yet the issue would be that Judaism would sink, and wither, and perish; but true Christianity should flourish and last for ever. And then, as a general inference from the whole of the sum of what he had said, he concludes (v. 31), *So then, brethren, we are not children of the bond-woman, but of the free*.

## Chapter 5

In this chapter the apostle comes to make application of his foregoing discourse. He begins it with a general caution, or exhortation (v. 1), which he afterwards enforces by several considerations (v. 2–12). He then presses them to serious practical godliness, which would be the best antidote against the snares of their false teachers; particularly, I. That they should not strive with one another (v. 13–15). II. That they would strive against sin, where he shows, 1. That there is in every one a struggle between flesh and spirit (v. 17). 2. That it is our duty and interest, in this struggle, to side with the better part (v. 16, 18). 3. He specifies the works of the flesh, which must be watched against and mortified, and the fruits of the Spirit, which must be brought forth and cherished, and shows of what importance it is that they be so (v. 19–24). And then concludes the chapter with a caution against pride and envy.

### Verses 1-12

In the former part of this chapter the apostle cautions the Galatians to take heed of the judaizing teachers, who endeavoured to bring them back under the bondage of the law. He had been arguing against them before, and had largely shown how contrary the principles and spirit of those teachers were to the spirit of the gospel; and now this is as it were the general inference or application of all that discourse. Since it appeared by what had been said that we can be justified only by faith in Jesus Christ, and not by the righteousness of the law, and that the law of Moses was no longer in force, nor Christians under any obligation to submit to it, therefore he would have them to *stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and not to be again entangled with the yoke of bondage*. Here observe, 1. Under the gospel we are enfranchised, we are brought into a state of liberty, wherein we are freed from the yoke of the ceremonial law and from the curse of the moral law; so that we are no longer tied to the observance of the one, nor tied up to the rigour of the other, which curses every one that continues not in all things written therein to do them, ch. 3:10. 2. We owe this liberty to Jesus Christ. It is he who *has made us free*; by his merits he has satisfied the demands of the broken law, and by his authority as a king he has discharged us from the obligation of those carnal ordinances which were imposed on the Jews. And, 3. It is therefore our duty to *stand fast in this liberty*, constantly and faithfully to adhere to the gospel and to the liberty of it, and not to suffer ourselves, upon any consideration, *to be again entangled in the yoke of bondage*, nor persuaded to return back to the law of Moses. This is the general caution or exhortation, which in the following verses the apostle enforces by several reasons or arguments. As,

I. That their submitting to circumcision, and depending on the works of the law for righteousness, were an implicit contradiction of their faith as Christians and a forfeiture of all their advantages by Jesus Christ, v. 2-4. And here we may observe, 1. With what solemnity the apostle asserts and declares this: *Behold, I Paul say unto you* (v. 2), and he repeats it (v. 3), *I testify unto you*; as it he had said, "I, who have proved myself an apostle of Christ, and to have received my authority and instructions from him, do declare, and am ready to pawn my credit and reputation upon it, *that if you be circumcised Christ shall profit you nothing*, etc.," wherein he shows that what he was now saying was not only a matter of great importance, but what might be most assuredly depended on. He was so far from being a preacher of circumcision (as some might report him to

be) that he looked upon it as a matter of the greatest consequence that they did not submit to it. 2. What it is which he so solemnly, and with so much assurance, declares; it is that, *if they were circumcised, Christ would profit them nothing*, etc. We are not to suppose that it is mere circumcision which the apostle is here speaking of, or that it was his design to say that none who are circumcised could have any benefit by Christ; for all the Old-Testament saints had been circumcised, and he himself had consented to the circumcising of Timothy. But he is to be understood as speaking of circumcision in the sense in which the judaizing teachers imposed it, who taught *that except they were circumcised, and kept the law of Moses, they could not be saved*, Acts 15:1. That this is his meaning appears from v. 4, where he expresses the same thing by their being *justified by the law*, or seeking justification by the works of it. Now in this case, if they submitted to circumcision in this sense, he declares that *Christ would profit them nothing, that they were debtors to do the whole law, that Christ had become of no effect to them, and that they were fallen from grace*. From all these expressions it appears that thereby they renounced that way of justification which God had established; yea, that they laid themselves under an impossibility of being justified in his sight, for they became debtors to do the whole law, which required such an obedience as they were not capable of performing, and denounced a curse against those who failed in it, and therefore condemned, but could not justify them; and, consequently, that having thus revolted from Christ, and built their hopes upon the law, Christ would profit them nothing, nor be of any effect to them. Thus, as by being circumcised they renounced their Christianity, so they cut themselves off from all advantage by Christ; and therefore there was the greatest reason why they should steadfastly adhere to that doctrine which they had embraced, and not suffer themselves to be brought under this yoke of bondage. Note, (1.) Though Jesus Christ is able to save to the uttermost, yet there are multitudes whom he will profit nothing. (2.) All those who seek to be justified by the law do thereby render Christ of no effect to them. By building their hopes on the works of the law, they forfeit all their hopes from him; for he will not be the Saviour of any who will not own and rely upon him as their only Saviour.

II. To persuade them to steadfastness in the doctrine and liberty of the gospel, he sets before them his own example, and that of other Jews who had embraced the Christian religion, and acquaints them what their hopes were, namely, That *through the Spirit they were waiting for the hope of righteousness by faith*. Though they were Jews by nature, and had been bred up under the law, yet being, through the Spirit, brought to the knowledge of Christ, they had renounced all dependence on the works of the law, and looked for justification and salvation only by faith in him; and therefore it must needs be the greatest folly in those who had never been under the law to suffer themselves to be brought into subjection to it, and to found their hopes upon the works of it. Here we may observe, 1. What it is that Christians are waiting for: it is *the hope of righteousness*, by which we are chiefly to understand the happiness of the other world. This is called the hope of Christians, as it is the great object of their hope, which they are above every thing else desiring and pursuing; and the hope of righteousness, as their hopes of it are founded on righteousness, not their own, but that of our Lord Jesus: for, though a life of righteousness is the way that leads to this happiness, yet it is the righteousness of Christ alone which has procured it for us, and on account of which we can expect to be brought to the possession of it. 2. How they hope to obtain this happiness, namely, by faith, that is, in our Lord Jesus Christ, not by the works of the law, or any thing they can do to deserve it, but only by faith, receiving and relying upon him as

the Lord our righteousness. It is in this way only that they expect either to be entitled to it here or possessed of it hereafter. And, 3. Whence it is that they are thus waiting for the hope of righteousness: it is *through the Spirit*. Herein they act under the direction and influence of the Holy Spirit; it is under his conduct, and by his assistance, that they are both persuaded and enabled to believe on Christ, and to look for the hope of righteousness through him. When the apostle thus represents the case of Christians, it is implied that if they expected to be justified and saved in any other way they were likely to meet with a disappointment, and therefore that they were greatly concerned to adhere to the doctrine of the gospel which they had embraced.

III. He argues from the nature and design of the Christian institution, which was to abolish the difference between Jew and Gentile, and to establish faith in Christ as the way of our acceptance with God. He tells them (v. 6) that *in Christ Jesus*, or under the gospel dispensation, *neither circumcision availeth any thing nor uncircumcision*. Though, while the legal state lasted, there was a difference put between Jew and Greek, between those who were and those who were not circumcised, the former being admitted to those privileges of the church of God from which the other were excluded, yet it was otherwise in the gospel state: Christ, who is *the end of the law*, having come, now it was neither here nor there whether a man were circumcised or uncircumcised; he was neither the better for the one nor the worse for the other, nor would either the one or the other recommend him to God; and therefore as their judaizing teachers were very unreasonable in imposing circumcision upon them, and obliging them to observe the law of Moses, so they must needs be very unwise in submitting to them herein. But, though he assures them that neither circumcision nor uncircumcision would avail to their acceptance with God, yet he informs them what would do so, and that is *faith, which worketh by love*: such a faith in Christ as discovers itself to be true and genuine by a sincere love to God and our neighbour. If they had this, it mattered not whether they were circumcised or uncircumcised, but without it nothing else would stand them in any stead. Note, 1. No external privileges nor profession will avail to our acceptance with God, without a sincere faith in our Lord Jesus. 2. Faith, where it is true, is a working grace: it works by love, love to God and love to our brethren; and faith, thus working by love, is all in all in our Christianity.

IV. To recover them from their backslidings, and engage them to greater stedfastness for the future, he puts them in mind of their good beginnings, and calls upon them to consider whence it was that they were so much altered from what they had been, v. 7.

1. He tells them that *they did run well*; at their first setting out in Christianity they had behaved themselves very commendably, they had readily embraced the Christian religion, and discovered a becoming zeal in the ways and work of it; as in their baptism they were devoted to God, and had declared themselves the disciples of Christ, so their behaviour was agreeable to their character and profession. Note, (1.) The life of a Christian is a race, wherein he must run, and hold on, if he would obtain the prize. (2.) It is not enough that we run in this race, by a profession of Christianity, but we must run well, by living up to that profession. Thus these Christians had done for awhile, but they had been obstructed in their progress, and were either turned out of the way or at least made to flag and falter in it. Therefore,

2. He asks them, and calls upon them to ask themselves, *Who did hinder you?* How came it to pass that they did not hold on in

the way wherein they had begun to run so well? He very well knew who they were, and what it was that hindered them; but he would have them to put the question to themselves, and seriously consider whether they had any good reason to hearken to those who gave them this disturbance, and whether what they offered was sufficient to justify them in their present conduct. Note, (1.) Many who set out fair in religion, and run well for awhile—run within the bounds appointed for the race, and run with zeal and alacrity too—are yet by some means or other hindered in their progress, or turned out of the way. (2.) It concerns those who have run well, but now begin either to turn out of the way or to tire in it, to enquire what it is that hinders them. Young converts must expect that Satan will be laying stumbling blocks in their way, and doing all he can to divert them from the course they are in; but, whenever they find themselves in danger of being turned out of it, they would do well to consider who it is that hinders them. Whoever they were that hindered these Christians, the apostle tells them that by hearkening to them they were kept from *obeying the truth*, and were thereby in danger of losing the benefit of what they had done in religion. The gospel which he had preached to them, and which they had embraced and professed, he assures them was the truth; it was therein only that the true way of justification and salvation was fully discovered, and, in order to their enjoying the advantage of it, it was necessary that they should obey it, that they should firmly adhere to it, and continue to govern their lives and hopes according to the directions of it. If therefore they should suffer themselves to be drawn away from it they must needs be guilty of the greatest weakness and folly. Note, [1.] The truth is not only to be believed, but to be obeyed, to be received not only in the light of it, but in the love and power of it. [2.] Those do not rightly obey the truth, who do not stedfastly adhere to it. [3.] There is the same reason for our obeying the truth that there was for our embracing it: and therefore those act very unreasonably who, when they have begun to run well in the Christian race, suffer themselves to be hindered, so as not to persevere in it.

V. He argues for their stedfastness in the faith and liberty of the gospel from the ill rise of that persuasion whereby they were drawn away from it (v. 8): *This persuasion*, says he, *cometh not of him that calleth you*. The opinion or persuasion of which the apostle here speaks was no doubt that of the necessity of their being circumcised, and keeping the law of Moses, or of their mixing the works of the law with faith in Christ in the business of justification. This was what the judaizing teachers endeavoured to impose upon them, and what they had too easily fallen into. To convince them of their folly herein, he tells them that this persuasion did not come of him that called them, that is, either of God, by whose authority the gospel had been preached to them and they had been called into the fellowship of it, or of the apostle himself, who had been employed as the instrument of calling them hereunto. It could not come from God, for it was contrary to that way of justification and salvation which he had established; nor could they have received it from Paul himself; for, whatever some might pretend, he had all along been an opposer and not a preacher of circumcision, and, if in any instance he had submitted to it for the sake of peace, yet he had never pressed the use of it upon Christians, much less imposed it upon them as necessary to salvation. Since then this persuasion did not come of him that had called them, he leaves them to judge whence it must arise, and sufficiently intimates that it could be owing to none but Satan and his instruments, who by this means were endeavouring to overthrow their faith and obstruct the progress of the gospel, and therefore that the Galatians had every reason to reject it, and to continue

stedfast in the truth which they had before embraced. Note, 1. In order to our judging aright of the different persuasions in religion which there are among Christians, it concerns us to enquire whether they come of him that calleth us, whether or no they are founded upon the authority of Christ and his apostles. 2. If, upon enquiry, they appear to have no such foundation, how forward soever others may be to impose them upon us, we should by no means submit to them, but reject them.

VI. The danger there was of the spreading of this infection, and the ill influence it might have upon others, are a further argument which the apostle urges against their complying with their false teachers in what they would impose on them. It is possible that, to extenuate their fault, they might be ready to say that there were but few of those teachers among them who endeavoured to draw them into this persuasion and practice, or that they were only some smaller matters wherein they complied with them—that though they submitted to be circumcised, and to observe some few rites of the Jewish laws, yet they had by no means renounced their Christianity and gone over to Judaism. Or, suppose their complying thus far was as faulty as he could represent it, yet perhaps they might further say that there were but few among them who had done so, and therefore he needed not be so much concerned about it. Now, to obviate such pretences as these, and to convince them that there was more danger in it than they were aware of, he tells them (v. 9) that *a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump*—that the whole lump of Christianity may be tainted and corrupted by one such erroneous principle, or that the whole lump of the Christian society may be infected by one member of it, and therefore that they were greatly concerned not to yield in this single instance, or, if any had done so, to endeavour by all proper methods to purge out the infection from among them. Note, It is dangerous for Christian churches to encourage those among them who entertain, especially who set themselves to propagate, destructive errors. This was the case here. The doctrine which the false teachers were industrious to spread, and which some in these churches had been drawn into, was subversive of Christianity itself, as the apostle had before shown; and therefore, though the number either of the one or the other of these might be but small, yet, considering the fatal tendency of it and the corruption of human nature, whereby others were too much disposed to be infected with it, he would not have them on that account to be easy and unconcerned, but remember that *a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump*. If these were indulged the contagion might soon spread further and wider; and, if they suffered themselves to be imposed upon in this instance, it might soon issue in the utter ruin of the truth and liberty of the gospel.

VII. That he might conciliate the greater regard to what he had said, he expresses the hopes he had concerning them (v. 10): *I have confidence in you*, says he, *through the Lord, that you will be none otherwise minded*. Though he had many fears and doubts about them (which was the occasion of his using so much plainness and freedom with them), yet he hoped that through the blessing of God upon what he had written they might be brought to be of the same mind with him, and to own and abide by that truth and that liberty of the gospel which he had preached to them, and was now endeavouring to confirm them in. Herein he teaches us that we ought to hope the best even of those concerning whom we have cause to fear the worst. That they might be the less offended at the reproofs he had given them for their unstedfastness in the faith, he lays the blame of it more upon others than themselves; for he adds, *But he that troubleth you shall bear his judgment, whosoever he be*. He was sensible that there were *some that troubled them, and would pervert the gospel of Christ* (as ch. 1:7), and possibly he may point to some one

particular man who was more busy and forward than others, and might be the chief instrument of the disorder that was among them; and to this he imputes their defection or inconstancy more than to any thing in themselves. This may give us occasion to observe that, in reprovng sin and error, we should always distinguish between the leaders and the led, such as set themselves to draw others thereinto and such as are drawn aside by them. Thus the apostle softens and alleviates the fault of these Christians, even while he is reprovng them, that he might the better persuade them to return to, and stand fast in, the liberty wherewith Christ had made them free: but as for him or those that troubled them, whoever he or they were, he declares they *should bear their judgment*, he did not doubt but God would deal with them according to their deserts, and out of his just indignation against them, as enemies of Christ and his church, he wishes that *they were even cut off*—not cut off from Christ and all hopes of salvation by him, but cut off by the censures of the church, which ought to witness against those teachers who thus corrupted the purity of the gospel. Those, whether ministers or others, who set themselves to overthrow the faith of the gospel, and disturb the peace of Christians, do thereby forfeit the privileges of Christian communion and deserve to be cut off from them.

VIII. To dissuade these Christians from hearkening to their judaizing teachers, and to recover them from the ill impressions they had made upon them, he represents them as men who had used very base and disingenuous methods to compass their designs, for they had misrepresented him, that they might the more easily gain their ends upon them. That which they were endeavouring was to bring them to submit to circumcision, and to mix Judaism with their Christianity; and, the better to accomplish this design, they had given out among them that Paul himself was a preacher of circumcision: for when he says (v. 11), *And I brethren, if I yet preach circumcision*, it plainly appears that they had reported him to have done so, and that they had made use of this as an argument to prevail with the Galatians to submit to it. It is probable that they grounded this report upon his having circumcised Timothy, Acts 16:3. But, though for good reasons he had yielded to circumcision in that instance, yet that he was a preacher of it, and especially in that sense wherein they imposed it, he utterly denies. To prove the injustice of that charge upon him, he offers such arguments as, if they would allow themselves to consider, could not fail to convince them of it. 1. If he would have preached circumcision, he might have avoided persecution. If I yet preach circumcision, says he, *why do I yet suffer persecution?* It was evident, and they could not but be sensible of it, that he was hated and persecuted by the Jews; but what account could be given of this their behaviour towards him, if he had so far symbolized with them as to preach up circumcision, and the observance of the law of Moses, as necessary to salvation? This was the great point they were contending for; and, if he had fallen in with them herein, instead of being exposed to their rage he might have been received into their favour. When therefore he was suffering persecution from them, this was a plain evidence that he had not complied with them; yea, that he was so far from preaching the doctrine he was charged with, that, rather than do so, he was willing to expose himself to the greatest hazards. 2. If he had yielded to the Jews herein, *then would the offence of the cross have ceased*. They would not have taken so much offence against the doctrine of Christianity as they did, nor would he and others have been exposed to so much suffering on the account of it as they were. He informs us (1 Co. 1:23) that the preaching of the cross of Christ (or the doctrine of justification and salvation only by faith in Christ crucified) *was to the Jews a stumbling-block*. That

which they were most offended at in Christianity was, that thereby circumcision, and the whole frame of the legal administration, were set aside, as no longer in force. This raised their greatest outcries against it, and stirred them up to oppose and persecute the professors of it. Now if Paul and others could have given into this opinion, that circumcision was still to be retained, and the observance of the law of Moses joined with faith in Christ as necessary to salvation, then their offence against it would have been in a great measure removed, and they might have avoided the sufferings they underwent for the sake of it. But though others, and particularly those who were so forward to asperse him as a preacher of this doctrine, could easily come into it, yet so could not he. He rather chose to hazard his ease and credit, yea his very life itself, than thus to corrupt the truth and give up the liberty of the gospel. Hence it was that the Jews continued to be so much offended against Christianity, and against him as the preacher of it. Thus the apostle clears himself from the unjust reproach which his enemies had cast upon him, and at the same time shows how little regard was due to those men who could treat him in such an injurious manner, and how much reason he had to wish that they were even cut off.

### **Verses 13-26**

In the latter part of this chapter the apostle comes to exhort these Christians to serious practical godliness, as the best antidote against the snares of the false teachers. Two things especially he presses upon them:—

I. That they should not strive with one another, but love one another. He tells them (v. 13) that *they had been called unto liberty*, and he would have them to stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ had made them free; but yet he would have them be very careful that they did not *use this liberty as an occasion to the flesh*—that they did not thence take occasion to indulge themselves in any corrupt affections and practices, and particularly such as might create distance and disaffection, and be the ground of quarrels and contentions among them: but, on the contrary, he would have them *by love to serve one another*, to maintain that mutual love and affection which, notwithstanding any minor differences there might be among them, would dispose them to all those offices of respect and kindness to each other which the Christian religion obliged them to. Note, 1. The liberty we enjoy as Christians is not a licentious liberty: though Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, yet he has not freed us from the obligation of it; the gospel is a *doctrine according to godliness* (1 Tim. 6:3), and is so far from giving the least countenance to sin that it lays us under the strongest obligations to avoid and subdue it. 2. Though we ought to stand fast in our Christian liberty, yet we should not insist upon it to the breach of Christian charity; we should not use it as an occasion of strife and contention with our fellow Christians, who may be differently minded from us, but should always maintain such a temper towards each other as may dispose us by love to serve one another. To this the apostle endeavours to persuade these Christians, and there are two considerations which he sets before them for this purpose:—(1.) *That all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself*, v. 14. Love is the sum of the whole law; as love to God comprises the duties of the first table, so love to our neighbour those of the second. The apostle takes notice of the latter here, because he is speaking of their behaviour towards one another; and, when he makes use of this as an argument to persuade them to mutual love, he intimates both that this would be a good evidence of their sincerity in religion and also the most likely means of rooting out those dissensions and divisions that were among them. It will appear that we are the disciples

of Christ indeed when we have love one to another (Jn. 13:35); and, where this temper is kept up, if it do not wholly extinguish those unhappy discords that are among Christians, yet at least it will so far accommodate them that the fatal consequences of them will be prevented. (2.) The sad and dangerous tendency of a contrary behaviour (v. 15): *But*, says he, if instead of serving one another in love, and therein fulfilling the law of God, *you bite and devour one another, take heed that you be not consumed one of another*. If, instead of acting like men and Christians, they would behave themselves more like brute beasts, in tearing and rending one another, they could expect nothing as the consequence of it, but that they would be consumed one of another; and therefore they had the greatest reason not to indulge themselves in such quarrels and animosities. Note, Mutual strifes among brethren, if persisted in, are likely to prove a common ruin; those that devour one another are in a fair way to be consumed one of another. Christian churches cannot be ruined but by their own hands; but if Christians, who should be helps to one another and a joy one to another, be as brute beasts, biting and devouring each other, what can be expected but that the God of love should deny his grace to them, and the Spirit of love should depart from them, and that the evil spirit, who seeks the destruction of them all, should prevail?

II. That they should all strive against sin; and happy would it be for the church if Christians would let all their quarrels be swallowed up of this, even a quarrel against sin-if, instead of biting and devouring one another on account of their different opinions, they would all set themselves against sin in themselves and the places where they live. This is what we are chiefly concerned to fight against, and that which above every thing else we should make it our business to oppose and suppress. To excite Christians hereunto, and to assist them herein, the apostle shows,

1. That there is in every one a struggle between the flesh and the spirit (v. 17): *The flesh* (the corrupt and carnal part of us) *lusts* (strives and struggles with strength and vigour) *against the spirit*: it opposes all the motions of the Spirit, and resists every thing that is spiritual. On the other hand, *the spirit* (the renewed part of us) strives *against the flesh*, and opposes the will and desire of it: and hence it comes to pass *that we cannot do the things that we would*. As the principle of grace in us will not suffer us to do all the evil which our corrupt nature would prompt us to, so neither can we do all the good that we would, by reason of the oppositions we meet with from that corrupt and carnal principle. Even as in a natural man there is something of this struggle (the convictions of his conscience and the corruption of his own heart strive with one another; his convictions would suppress his corruptions, and his corruptions silence his convictions), so in a renewed man, where there is something of a good principle, there is a struggle between the old nature and the new nature, the remainders of sin and the beginnings of grace; and this Christians must expect will be their exercise as long as they continue in this world.

2. That it is our duty and interest in this struggle to side with the better part, to side with our convictions against our corruptions and with our graces against our lusts. This the apostle represents as our duty, and directs us to the most effectual means of success in it. If it should be asked, What course must we take that the better interest may get the better? he gives us this one general rule, which, if duly observed, would be the most sovereign remedy against the prevalence of corruption; and that is to walk in the Spirit (v. 16): *This I say, then, Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh*. By the *Spirit* here may be meant either the Holy Spirit himself, who condescends to dwell in the hearts of those whom he has renewed and

sanctified, to guide and assist them in the way of their duty, or that gracious principle which he implants in the souls of his people and which lusts against the flesh, as that corrupt principle which still remains in them does against it. Accordingly the duty here recommended to us is that we set ourselves to act under the guidance and influence of the blessed Spirit, and agreeably to the motions and tendency of the new nature in us; and, if this be our care in the ordinary course and tenour of our lives, we may depend upon it that, though we may not be freed from the stirrings and oppositions of our corrupt nature, we shall be kept from fulfilling it in the lusts thereof; so that though it remain in us, yet it shall not obtain a dominion over us. Note, The best antidote against the poison of sin is to walk in the Spirit, to be much in conversing with spiritual things, to mind the things of the soul, which is the spiritual part of man, more than those of the body, which is his carnal part, to commit ourselves to the guidance of the word, wherein the Holy Spirit makes known the will of God concerning us, and in the way of our duty to act in a dependence on his aids and influences. And, as this would be the best means of preserving them from fulfilling the lusts of the flesh, so it would be a good evidence that they were Christians indeed; for, says the apostle (v. 18), *If you be led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.* As if he had said, "You must expect a struggle between flesh and spirit as long as you are in the world, that the flesh will be lusting against the spirit as well as the spirit against the flesh; but if, in the prevailing bent and tenour of your lives, you be *led by the Spirit*,—if you act under the guidance and government of the Holy Spirit and of that spiritual nature and disposition he has wrought in you,—if you make the word of God your rule and the grace of God your principle,—it will hence appear that you are not under the law, not under the condemning, though you are still under the commanding, power of it; for *there is now no condemnation to those that are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit; and as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God,*" Rom. 8:1–14.

3. The apostle specifies the works of the flesh, which must be watched against and mortified, and the fruits of the Spirit, which must be cherished and brought forth (v. 19, etc.); and by specifying particulars he further illustrates what he is here upon. (1.) He begins with *the works of the flesh*, which, as they are many, so they are manifest. It is past dispute that the things he here speaks of are the works of the flesh, or the product of corrupt and depraved nature; most of them are condemned by the light of nature itself, and all of them by the light of scripture. The particulars he specifies are of various sorts; some are sins against the seventh commandment, such as *adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness*, by which are meant not only the gross acts of these sins, but all such thoughts, and words, and actions, as have a tendency towards the great transgression. Some are sins against the first and second commandments, as *idolatry and witchcraft*. Others are sins against our neighbour, and contrary to the royal law of brotherly love, such as *hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife*, which too often occasion *seditions, heresies, envyings*, and sometimes break out into *murders*, not only of the names and reputation, but even of the very lives, of our fellow-creatures. Others are sins against ourselves, such as *drunkenness and revellings*; and he concludes the catalogue with an *et cetera*, and gives fair warning to all to take care of them, as they hope to see the face of God with comfort. Of these and *such like*, says he, *I tell you before, as I have also told you in times past, that those who do such things, how much soever they may flatter themselves with vain hopes, shall not inherit the kingdom of God.* These are sins which will undoubtedly shut men out of heaven. The world of spirits can never be comfortable to those who plunge themselves in the filth of the flesh; nor

will the righteous and holy God ever admit such into his favour and presence, unless they be first *washed and sanctified, and justified in the name of our Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God*, 1 Co. 6:11. (2.) He specifies the fruits of the Spirit, or the renewed nature, which as Christians we are concerned to bring forth, v. 22, 23. And here we may observe that as sin is called *the work of the flesh*, because the flesh, or corrupt nature, is the principle that moves and excites men to it, so grace is said to be *the fruit of the Spirit*, because it wholly proceeds from the Spirit, as the fruit does from the root: and whereas before the apostle had chiefly specified those works of the flesh which were not only hurtful to men themselves but tended to make them so to one another, so here he chiefly takes notice of those fruits of the Spirit which had a tendency to make Christians agreeable one to another, as well as easy to themselves; and this was very suitable to the caution or exhortation he had before given (v. 13), that they should *not use their liberty as an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another*. He particularly recommends to us, *love*, to God especially, and to one another for his sake,—*joy*, by which may be understood cheerfulness in conversation with our friends, or rather a constant delight in God,—*peace*, with God and conscience, or a peaceableness of temper and behaviour towards others,—*long-suffering*, patience to defer anger, and a contentedness to bear injuries,—*gentleness*, such a sweetness of temper, and especially towards our inferiors, as disposes us to be affable and courteous, and easy to be entreated when any have wronged us,—*goodness* (kindness, beneficence), which shows itself in a readiness to do good to all as we have opportunity,—*faith*, fidelity, justice, and honesty, in what we profess and promise to others,—*meekness*, wherewith to govern our passions and resentments, so as not to be easily provoked, and, when we are so, to be soon pacified,—and *temperance*, in meat and drink, and other enjoyments of life, so as not to be excessive and immoderate in the use of them. Concerning these things, or those in whom these fruits of the Spirit are found, the apostle says, *There is no law against them*, to condemn and punish them. Yea, hence it appears that they are not under the law, but under grace; for these fruits of the Spirit, in whomsoever they are found, plainly show that such are *led by the Spirit*, and consequently that they are not *under the law*, as v. 18. And as, by specifying these works of the flesh and fruits of the Spirit, the apostle directs us both what we are to avoid and oppose and what we are to cherish and cultivate, so (v. 24) he informs us that this is the sincere care and endeavour of all real Christians: *And those that are Christ's*, says he (those who are Christians indeed, not only in show and profession, but in sincerity and truth), *have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts*. As in their baptism they were obliged hereunto (for, being baptized into Christ, they were baptized into his death, Rom. 6:3), so they are now sincerely employing themselves herein, and, in conformity to their Lord and head, are endeavouring to die unto sin, as he had died for it. They have not yet obtained a complete victory over it; they have still flesh as well as Spirit in them, and that has its affections and lusts, which continue to give them no little disturbance, but as it does not now *reign in their mortal bodies, so as that they obey it in the lusts thereof* (Rom. 6:12), so they are seeking the utter ruin and destruction of it, and to put it to the same shameful and ignominious, though lingering death, which our Lord Jesus underwent for our sakes. Note, If we should approve ourselves to be Christ's, such as are united to him and interested in him, we must make it our constant care and business to crucify the flesh with its corrupt affections and lusts. Christ will never own those as his who yield themselves the servants of sin. But though the apostle here only mentions the crucifying of the flesh with the affections and lusts, as the care and character

of real Christians, yet, no doubt, it is also implied that, on the other hand, we should show forth those fruits of the Spirit which he had just before been specifying; this is no less our duty than that, nor is it less necessary to evidence our sincerity in religion. It is not enough that we cease to do evil, but we must learn to do well. Our Christianity obliges us not only to die unto sin, but to live unto righteousness; not only to oppose the works of the flesh, but to bring forth the fruits of the Spirit too. If therefore we would make it appear that we do indeed belong to Christ, this must be our sincere care and endeavour as well as the other; and that it was the design of the apostle to represent both the one and the other of these as our duty, and as necessary to support our character as Christians, may be gathered from what follows (v. 25), where he adds, *If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit*; that is, "If we profess to have received the Spirit of Christ, or that we are renewed in the Spirit of Christ, or that we are renewed in the spirit of our minds, and endued with a principle of spiritual life, let us make it appear by the proper fruits of the Spirit in our lives." He had before told us that the Spirit of Christ is a privilege bestowed on all the children of God, ch. 4:6. "Now," says he, "if we profess to be of this number, and as such to have obtained this privilege, let us show it by a temper and behaviour agreeable hereunto; let us evidence our good principles by good practices." Our conversation will always be answerable to the principle which we are under the guidance and government of: as *those that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh, so those that are after the Spirit do mind the things of the Spirit*, Rom. 8:5. If therefore we would have it appear that we are Christ's, and that we are partakers of his Spirit, it must be by our *walking not after the flesh, but after the spirit*. We must set ourselves in good earnest both to mortify the deeds of the body, and to walk in newness of life.

4. The apostle concludes this chapter with a caution against pride and envy, v. 26. He had before been exhorting these Christians *by love to serve one another* (v. 13), and had put them in mind of what would be the consequence if, instead of that, they did *bite and devour one another*, v. 15. Now, as a means of engaging them to the one and preserving them from the other of these, he here cautions them against being desirous of vain-glory, or giving way to an undue affectation of the esteem and applause of men, because this, if it were indulged, would certainly lead them to provoke one another and to envy one another. As far as this temper prevails among Christians, they will be ready to slight and despise those whom they look upon as inferior to them, and to be put out of humour if they are denied that respect which they think is their due from them, and they will also be apt to envy those by whom their reputation is in any danger of being lessened: and thus a foundation is laid for those quarrels and contentions which, as they are inconsistent with that love which Christians ought to maintain towards each other, so they are greatly prejudicial to the honour and interest of religion itself. This therefore the apostle would have us by all means to watch against. Note, (1.) The glory which comes from men is vain-glory, which, instead of being desirous of, we should be dead to. (2.) An undue regard to the approbation and applause of men is one great ground of the unhappy strifes and contentions that exist among Christians.

## Chapter 6

This chapter chiefly consists of two parts. In the former the apostle gives us several plain and practical directions, which more especially tend to instruct Christians in their duty to one another, and to promote the communion of saints in love (v. 1–10). In the latter he revives the main design of the epistle, which was to fortify the Galatians against the arts of their judaizing teachers, and confirm them in the truth and liberty of the gospel, for which purpose he, I. Gives them the true character of these teachers, and shows them from what motives, and with what views, they acted (v. 11–14). And, II. On the other hand he acquaints them with his own temper and behaviour. From both these they might easily see how little reason they had to slight him, and to fall in with them. And then he concludes the epistle with a solemn benediction.

### Verses 1-10

The apostle having, in the foregoing chapter, exhorted Christians *by love to serve one another* (v. 13), and also cautioned us (v. 16) against a temper which, if indulged, would hinder us from showing the mutual love and serviceableness which he had recommended, in the beginning of this chapter he proceeds to give some further directions, which, if duly observed, would both promote the one and prevent the other of these, and render our behaviour both more agreeable to our Christian profession and more useful and comfortable to one another: particularly,

I. We are here taught to deal tenderly with those who are overtaken in a fault, v. 1. He puts a common case: *If a man be overtaken in a fault*, that is, be brought to sin by the surprise of temptation. It is one thing to overtake a fault by contrivance and deliberation, and a full resolution in sin, and another thing to be overtaken in a fault. The latter is the case here supposed, and herein the apostle shows that great tenderness should be used. *Those who are spiritual*, by whom is meant, not only the ministers (as if none but they were to be called spiritual persons), but other Christians too, especially those of the higher form in Christianity; these must *restore such a one with the spirit of meekness*. Here observe, 1. The duty we are directed to—to restore such; we should labour, by faithful reproofs, and pertinent and seasonable councils, to bring them to repentance. The original word, *katartizete*, signifies *to set in joint*, as a dislocated bone; accordingly we should endeavour to set them in joint again, to bring them to themselves, by convincing them of their sin and error, persuading them to return to their duty, comforting them in a sense of pardoning mercy thereupon, and having thus recovered them, confirming our love to them. 2. The manner wherein this is to be done: *With the spirit of meekness*; not in wrath and passion, as those who triumph in a brother's falls, but with meekness, as those who rather mourn for them. Many needful reproofs lose their efficacy by being given in wrath; but when they are managed with calmness and tenderness, and appear to proceed from sincere affection and concern for the welfare of those to whom they are given, they are likely to make a due impression. 3. A very good reason why this should be done with meekness: *Considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted*. We ought to deal very tenderly with those who are overtaken in sin, because we none of us know but it may some time or other be our own case. We also may be tempted, yea, and overcome by the temptation; and therefore, if we rightly consider ourselves, this will dispose us to do by others as we desire to be done by in such a case.

II. We are here directed *to bear one another's burdens*, v. 2. This may be considered either as referring to what goes before, and so may teach us to exercise forbearance and compassion towards one another, in the case of those weaknesses, and follies, and infirmities, which too often attend us—that, though we should not wholly connive at them, yet we should not be severe against one another on account of them; or as a more general precept, and so it directs us to sympathize with one another under the various trials and troubles that we may meet with, and to be ready to afford each other the comfort and counsel, the help and assistance, which our circumstances may require. To excite us hereunto, the apostle adds, by way of motive, that so we shall *fulfil the law of Christ*. This is to act agreeably to the law of his precept, which is the law of love, and obliges us to a mutual forbearance and forgiveness, to sympathy with and compassion towards each other; and it would also be agreeable to his pattern and example, which have the force of a law to us. He bears with us under our weaknesses and follies, he is *touched with a fellow-feeling of our infirmities*; and therefore there is good reason why we should maintain the same temper towards one another. Note, Though as Christians we are freed from the law of Moses, yet we are under the law of Christ; and therefore, instead of laying unnecessary burdens upon others (as those who urged the observance of Moses's law did), it much more becomes us to fulfil the law of Christ by bearing one another's burdens. The apostle being aware how great a hindrance pride would be to the mutual condescension and sympathy which he had been recommending, and that a conceit of ourselves would dispose us to censure and contemn our brethren, instead of bearing with their infirmities and endeavouring to restore them when overtaken with a fault, he therefore (v. 3) takes care to caution us against this; he supposes it as a very possible thing (and it would be well if it were not too common) for a man to think himself to be something—to entertain a fond opinion of his own sufficiency, to look upon himself as wiser and better than other men, and as fit to dictate and prescribe to them—when in truth he is nothing, has nothing of substance or solidity in him, or that can be a ground of the confidence and superiority which he assumes. To dissuade us from giving way to this temper he tells us that such a one does but deceive himself; while he imposes upon others, by pretending to what he has not, he puts the greatest cheat upon himself, and sooner or later will find the sad effects of it. This will never gain him that esteem, either with God or good men, which he is ready to expect; he is neither the freer from mistakes nor will he be the more secure against temptations for the good opinion he has of his own sufficiency, but rather the more liable to fall into them, and to be overcome by them; for *he that thinks he stands has need to take heed lest he fall*. Instead therefore of indulging such a vain-glorious humour, which is both destructive of the love and kindness we owe to our fellow-christians and also injurious to ourselves, it would much better become us to accept the apostle's exhortation (Phil. 2:3), *Do nothing through strife nor vain-glory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself*. Note, Self-conceit is but self-deceit: as it is inconsistent with that charity we owe to others (for *charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up*, 1 Co. 13:4), so it is a cheat upon ourselves; and there is not a more dangerous cheat in the world than self-deceit. As a means of preventing this evil,

III. We are advised every one to prove his own work, v. 4. By our own work is chiefly meant our own actions or behaviour. These the apostle directs us to prove, that is seriously and impartially to examine them by the rule of God's word, to see whether or no they are agreeable to it, and therefore such as God and conscience do approve. This he represents as the duty of

every man; instead of being forward to judge and censure others, it would much more become us to search and try our own ways; our business lies more at home than abroad, with ourselves than with other men, *for what have we to do to judge another man's servant?* From the connection of this exhortation with what goes before it appears that if Christians did duly employ themselves in this work they might easily discover those defects and failings in themselves which would soon convince them how little reason they have either to be conceited of themselves or severe in their censures of others; and so it gives us occasion to observe that the best way to keep us from being proud of ourselves is to prove our own selves: the better we are acquainted with our own hearts and ways, the less liable shall we be to despise and the more disposed to compassionate and help others under their infirmities and afflictions. That we may be persuaded to this necessary and profitable duty of proving our own work, the apostle urges two considerations very proper for this purpose:—

1. This is the way to *have rejoicing in ourselves alone*. If we set ourselves in good earnest to *prove our own work*, and, upon the trial, can approve ourselves to God, as to our sincerity and uprightness towards him, then may we expect to have comfort and peace in our own souls, having the testimony of our own consciences for us (as 2 Co. 1:12), and this, he intimates, would be a much better ground of joy and satisfaction than to be able to rejoice *in another*, either in the good opinion which others may have of us or in having gained over others to our opinion, which the false teachers were wont to glory in (as we see v. 13), or by comparing ourselves with others, as, it should seem, some did, who were ready to think well of themselves, because they were not so bad as some others. Too many are apt to value themselves upon such accounts as these; but the joy that results thence is nothing to that which arises from an impartial trial of ourselves by the rule of God's word, and our being able thereupon to approve ourselves to him. Note, (1.) Though we have nothing in ourselves to boast of, yet we may have the matter of rejoicing in ourselves: our works can merit nothing at the hand of God; but, if our consciences can witness for us that they are such as he for Christ's sake approves and accepts, we may upon good ground rejoice therein. (2.) The true way to have *rejoicing in ourselves* is to be much in *proving our own works*, in examining ourselves by the unerring rule of God's word, and not by the false measures of what others are, or may think of us. (3.) It is much more desirable to have matter of glorying in ourselves than in another. If we have the testimony of our consciences that we are accepted of God, we need not much concern ourselves about what others think or say of us; and without this the good opinion of others will stand us in little stead.

2. The other argument which the apostle uses to press upon us this duty of proving our own work is that every man shall bear his own burden (v. 5), the meaning of which is that at the great day every one shall be reckoned with according as his behaviour here has been. He supposes that there is a day coming when we must all give an account of ourselves to God; and he declares that then the judgment will proceed, and the sentence pass, not according to the sentiments of the world concerning us, or any ungrounded opinion we may have had of ourselves, or upon our having been better or worse than others, but according as our state and behaviour have really been in the sight of God. And, if there be such an awful time to be expected, when he will *render to every one according to his works*, surely there is the greatest reason why we should prove our own works now: if we must certainly be called to an account hereafter, surely we ought to be often calling ourselves to an account here, to see whether or no we are such as God will own and approve then: and, as this is our duty, so if it were more our

practice we should entertain more becoming thoughts both of ourselves and our fellow-christians, and instead of bearing hard upon one another, on account of any mistakes or failings we may be guilty of, we should be more ready to fulfil that law of Christ by which we must be judged in bearing one another's burdens.

IV. Christians are here exhorted to be free and liberal in maintaining their ministers (v. 6): *Let him that is taught in the word communicate to him that teacheth, in all good things*. Here we may observe, 1. The apostle speaks of it as a thing known and acknowledged, that, as there are some to be taught, so there are others who are appointed to teach them. The office of the ministry is a divine institution, which does not lie open in common to all, but is confined to those only whom God has qualified for it and called to it: even reason itself directs us to put a difference between the teachers and the taught (for, if all were teachers, there would be none to be taught), and the scriptures sufficiently declare that it is the will of God we should do so. 2. It is the word of God wherein ministers are to teach and instruct others; that which they are to preach is *the word*, 2 Tim. 4:2. That which they are to declare is *the counsel of God*, Acts 20:27. They are not *lords of our faith, but helpers of our joy*, 2 Co. 1:24. It is the word of God which is the only rule of faith and life; this they are concerned to study, and to open, and improve, for the edification of others, but they are no further to be regarded than as they speak according to this rule. 3. It is the duty of those who are taught in the word to support those who are appointed to teach them; for they are *to communicate to them in all good things*, freely and cheerfully to contribute, of the good things with which God has blessed them, what is needful for their comfortable subsistence. Ministers are *to give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine* (1 Tim. 4:13); they are not to *entangle themselves with the affairs of this life* (2 Tim. 2:4), and therefore it is but fit and equitable that, while they are *sowing to others spiritual things, they should reap their carnal things*. And this is the appointment of God himself; for as, under the law, *those who ministered about holy things lived of the things of the temple, so hath the Lord ordained that those who preach the gospel should live of the gospel*, 1 Co. 9:11, 13, 14.

V. Here is a caution to take heed of mocking God, or of deceiving ourselves, by imagining that he can be imposed upon by mere pretensions or professions (v. 7): *Be not deceived, God is not mocked*. This may be considered as referring to the foregoing exhortation, and so the design of it is to convince those of their sin and folly who endeavoured by any plausible pretences to excuse themselves from doing their duty in supporting their ministers: or it may be taken in a more general view, as respecting the whole business of religion, and so as designed to take men off from entertaining any vain hopes of enjoying its rewards while they live in the neglect of its duties. The apostle here supposes that many are apt to excuse themselves from the work of religion, and especially the more self-denying and chargeable parts of it, though at the same time they may make a show and profession of it; but he assures them that *this their way is their folly*, for, though hereby they may possibly impose upon others, yet they do but deceive themselves if they think to impose upon God, who is perfectly acquainted with their hearts as well as actions, and, as he cannot be deceived, so he will not be mocked; and therefore, to prevent this, he directs us to lay down as a rule to ourselves, *That whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap*; or that according as we behave ourselves now, so will our account be in the great day. Our present time is seed-time: in the other world there will be a great harvest; and, as the husbandman reaps in the harvest according as he sows in the seedness, so we shall reap then as we sow now. And he

further informs us (v. 8) that, as there are two sorts of seedness, sowing to the flesh and sowing to the Spirit, so accordingly will the reckoning be hereafter: *If we sow to the flesh, we shall of the flesh reap corruption*. If we sow the wind, we shall reap the whirlwind. Those who live a carnal sensual life, who instead of employing themselves to the honour of God and the good of others, spend all their thoughts, and care, and time, about the flesh, must expect no other fruit of such a course than corruption—a mean and short-lived satisfaction at present, and ruin and misery at the end of it. But, on the other hand, *those who sow to the Spirit*, who under the guidance and influence of the Spirit do live a holy and spiritual life, a life of devotedness to God and of usefulness and serviceableness to others, may depend upon it that *of the Spirit they shall reap life everlasting*—they shall have the truest comfort in their present course, and an eternal life and happiness at the end of it. Note, Those who go about to mock God do but deceive themselves. Hypocrisy in religion is the greatest folly as well as wickedness, since the God we have to do with can easily see through all our disguises, and will certainly deal with us hereafter, not according to our professions, but our practices.

VI. Here is a further caution given us, *not to be weary in well doing*, v. 9. As we should not excuse ourselves from any part of our duty, so neither should we grow weary in it. There is in all of us too great a proneness to this; we are very apt to flag and tire in duty, yea to fall off from it, particularly that part of it to which the apostle has here a special regard, that of doing good to others. This therefore he would have us carefully to watch and guard against; and he gives this very good reason for it, because *in due season we shall reap, if we faint not*, where he assures us that there is a recompence of reward in reserve for all who sincerely employ themselves in well doing; that this reward will certainly be bestowed on us in the proper season—if not in this world, yet undoubtedly in the next; but then that it is upon supposition that we faint not in the way of our duty; if we grow weary of it, and withdraw from it, we shall not only miss of this reward, but lose the comfort and advantage of what we have already done; but, if we hold on and hold out in well-doing, though our reward may be delayed, yet it will surely come, and will be so great as to make us an abundant recompence for all our pains and constancy. Note, Perseverance in well-doing is our wisdom and interest, as well as our duty, for to this only is the reward promised.

VII. Here is an exhortation to all Christians to do good in their places (v. 10): *As we have therefore an opportunity*, etc. It is not enough that we be good to others, if we would approve ourselves to be Christians indeed. The duty here recommended to us is the same that is spoken of in the foregoing verses; and, as there the apostle exhorts us to sincerity and perseverance in it, so here he directs us both as to the objects and rule of it. 1. The objects of this duty are more generally all men. We are not to confine our charity and beneficence within too narrow bounds, as the Jews and judaizing Christians were apt to do, but should be ready to extend it to all who partake of the same common nature with us, as far as we are capable and they stand in need of us. But yet, in the exercise of it, we are to have a special regard to the household of faith, or to those who profess the same common faith, and are members of the same body of Christ, with us: though others are not to be excluded, yet these are to be preferred. The charity of Christians should be extensive charity: but yet therein a particular respect is to be had to good people. God does good to all, but in an especial manner he is good to his own servants; and we must in doing good be *followers of God as dear children*. 2. The rule which we are to observe in doing good to others is *as we have opportunity*, which implies, (1.)

That we should be sure to do it while we have opportunity, or while our life lasts, which is the only season wherein we are capable of doing good to his own servants; and we must in doing good be *followers of God as dear children*. 2. The rule which we are to observe in doing good to others is *as we have opportunity*, which implies, (1.) That we should be sure to do it while we have opportunity, or while our life lasts, which is the only season wherein we are capable of doing good to others. If therefore we would behave ourselves aright in this matter, we must not, as too many do, neglect it in our life-time, and defer it till we come to die, under a pretence of doing something of this nature then: for, as we cannot be sure that we shall then have an opportunity for it, so neither, if we should, have we any ground to expect that what we do will be so acceptable to God, much less that we can atone for our past neglects by leaving something behind us for the good of others, when we can no longer keep it ourselves. But we should take care to do good in our life-time, yea, to make this the business of our lives. And, (2.) That we be ready to improve every opportunity for it: we should not content ourselves in having done some good already; but, whenever fresh occasions offer themselves, as far as our capacity reaches we should be ready to embrace them too, for we are directed to *give a portion to seven and also to eight*, Eccl. 11:2. Note, [1.] As God has made it our duty to do good to others, so he takes care in his providence to furnish us with opportunities for it. *The poor we have always with us*, Mt. 26:11. [2.] Whenever God gives us an opportunity of being useful to others, he expects we should improve it, according to our capacity and ability. [3.] We have need of godly wisdom and discretion to direct us in the exercise of our charity or beneficence, and particularly in the choice of the proper objects of it; for, though none who stand in need of us are to be wholly overlooked, yet there is a difference to be made between some and others.

### **Verses 11-18**

The apostle, having at large established the doctrine of the gospel, and endeavoured to persuade these Christians to a behaviour agreeable to it, seems as if he intended here to have put an end to the epistle, especially when he had acquainted them that, as a particular mark of his respect for them, he had written this large letter with his own hand, and had not made use of another as his amanuensis, and only subscribed his name to it, as he was wont to do in his other epistles: but such is his affection to them such his concern to recover them from the bad impressions made upon them by their false teachers, that he cannot break off till he has once again given them the true character of those teachers, and an account of his own contrary temper and behaviour, that by comparing these together they might the more easily see how little reason they had to depart from the doctrine he had taught them and to comply with theirs.

I. He gives them the true character of those teachers who were industrious to seduce them, in several particulars. As, 1. They were men who *desired to make a fair show in the flesh*, v. 12. They were very zealous for the externals of religion, forward to observe, and to oblige others to observe, the rites of the ceremonial law, though at the same time they had little or no regard to real piety; for, as the apostle says of them in the following verse, *neither do they themselves keep the law*. Proud, vain, and carnal hearts desire nothing more than to make a fair show in the flesh, and they can easily be content with so much religion as will help them to keep up such a fair show; but frequently those have least of the substance of religion who are most solicitous to make a show of it. 2. They were men who were afraid of suffering, for they constrained the Gentile Christians to be

circumcised, *only lest they should suffer persecution for the cross of Christ*. It was not so much out of a regard to the law as to themselves; they were willing to sleep in a whole skin, and to save their worldly cargo, and cared not though they made shipwreck of faith and a good conscience. That which they chiefly aimed at was to please the Jews, and to keep up their reputation among them, and so to prevent the trouble that Paul, and other faithful professors of the doctrine of Christ, lay open to. And, 3. Another part of their character was that they were men of a party spirit, and who had no further zeal for the law than as it subserved their carnal and selfish designs; for they desired to have these Christians circumcised, *that they might glory in their flesh* (v. 13), that they might say they had gained them over to their side, and made proselytes of them, of which they carried the mark in their flesh. And thus, while they pretended to promote religion, they were the greatest enemies of it; for nothing has been more destructive to the interest of religion than men-siding and party-making.

II. He acquaints us, on the other hand, with his own temper and behaviour, or makes profession of his own faith, hope, and joy; particularly,

1. That his principle glory was in the cross of Christ: *God forbid, says he, that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ*, v. 14. By the cross of Christ is here meant his sufferings and death on the cross, or the doctrine of salvation by a crucified Redeemer. This was what the Jews stumbled at and the Greeks accounted foolishness; and the judaizing teachers themselves, though they had embraced Christianity, yet were so far ashamed of it that in compliance with the Jews, and to avoid persecution from them, they were for mixing the observance of the law of Moses with faith in Christ, as necessary to salvation. But Paul had a very different opinion of it; he was so far from being offended at the cross of Christ, or ashamed of it, or afraid to own it, that he gloried in it; yea, he desired to glory in nothing else, and rejected the thought of setting up anything in competition with it, as the object of his esteem, with the utmost abhorrence; *God forbid*, etc. This was the ground of all his hope as a Christian: this was the doctrine which, as an apostle, he was resolved to preach; and, whatever trials his firm adherence to it might bring upon him, he was ready, not only to submit to them, but to rejoice in them. Note, The cross of Christ is a good Christian's chief glory, and there is the greatest reason why we should glory in it, for to it we owe all our joys and hopes.

2. That he was dead to the world. By Christ, or by the cross of Christ, *the world was crucified to him, and he to the world*; he had experienced the power and virtue of it in weaning him from the world, and this was one great reason of his glorying in it. The false teachers were men of a worldly temper, their chief concern was about their secular interests, and therefore they accommodated their religion thereunto. But Paul was a man of another spirit; as the world had no kindness for him, so neither had he any great regard to it; he had got above both the smiles and the frowns of it, and had become as indifferent to it as one who is dying out of it. This is a temper of mind that all Christians should be labouring after; and the best way to attain it is to converse much with the cross of Christ. The higher esteem we have of him the meaner opinion shall we have of the world, and the more we contemplate the sufferings our dear Redeemer met with from the world the less likely shall we be to be in love with it.

3. That he did not lay the stress of his religion on one side or the other of the contesting interests, but on sound Christianity, v.

15. There was at that time an unhappy division among Christians; circumcision and uncircumcision had become names by which they were distinguished from each other; for (ch. 2:9, 12) the Jewish Christians are called *the circumcision*, and *those of the circumcision*. The false teachers were very zealous for circumcision; yea, to such a degree as to represent it as necessary to salvation, and therefore they did all they could to constrain the Gentile Christians to submit to it. In this they had carried the matter much further than others did; for, though the apostles connived at the use of it among the Jewish converts, yet they were by no means for imposing it upon the Gentiles. But what they laid so great a stress upon Paul made very little account of. It was indeed of great importance to the interest of Christianity that circumcision should not be imposed on the Gentile converts, and therefore this he had set himself with the utmost vigour to oppose; but as for mere circumcision or uncircumcision, whether those who embraced the Christian religion had been Jews or Gentiles, and whether they were for or against continuing the use of circumcision, so that they did not place their religion in it—this was comparatively a matter of little moment with him; for he very well knew that *in Jesus Christ*, that is, in his account, or under the Christian dispensation, *neither circumcision availed any thing nor uncircumcision*, as to men's acceptance with God, *but a new creature*. Here he instructs us both wherein real religion does not and wherein it does consist. It does not consist in circumcision or uncircumcision, in our being in this or the other denomination of Christians; but it consists in our being new creatures; not in having a new name, or putting on a new face, but in our being renewed in the spirit of our minds and having Christ formed in us: this is of the greatest account with God, and so it was with the apostle. If we compare this text with some others, we may more fully see what it is that renders us most acceptable to God, and about which we should therefore be chiefly concerned. Here we are told that it is *a new creature*, and in ch. 5:6 that it is *faith which worketh by love*, and in 1 Co. 7:19 that it is *the keeping of the commandments of God*, from all which it appears that it is a change of mind and heart, whereby we are disposed and enabled to believe in the Lord Jesus and to live a life of devotedness to God; and that where this inward, vital, practical religion is wanting, no outward professions, nor particular names, will ever stand us in any stead, or be sufficient to recommend us to him. Were Christians duly concerned to experience this in themselves, and to promote it in others, if it did not make them lay aside their distinguishing names, yet it would at least take them off from laying so great a stress upon them as they too often do. Note, Christians should take care to lay the stress of their religion where God has laid it, namely, on those things which are available to our acceptance with him; so we see the apostle did, and it is our wisdom and interest herein to follow his example. The apostle having shown what was of chief consideration in religion, and what he laid the greatest stress upon, namely, not a mere empty name or profession, but a sound and saving change, in v. 16 he pronounces a blessing upon all those who walk according to this rule: *And as many as walk according to this rule peace be upon them, and mercy upon the Israel of God*. The rule which he here speaks of may signify more generally the whole word of God, which is the complete and perfect rule of faith and life, or that doctrine of the gospel, or way of justification and salvation, which he had laid down in this epistle, namely, by faith in Christ without the works of the law; or it may be considered as more immediately referring to the new creature, of which he had just before been speaking. The blessings which he desires for those who walk according to this rule, or which he gives them the hope and prospect of (for the words may be taken either as a prayer or a promise), are *peace and*

*mercy*—peace with God and conscience, and all the comforts of this life as far as they are needful for them, and mercy, or an interest in the free love and favour of God in Christ, which are the spring and fountain of all other blessings. A foundation is laid for these in that gracious change which is wrought in them; and while they behave themselves as new creatures, and govern their lives and hopes by the rule of the gospel, they may most assuredly depend upon them. These, he declares, shall be the portion of *all the Israel of God*, by whom he means all sincere Christians, whether Jews or Gentiles, all who are Israelites indeed, who, though they may not be the natural, yet are become the spiritual seed of Abraham; these, being heirs of his faith, are also heirs together with him of the same promise, and consequently entitled to the peace and mercy here spoken of. The Jews and judaizing teachers were for confining these blessings to such as were circumcised and kept the law of Moses; but, on the contrary, the apostle declares that they belong to all who walk according to the rule of the gospel, or of the new creature, even to all the Israel of God, intimating that those only are the true Israel of God who walk according to this rule, and not that of circumcision, which they insisted so much upon, and therefore that this was the true way to obtain peace and mercy. Note, (1.) Real Christians are such as walk by rule; not a rule of their own devising, but that which God himself has prescribed to them. (2.) Even those who walk according to this rule do yet stand in need of the mercy of God. But, (3.) All who sincerely endeavour to walk according to this rule may be assured that peace and mercy will be upon them: this is the best way to have peace with God, ourselves, and others; and hereupon, as we may be sure of the favour of God now, so we may be sure that we shall find mercy with him hereafter.

4. That he had cheerfully suffered persecution for the sake of Christ and Christianity, v. 17. As the cross of Christ, or the doctrine of salvation by a crucified Redeemer, was what he chiefly gloried in, so he had been willing to run all hazards rather than he would betray this truth, or suffer it to be corrupted. The false teachers were afraid of persecution, and this was the great reason why they were zealous for circumcision, as we see, v. 12. But this was the least of Paul's concern; he was not moved at any of the afflictions he met with, *nor did he count his life dear to him, so that he might finish his course with joy, and the ministry which he had received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God*, Acts 20:24. He had already suffered much in the cause of Christ, for *he bore in his body the marks of the Lord Jesus*, the scars of those wounds which he had sustained from persecuting enemies, for his steady adherence to him, and that doctrine of the gospel which he had received from him. As from this it appeared that he was firmly persuaded of the truth and importance of it, and that he was far from being a favourer of circumcision, as they had falsely reported him to be, so hereupon, with a becoming warmth and vehemence, suitable to his authority as an apostle and to the deep concern of mind he was under, he insists upon it that no man should henceforth trouble him, namely by opposing his doctrine or authority, or by any such calumnies and reproaches as had been cast upon him; for as, both from what he had said and what he had suffered, they appeared to be highly unjust and injurious, so also those were very unreasonable who either raised or received them. Note, (1.) It may justly be presumed that men are fully persuaded of those truths in the defence of which they are willing to suffer. And (2.) It is very unjust to charge those things upon others which are contrary not only to their profession, but their sufferings too.

III. The apostle, having now finished what he intended to write for the conviction and recovery of the churches of Galatia,

concludes the epistle with his apostolical benediction, v. 18. He calls them his brethren, wherein he shows his great humility, and the tender affection he had for them, notwithstanding the ill treatment he had met with from them; and takes his leave of them with this very serious and affectionate prayer, that *the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ may be with their spirit*. This was a usual farewell wish of the apostle's, as we see, Rom. 16:20, 24, and 1 Co. 16:23. And herein he prays that they might enjoy the favour of Christ, both in its special effects and its sensible evidences, that they might receive from him all that grace which was needful to guide them in their way, to strengthen them in their work, to establish them in their Christian course, and to encourage and comfort them under all the trials of life and the prospect of death itself. This is fitly called *the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ*, as he is both the sole purchaser and the appointed dispenser of it; and though these churches had done enough to forfeit it, by suffering themselves to be drawn into an opinion and practice highly dishonourable to Christ, as well as dangerous to them, yet, out of his great concern for them, and knowing of what importance it was to them, he earnestly desires it on their behalf; yea, that it might *be with their spirit*, that they might continually experience the influences of it upon their souls, disposing and enabling them to act with sincerity and uprightness in religion. We need desire no more to make us happy than the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. This the apostle begs for these Christians, and therein shows us what we are chiefly concerned to obtain; and, both for their and our encouragement to hope for it, he adds his *Amen*.