

A SHORT SUMMARY

OF THE

EPISTLE TO THE GALATIANS.



The Epistle to the Galatians was written in view of certain Judaizing teachers who were spreading their doctrines amongst the Christian assemblies in Galatia. The Apostle had planted these assemblies after his second departure from Antioch attended by Silas, and afterwards Timothy as his companions (Acts xvi. 6). Just previously to this, (Acts xv.) the conference, held at Jerusalem, had settled that it was not necessary for the Gentiles to keep the law of Moses, only that they were to abstain from meats offered to idols, from things strangled, from blood, and from fornication. Notwithstanding all this these Judaizers had come down from Jerusalem, apparently with supposed authority from the twelve Apostles, and after Paul's departure were spreading their legal notions amongst the Christians in Galatia. The consequence of their teaching was that the Galatian Christians were losing all their liberty in the Gospel. It was taught that, besides Christ, it was necessary to be circumcised and to keep the law, and, of course, all the bondage and fear resulting from such teaching was the result; and as they had put themselves under the law, which was the measure of God's just requirements from man in the flesh, so they were requiring from one another,

and the consequence was they were biting and devouring one another (See Gal. v. 15, 16). Sad result of law teaching pressed on the saints!

Now Paul's ministry had been a direct contrast to all this. His was a ministry given him from Christ in glory. He had never known Christ after the flesh. The first time he had seen Him was in the glory. A Christ then, who had entered the glory after having been to the cross and settled every question of sin, was the theme of his ministry. The message he brought had the effect of detaching the soul from its Adam connection, for the cross was the judgment of everything that was of Adam, and of attaching it to Christ in glory, the second Man the Lord from heaven. It was a ministry of righteousness and of the Spirit. Of righteousness because the righteousness of God manifested in a glorified Christ, and, by His death and resurrection, was ministered to man, and so no longer a righteousness demanded from them, which the law was; of the Spirit, because Christ, the second Adam, was the quickening Spirit, and so the resurrection life of the dead, risen and victorious Christ was communicated to the souls that received it. Thus the believer was constituted a dead and risen man. He was connected with the dead and risen Man in glory, made partaker of His life and righteousness, and the Spirit of God had sealed him in that new position. In that place he was waiting for the return of the Lord from heaven. To put then a Christian back under law was to put him back as if he were living in the dispensation before the cross. This is what the Apostle calls falling from grace (Chap. v. 4.)

Alas, is not this the state of a great part of the best part of Christendom in the present day? If Roman Catholicism, as a system, needs the Epistle

to the Romans, do not many of the Protestant churches, who boast of superior light and the truth of justification by faith, need the Epistle to the Galatians. Do we not see a tendency amongst the teachers to preach Christ indeed for forgiveness of sins, but after that, to put back those who have received the gospel under law, in order to maintain themselves in that salvation. If they don't keep the law as Christians, they are said to have fallen from grace. Sad perversion of the truth of God! Why, those very teachers who are pressing law on the Christian, or mixing up law and grace together, are themselves fallen from grace. (Gal. v. 1-4.)

But before I go on I would just say a word as to the difference of the ministry of the twelve Apostles and Paul's. There was evidently a slowness of heart on the part of the former to understand God's purposes of grace during this present time. They had known Christ in the flesh on earth. But such a Christ was Christ fulfilling the promises of God made to the fathers in reference to Israel. He was to be Messiah, their King, redeeming and delivering them from their enemies, and making them the great central nation of the earth, with the Gentiles as second and their tributaries. Such will it be in the millennium. The Apostles were very slow to believe in the necessity of Christ's death and rejection by Israel. We see it in the Lord's conversations with His disciples after His resurrection. And it was true the Lord was still bearing with Israel, even after the resurrection. If the nation had repented, as Peter testified (Acts iii.), the Messiah would at once have come again and set up His kingdom. But God had other purposes in view, and Paul was the great vessel for the communication of these future purposes of God.

All the ministerial commissions, likewise given to

the twelve, dated from the earth. (See Matt. xxviii., Mark xvi., Luke xxiv.) The first had reference to the new form the kingdom of heaven was to take amongst all nations referred to in Matt. xiii.; the second to carrying the Gospel to every creature; the third to grace offered universally to man from the second Man, but beginning at Jerusalem. But none of these commissions do we read of as having ever been carried out by the twelve. They began at Jerusalem true, but never went beyond, I mean as far as the scriptural history gives us the account of them, though still keeping up the link with the Jewish remnant. Paul therefore had to be called out as God's special instrument for the carrying out of God's purposes. The twelve appear to have been able to follow Christ up to heaven till the cloud received Him out of their sight, and they also prophesied of His future kingdom and glory, but there their ministry stopped. Afterwards, no doubt, they received the full communication of truth from the Apostle Paul as we read in Eph. iii., but that was the general character of their ministry. Christ on earth, rejected, raised from the dead, ascended too, but unseen, and coming again to set up His kingdom and glory.*

Now, the Apostle Paul's ministry filled up the gap between the time of the cloud receiving the Lord out of sight and His return. Israel having rejected the testimony of grace, Christ had taken a new place at the right hand of God, God's righteousness for all men; besides the Holy Ghost had come down and those that had believed, and received God's righteousness, whether Jew or Gentile, were

* Peter speaks in his epistles of the heavenly calling and the government of the Father over the saints travelling through the wilderness: John of eternal life in us, but the saints are still looked at on earth.

united to Christ where He was by the Holy Ghost come down, baptized by the Holy Ghost into one body, and builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit. It was no longer a question of God dealing with a nation on earth, whether in law or grace, but of God taking out of the earth a people for His Name, as, indeed, James bore witness to in Acts xv. This people, then, called out of the earth, had their portion and link with Christ in glory; not only was their calling heavenly, but their present standing heavenly, their hope was heavenly, Christ was coming again before the kingdom to take this people away to glory, that where He was there they might be also. (See 1 Thess. iv. 14.)

The ministry connected with this Christ is called the ministry of righteousness and of the Spirit (2 Cor. iii.) That connected with Israel and the earth is characterized by being a ministry of death and condemnation, preparing, indeed, the way for Christ, but not to be taken out of its place and applied to a condition of things to which it did not apply at all.

Now these Judaizing teachers were applying the ministry of death and condemnation to the Christians in Galatia, who had been taught by the Apostle Paul, that they had been entirely delivered from such a ministry and its results by Christ's death. No wonder then the great Apostle was broken-hearted as he wrote to them. In chaps. i. ii. he establishes his ministry as being not of man, nor by man, but by Jesus Christ, the glorified Man, and God the Father who had raised Him from the dead. In chap. iii., too, he argues out the difference between law and grace, showing that the gift of the Spirit, justification, life, the inheritance and the nature and position of children were all received, not on the principle of law, but by grace through faith.

From chap. iv. 7-31 he pleads with the Galatians as a father with his children, contrasting himself with these teachers that had come in and were spoiling his work, and making them hear the law if they would be under it at the end, showing from it the difference between Judaism and Christianity. In chap. v. he exhorts them to stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ had made them free, bringing out the principles of Christian walk in contrast with that of law requirement. Chap. vi. closes the letter, and sums it all, bringing out in three verses a short summary of the whole of the Christian's individual standing and rule for walk, and begs that no man might henceforth trouble him, as he had already the marks of Christ's rejection branded on his body. Thus the Apostle links most blessedly a ministry which is characterized as being not of man, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ, with all the blessed foundation truths of grace which are so dear to us all, showing thereby where those truths are to be found, in any day, in contrast with the darkness which characterized the teachings of man constituted law teachers, and their sad results on those that hear them.

But let us now pursue our Epistle. Paul was an Apostle, not of man, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father who had raised Him from the dead. God the Father had raised the Lord Jesus from the dead as the honor put upon Him for what He had done; (Rom. vi, 4) had seated Him in the glory, and it was in that position that the Lord revealed Himself to Paul, and sent him forth to be His servant. Paul then was a witness of the glory of Christ and of the honor that God the Father had put upon the Son of His love after He had been to the cross and fully accomplished His will in dying for our sins. He was witness of the grace that had

saved him and given him a place in connection with the Son, as a child of the heavenly family, after he had gone to the very utmost extent of enmity against Him that any man could have done.

He joins with all the brethren in Galatia, in addressing the Galatian assemblies, saluting them with grace and peace from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for our sins that He might deliver us from this present evil age, according to the will of God and the Father, to whom be glory for ever and ever, amen.

It was not the will of God now that the Jewish kingdom should be set up. The Jews had joined with the Gentiles in murdering the King. All links were broken off with a world that had murdered Christ. If a man became a Christian it was by being delivered from this present evil world, by the death of Christ which proclaimed the world's judgment. This is characteristic of this Epistle, for the Galatians, in going back to Judaism, were going back to a system that had crucified the Messiah, and which had therefore become the world. Paul calls it later on in the Epistle the elements of the world.

We have no recommendations given to the saints in this Epistle, like even at Corinth. The Apostle seems so grieved at heart with the denial of all the Christian principles of grace that was going on in Galatia that he bursts out at once in the exclamation, "I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel, which is not another, for there be some that trouble you and would pervert the Gospel of Christ." It was another gospel, according to the Apostle, to add law to grace. He continues, "Though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which

we have preached unto you, let him be accursed; as we said before, so say I now again, if any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed." Even in the Apostle's letter to the Corinthians, where there were all kinds of evils going on in their midst, we read no such language as that spoken here. Immorality was bad enough, yet the Apostle could recommend the Corinthians for some things, and he begins the letter by doing it, but here was a total giving up of the doctrines of grace, for law and grace could not go on together. Hence the preacher of any other gospel than that of pure grace was cursed. Solemn warning to preachers, and to the saints of God of this day.

Oh! how these strong warnings should be listened to by the teachers of this day, and oh, how careful Christians should be as to those they go to hear. The Apostle links the Galatians to himself in verses 8 and 9; he had preached the Gospel to them (verse 8), and they had received it (verse 9). Any that preached any other gospel than that which the Apostle had preached, or that which they had received, was anathema. Was the Apostle a pleaser of man, or did he seek to please God? if he pleased man he should not be a servant of Christ. In truth, the Gospel he had preached to the Galatians was not after man, for the Apostle had neither received it from men, neither was he taught it of them, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ. Thus he makes clear, that neither the servant himself (verse 1), nor the Gospel he preached (verse 2), was of man, nor from man.

These Judaisers might boast of having their commission from the twelve Apostles, who themselves were sent out directly from the Lord on earth: the Apostle was neither himself come from such a

source, nor his message. Jesus Christ from the glory had directly called him out, and had given him his message, and he gives his history in the remainder of chapter i. and chapter ii. to prove these points. The Galatians had heard of his conversation in time past in the Jewish religion, how that beyond measure he had persecuted the Assembly of God and wasted it; and had profited in the Jews' religion above many his own equals in the nation, being more exceedingly jealous of the traditions of his fathers. Such had been his history before his conversion.

But when it pleased God, who had separated Paul from his mother's womb, and called him by His grace to reveal His glorified Son in his heart by the Holy Ghost, that he might preach Him to the heathen, immediately, he conferred not with flesh and blood; he did not go to Jerusalem, to them who were Apostles before him, but went into Arabia, and afterwards returned to Damascus. About three years after he went up to Jerusalem to see Peter, and abode with him fifteen days. But other of the the Apostles he saw none save James, the Lord's brother. Afterwards he came into the regions of Syria and Cilicia, and was unknown even in face to the Assemblies of God in Judea, which were in Christ. They had only heard that he that had persecuted the Assembly in times past, now was preaching the faith he once destroyed. And they glorified God in the Apostle. Thus does the Apostle prove by his history how independent he was of man as the Lord's servant, how neither also did he get his gospel from man, but directly from Jesus Christ.

CHAPTER II.

But though in all this he shows himself perfectly independent of man, having received his commis-

sion and his gospel from Jesus Christ ; and although he shows that after his conversion, he had not consulted with flesh and blood : he shows at the same time in this chapter how he carried on this work in guarding the unity of the Church.

It was a great crisis in the history of the Church. (See Acts xv.) The other Apostles had in a sense failed as to carrying out the commission entrusted to them in Matt. xxviii. 18-20. They always seemed to have held to what the prophets said, that the Jewish nation was to be the centre of God's kingdom on the earth, and they were blind to God's present purposes as to the calling out of the Church. They therefore only preached the Gospel to the Jews, who were all still zealous for the law. Paul had therefore been called out to preach the Gospel to the Gentiles. In the meantime also, those who were scattered abroad by the persecution of Stephen had gone everywhere, preaching the Gospel, See Acts viii. ix., and had got down as far as Antioch doing the same. Here a number of Gentiles turned to the Lord. (Acts xi. 19-26.) Antioch from that time became the centre for preaching to the Gentiles, whilst Jerusalem remained the centre for the Jews. The Jewish Christians wanted at this time to force the Gentile Christians to be circumcised, and to keep the law of Moses. (Acts xv.) Paul and Barnabas contended with them on this point. Would there be a division on account of this? That was the question. The disciples at Antioch decide to send Paul and Barnabas to Jerusalem. (Acts xv. 2.) Paul gets a revelation at the same time from heaven to go. (Gal., chap ii. 2.) He sets off with Titus, who being a Greek was not compelled to be circumcised ; and that because of false brethren crept in, who came in privily to spy out their liberty which they had in Christ ; that they might bring them

into bondage. He communicated his Gospel which he preached amongst the Gentiles, to the Apostles privately. This was God's wisdom given him, in order that he might not have run or labored in vain. He gives way in nothing, and in conference receives nothing from the Apostles. On the contrary when they saw that the Gospel of the uncircumcision was committed to him, as the Gospel of the circumcision was unto Peter; when James, Cephas and John who seemed to be pillars saw the grace that was given to Paul, they gave to him and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship, that they should go unto the heathen, whilst they, the twelve, should go to the circumcision. Paul charged himself at the same time to remember the poor. Thus the Gentiles had their liberty preserved to them, and the ministry of Paul was recognized by the Assembly at Jerusalem. It was settled not to be necessary for the Gentiles to keep the law of Moses, only to keep themselves from things offered to idols, from things strangled, from blood, and from fornication. The unity of the Church was thus preserved, and a great check given to the Judaisers.

In connection with the same thing the Apostle relates an event that took place between him and Peter, the Apostle of the circumcision, at Antioch, which brings out more than ever the independence of his ministry from man. When Peter came down to Antioch after the Jerusalem conference, Paul withstood him to the face because he was to be blamed. For before that certain came from James, he ate with the Gentiles, but when they were come he withdrew himself, fearing them of the circumcision. The other Jews likewise dissembled with him, and even Barnabas himself was carried away by the dissimulation. When therefore the Apostle Paul saw that they walked not rightly according

to the truth of the Gospel, he withstood Peter to the face, before them all, and said, "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?"

It would seem a small matter this to cause a division, but in reality it involved the whole truth of the Gospel. Under the law the Jews were the privileged people, and they were forbidden to eat with the Gentiles. They had a higher position in the flesh before God, for under that system and before Christ man was still under trial. Circumcision was their mark of separation after the flesh, but Paul's Gospel declared all alike to be sinners, there was no difference now between Jew and Gentile, all had sinned and come short of the glory of God, and that God justified all alike by His grace through faith through the redemption that was in Christ Jesus.

Thus, though a small matter to the outward eye, it involved the whole truth of justification by faith, and the difference between Judaism and Christianity. He appeals to Peter, and reminds him how they, being Jews and not sinners of the Gentiles, having found out that there was no justification by works of law, had believed in Jesus Christ, that they might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law, for by the works of the law could no flesh be justified.

Thus they had left the law and its claims to be justified by Christ. But if, after they had sought to be justified by Christ, they themselves were found sinners after all in doing so, (sinners of the Gentiles as the Judaisers would say), was Christ then the minister of sin? That Peter would not allow, surely. God forbid. But then, on the other hand, Peter was now going back and building the

things he destroyed, and by so doing was making himself a transgressor of the law, in having departed from it. Thus he had brought himself into a nice fix. The truth was, law and Christ could not go together. I through the law am dead to the law, says the Apostle, that I might live unto God; and how is that, Paul? I am crucified with Christ, I have died in Him to all that state and condition, when I had those privileges as a man in the flesh; nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me, and the life I now live in the flesh, is not by the rule of the law, but by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me. To go back to law would be to frustrate the grace or free favor of God, for if righteousness came by law, then Christ was dead in vain. You could then be justified without His death at all,—it was a practical denial that man was a sinner and under the power and dominion of sin.

Thus this little apparent question of eating or not eating with the Gentiles brought up the whole question of Judaism and Christianity, of law and grace. There could be no compromise now. The system that had circumcision and the law, and would press them as binding on the Gentiles, had crucified Christ. He had risen as the justified Man to be the Centre and Head of a new creation, and all who had believed on Him were justified from all things, delivered entirely from that whole system; they had died with Christ, to the law and to all its claims, which had been fulfilled by Christ, and now He was their life, and lived in them, and the life they now lived in the flesh was not by the rule of the law, but by faith of the Son of God, who had loved them and given Himself for them. We have two things pressed here; 1st, justification by faith, to all alike Jew or Gentile; 2nd, life in a new position

by being crucified with Christ and dead to the law. The presence of the Spirit as the seal (chap. iii. 1-5) completes the Christian's state.

CHAPTER III.

Having now shown that His ministry was perfectly independent of men, and derived from Jesus Christ alone, the Apostle now turns directly to the Galatian Christians and presses his doctrine on them, thus bringing out that all the blessed foundation truths of Christianity are linked with a ministry that is not of man, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ.

Oh, foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you that ye should not obey the truth, before whom Jesus Christ hath been manifestly set forth, crucified amongst you! This only would the Apostle learn of them, Had they received the Spirit by the works of the law or by the hearing of faith? Were they so foolish, having begun in the Spirit, to think to be now made perfect by the flesh, in keeping the law, for the law was addressed to man in the flesh. But there was suffering, too, connected with this confession of Christ, who had been crucified by the Jewish nation. Had they then suffered so many things in vain, if it were yet in vain? He then that ministered the Spirit to them, and worked miracles amongst them, did he do it by the works of the law or by the hearing of faith? Thus he reminds them that their reception of the Spirit, as well as any present ministry of it that benefitted them, was all theirs by the hearing of faith, and not on the principle of works. The reception of the Spirit connected them with Christ, the glorified Man in heaven, who had given Himself for their sins, to deliver them entirely by His death and resurrection from this present evil age. It was the seal of their

deliverance and their sure pledge for the glory, and what wanted they more.

From verse 6-14 the Apostle shows that their justification was on the principle of faith, and not by the law, going back to the example of Abraham the father of the Jewish nation, as well as of them that believe, to prove this point. The promises that refer to blessing to all nations are specially pressed (Gen. xii. 3) as referring specially to Gentiles, to whom he was speaking. It was the Gospel preached to Abraham which came both before law and circumcision, and intimating unconditional blessing to the Gentiles. Abraham is thus set before us not only as the father of the Jewish nation, with its special privileges, but also father of the family of faith and the root of blessing to all nations.

He is therefore now brought forward as the great example for justification by faith, and verse 6-9 show us the blessings that faith gives. 1st, righteousness; 2nd, the position of being children of Abraham; 3rdly, of being blessed with faithful Abraham. Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness. Know therefore that they which are of faith are the children of Abraham. So the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the Gospel to Abraham, saying, "In thee shall all nations be blessed;" so then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham. This was an all important principle to establish, for Abraham being the father of the Jewish nation, and he having been justified by faith, long before the law came in, was the example to every Jewish mind. If unconditional blessing was promised to all nations in him, and that before law and circumcision, what had the Judaisers to say to that? Thus

the blessing of justification to Gentiles was established on the principle of faith and not on the principle of works of law.

The law, on the contrary, given to the Jewish nation, verses 10–13 could only give: 1st, the curse; 2ndly, it could not justify; 3rdly, its principle was, demanding obedience to gain life. For as many as were of the works of the law, were under the *curse*; as it was written, cursed is every one that continueth not in all things written in the law to do them. But that *no man was justified* by the works of the law it was evident, for Habakkuk said, the just shall live by *faith*. And the law was not of faith, for the man that *doeth* them shall live in them.

But how was the Jew to get out from under the curse of the law, which could not justify, and which promised life, on the condition of obedience? And how was anybody to enter into the blessings which came by faith, and to receive the promise of the Holy Spirit? Christ was the answer. He hath redeemed us (Jews) the Apostle says, from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree; that the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith. Thus the double blessing came to the Gentiles, 1st the promises of unconditional blessings to all nations, made good in Christ to believers; 2ndly that which is distinctive of this dispensation, the promise of the Spirit. Both are received by faith.

Thus we have, 1st the Spirit; 2ndly promises; 3rdly law; 4thly Christ. In Christ the promises are fulfilled. He bears the curse of the law, and by His resurrection the blessings are made good to every believer. He is brought into the blessing of

Abraham, and receives the Spirit as the seal of it all.

From v. 15 to the end, the promises and the law are contrasted in reference to the inheritance and the heirs of this inheritance. The Apostle shews the real use of the law, as well as the time during which it lasted. It performed the office of school-master to the Jewish heirs whilst under age and until the time that Christ came. Christ is then introduced, and the promises are all accomplished in Him, so that by His death and resurrection we are introduced into the position of children by faith, and by baptism we have put on Christ.

The Apostle Paul takes the example of a covenant made between men. When once that covenant is made and confirmed, no one thinks of adding to it, or disannulling it. Now the promises were made to Abraham and his seed. (Gen. xii. 3, xxii. 18, xxvi. 4.) They were first made with Abraham, (Gen. xii. 3), and then confirmed to his seed. Chap. xxii. 18, xxvi. 4). Not to seeds as of many, but to Isaac, who was a type of Christ. Therefore the promise, "In thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed," was made and confirmed to Christ. Well, this is what the Apostle says, that the covenant that was confirmed before of God to *Christ, the law which was four hundred years after could not disannull, so as to make the promise of none effect; for if the inheritance were of the law, it was no more of promise; but God gave it to Abraham by promise. It was the inheritance of blessing to all nations, which will be fully accomplished in the millennium, but the principle is applied as a present

* Signifying "unto Christ." I would add that the promise was confirmed to the seed after he had been typically given up to death, and raised from the dead. (Gen. xxii.) Thus the blessing to all nations goes out on the ground of the death and resurrection of Christ.

thing to those who believe; they are heirs with Christ to this inheritance, as we see further down clearly brought out. Here he establishes the great point that the inheritance at the end of the journey, is by promise. The promise was made and confirmed to the seed. The law which came after could not break or disannul it.

Well, says some one, what is the use of the law? It was added in order to transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made. Till the law came there was no transgression. There was sin; but I must have a rule, to transgress it. So the law was not given because transgression was there, but in order that it might be there. The law entered that the offence might abound. (Comp. Rom. iv. 15, v. 20.)* And during what time did it last? It commenced, as we have seen, 430 years after that the promises were made. It lasted till Christ came, the true seed to whom the promises were made. How ordained? Through a mediator, not like the promises of God; coming direct from God only to the seed without a mediator, but by angels in the hands of a mediator; and it is clear that in the case of a mediator there are two persons in question, and the mediator comes between them to settle the claims of each, which was not the case in regard to the promises; God only was there, and he to whom the promises were made.

Then can it be that the law is contrary to the promises of God? In no way let it be thought so; for if

* A bridge is built, and a man trots over it in his carriage, without transgression, for there is no law against it; but presently a law is passed and a notice stuck up on the bridge of a penalty attached to the going over the bridge at a faster rate than a walk; the man now in doing so transgresses the law. So it was with the law of Moses. It was added in order to transgressions, to test man.

there had been a law which could have given life, truly justice should have been by the law ; but the Scripture, on the contrary, shut up everybody under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to every believer. Thus the law was not against the promises of God ; for these reasons, that it could neither give life nor righteousness, neither was it given to this end, but to give the knowledge of sin. In this way it was rather in their favor, for the Jews, under law, having been convinced of sin by it, were shut up by it to the faith which was about to be revealed. So the law was a kind of schoolmaster to the Jews until Christ came, in order that they might be justified by faith.

Christ is now introduced as the consummation of the blessing. The dispensation of faith has come in with Him, so that the believing Jew was no longer under a schoolmaster ; as also the believing Gentiles were all now the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus ; for as many as had been baptized unto Christ had put on Christ, *i. e.*, put Him on outwardly, not received Him inwardly. Faith was connected with the inward reality, baptism with the outward profession. In this new position there was neither Jew nor Gentile, neither bond nor free, neither male nor female ; they were all one in Christ Jesus, members of the one family of God ; but then if they were in Christ, they were the real children of Abraham, and heirs, according to the promise. The inheritance, indeed is not entered into yet by the heirs, but the great point is, it is established on the ground of promise and faith, which the law could not disannul, Christ, the true heir, has come, to whom the promises were made and confirmed, and by Him we are introduced into a new position and made heirs according to the promise ; and members of the family of God.

CHAPTER IV.

What advantage have we then over the saints of the old testament? Have they no place with us, as heirs of this inheritance? Yes, surely, but they were in the position of heirs under age, and as such differed nothing from servants, though really to be lords of all. They were under tutors and governors, under the tutelage of the law and the prophets until the time appointed of the Father. But when the fullness of time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, (for the Gentile) made under the law, (for the Jew) to redeem them that were under the law, that they might receive the adoption of sons; now to become sons of full age, in contrast to their position in the preceding dispensation. God had also sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying Abba, Father. Our position is then no longer that of servants, but of sons, and if sons then heirs of God through Christ.

Here is the full individual Christian position, in this Epistle. It does not rise to the height of Ephesian truth, *i.e.*, union with Christ as members of His body, seated in the heavenlies in Him, but shows the new position of the Christian on earth. He is taken out of his old Adam standing, and introduced into the family of God, not only having the *nature* of a son, as old testament saints, but the *position* of a son; having also the Holy Ghost indwelling him, bearing witness with his spirit that he is a child of God. This line of blessing, begins with the promises given to Abraham, made unconditionally, and confirmed to his seed. The law which came 430 years after could not disannul these promises. It was added in order to transgressions; was not against the promises, for it was not given either to give life or righteousness, but to give the knowledge of sin. Hence it only brought out all the more the neces-

sity for the promises to be fulfilled. The line of blessing ends then with the accomplishment of the promises in Christ, and we are made children of God by faith in Him, heirs according to the promise, delivered from a state of servitude, adopted into the family of God, and sealed with the Holy Ghost—Oh what a blessed place! God is our Father; Christ in glory is the first-born Son of the family, we are the other sons, and the Holy Spirit gives us the spirit of adoption, calling Abba, Father.

The Apostle now applies the truth more directly to his Galatian converts, and in short words, recalls their history, verses 8-10. They had left idol worship in order to know God, but now that they knew God, or rather were known of God, how was it that they were turning again to Judaism, which he calls here the beggarly elements, whereunto they were desiring to be in bondage. They were observing days and months and times, and years. He was afraid of them, lest all his labour bestowed on them should have been in vain. In verses 8, 9 we have the two religious systems of the ancient world described, and the knowledge of God put in between them. Both were antagonistic to the mind of God, and the cross of Christ gives them their proper character, both having been associated together in His murder. The Galatians at the beginning of their Christian career had been taught this specially in reference to the Gentile system; but the end of this Epistle was to show them that the Jewish religion was as antagonistic as the other, and it was as necessary for the Jew under the law to be redeemed and delivered from their system, as it was for the Gentile to be delivered from theirs. Before the cross, true, the Jewish system was God's religion on earth, but it only proved the Jew utterly bad, and was the strength of sin, so that it was as necessary

to be delivered from it as from sin. The death and resurrection of Christ was the means of the deliverance. Thus if the Gentiles after being delivered from idol worship, went back to Judaism, they went back to the world.

Thus having shown the Galatians their true relationship with God, and their responsibilities flowing from such a place; from v. 12-20 the Apostle puts himself forward as an example for them, and pleads their relations with himself. He besought them to be as he was, *i. e.* outside Judaism, for he was truly as they, and they had not injured him. With infirmity of the flesh he had preached the Gospel to them; and yet they did not despise him, but received him as an angel of God even as Jesus Christ. They were ready at that time to pull out their eyes and give them to him. But oh, how the gold had become dim! Was Paul indeed become their enemy for telling them the truth? He then compares himself with the false teachers, who were indeed zealous towards the Galatians, but it was all for their own selfish ends. They would exclude Paul and others like him from communion, in order that the Galatians might be zealously affected towards them. But it was good to be zealously affected always in good, and not only when Paul was present with them. He then pleads with them as a father with his children, showing the travail of his soul as it were in birth until Christ was formed in them, as He had been indeed in him. (Comp. chap. i. 16.) He desired to be still with them and to change his voice, for he was really in perplexity about their state.

From v. 21-31, in effect he does change his language. But how all this earnestness of the great Apostle should stir us up to be earnest towards our fellow Christians when they want to put them-

selves back under the law after coming to Christ. It does not do to be satisfied with their being born again—our effort should be to point them to a glorified Christ for their deliverance as well as for their pardon. Not till then will Christ be formed in them; not till then will they have done with law teachers, and be free to be led by the Spirit as sons of God. But alas! for the sad tendency of the heart to be in bondage. So the Apostle will make them hear the law. He will take them back to the history of Ishmael and Isaac to show the difference between Judaism and Christianity. The first, Ishmael, was by a bond-maid, born after the flesh. The last was by a free woman, born after promise. These things were an allegory; and typified the two covenants. Agar typifying that given at Mount Sinai, the law; which gendereth to bondage, and which answered to the earthly Jerusalem, which was under bondage with her children; whereas Sarah was a type of Jerusalem above, which was our mother, that is of the spiritual seed. (Comp. Isaiah liv. 1). Now we belong to Isaac, the child of promise, and as he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit, so was it now. But what said the Scripture? 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. Thus the Galatians did not belong to the seed under law, but were children of the free woman.*

* It would be interesting to follow out the history of Abraham, as a type of God's dispensational dealings in promise, law, and grace; 1st, in Gen. xv, 4, we have God's promise of the heir; 2ndly, in Gen. xvi. we have Hagar and Ishmael, a type of the law and Israel after the flesh; 3rd, in Gen. xxi. we have the heir born, a type of Christ, by whom grace came, and Ishmael type of the children of the flesh cast out. We might add, Gen. xxii., as the type of the death and resurrection of the heir, and Gen. xxiv., as a type of the Father sending the Holy Ghost down from Heaven to seek a bride for the heir. This latter truth, however, is not entered into in this epistle.

This ends the 2nd part of the Epistle (chap. iii., iv.), where life, righteousness, son-ship and the inheritance are shown to be not on the principle of law, but on the principle of grace. Gal. iii. 1-14 showed that the gift of the Spirit and justification were received on the same principle. Gal. iii. 1-14 agrees with the doctrine of Rom. iii.-v. 1-12. Gal. iii. 15 to end of iv. with Rom. v. 12,-viii.

CHAPTER V.

The Apostle now proceeds to the walk of the believer. He would have them, therefore, stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ had made them free, and not be entangled again with any yoke of bondage. By the death and resurrection of Christ, they were not only forgiven and justified, but delivered entirely from their old state as children of Adam. They had been crucified with Christ, had died for faith out of their old condition, as also to the law which applied to them in that condition, and had been introduced by Christ risen into the new position of sons. Christ glorified was their life and lived in them. The Spirit of God's Son had been sent down from this glorified Christ into their hearts, whereby they cried, Abba, Father. This was no getting back to the state of the upright Adam before he fell, but a going forward into the state of the second man risen and ascended, so that they were associated with Him in a new position. Consequently there was no falling away, for Christ was their life, a life which had been fully tested during thirty-three years of unparalleled trial and suffering and had proved victorious even over death itself. This was the life they were to stand fast in. To go back to the law after they had received it was to reinstate the old Adam life, which was ended for faith at the cross. Circumcision was the

great sign of introduction into the legal system, wherefore Paul says, that if they were circumcised, they were debtors to keep the whole law. Christ was become of none effect to them; in fact if they went back to the law it became a matter of justification by it, and they were fallen from grace. To choose the law after having received Christ by faith, was to commit adultery. (Comp. Romans vii. 1-4. It was to get off the platform of grace on to that of law.

Reader, I pray you notice this, for men stand up and preach that falling from grace is if you commit a sin after you are justified. Why the fact is, if a man says that if a child of God sins he is lost, he puts him back under law, and he himself has fallen from grace. Those very law teachers who prate about falling from grace, are themselves the very ones who are off the platform of grace. The walk of the Christian is not maintained by keeping the law, but by faith: "We, through the Spirit, wait for the hope of righteousness, *by faith*." The life I live in the flesh is by *the faith* of the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. (Gal. ii. 20.) For in Christ Jesus, neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision, but *faith* which worketh by love. The moment faith realises Christ in glory, life is communicated to the soul, and its character is love. It is thus that faith works by love, and love is the fulfilling of the law. Compare 2 Cor. iii. 17 and Rom. xiii. 8-10, with verses 13, 14 of this chapter. The Christian walks in the liberty of the new creation which loves God. Here below it is a life of faith, for we wait for the hope of righteousness, *i. e.*, Christ coming. (Comp. Phil. iii. 8, 9.)

All this part of the Epistle from v. 5 refers to the Christian walk. There are two great principles

brought out in connection with it; 1st, it is a walk by faith, (v. 5, 6); 2ndly, v. 16, it is a walk in the Spirit. It is *the race of faith* (compare Heb. xii. 1) he is speaking of, v. 7, but the Galatians were hindered in running it. He who had called them to the Gospel had not hindered them; these law teachers had; but the young converts were to know that a little leaven leavened the whole lump. Nevertheless he had confidence in the Lord about them, and they that opposed and troubled them, should bear their judgment. There was no persecution connected with preaching circumcision. There was in preaching the cross of Christ. He would they were cut off that troubled them; for they had been called unto liberty, only he would not have them use that liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love to serve one another, for all the law was fulfilled in that one word, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. The effect of preaching the law on the contrary was to produce the contrary effect, and to excite divisions and quarrels. The law caused sin to revive, and thus excited the lusts of the flesh, which ought to be reckoned dead, and only produced fruits unto death; (Comp. Rom. vii.), whilst if they walked in the Spirit, they would not fulfil the lusts of the flesh, and thus the righteousness of the law would be fulfilled in them. (Comp. Rom. viii. 3, 4.)

Here we have the second great principle of the Christian walk; *walk in the Spirit*. The character of the flesh never changes. It is always the same, even in the Christian. Tried without law, it proves itself lawless, as before the flood; tried under law, it breaks it, as illustrated at Mount Sinai. Tried under Christ, it rejects and crucifies Him. Tried under the Spirit, it resists the Holy Ghost. See Acts vii. In the Christian it lusts against the

Spirit, in order to prevent him doing the things which he would. But glory be to God, by grace we are delivered, and if led by the Spirit, we are not under the law. Verses 19–21 show the works of the flesh. The two great principles of corruption and violence compose its deeds. (Comp. Gen. vi. 11, 13.) Verses 22, 23 on the contrary show us the fruits of the Spirit, and the law cannot condemn such things. Christian liberty thus produces fruit, the flesh having been crucified with its affections and lusts. The law on the contrary exacts obedience from the flesh, which is thus looked at as alive. Christian life is by the Spirit, the flesh being reckoned dead and fruits follow. (Comp. Rom. viii. 10.) If we live in the Spirit; let us therefore walk in the Spirit. A man can glorify himself under the law, measuring himself with others by it, and envy is the result, but under grace he cannot, for he possesses nothing but what he has received.

CHAPTER VI.

The double principle then of the Christian walk is, 1st, walking by faith, that is by an object outside myself, which is the glorified Man at the right hand of God, this faith working by a new nature of love, communicated the moment I believe, and 2ndly, walking in the Spirit, that is in the power of the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven who dwells in me, and enables me to show God's character to the world. Thus knowing my absolute weakness and need of dependence on this power, as well as sensible of the grace which gives me such power, I am asked to show grace to others; and if any brother is overtaken in a fault, he that is spiritual is to restore such a one in the spirit of meekness, considering himself, lest he also

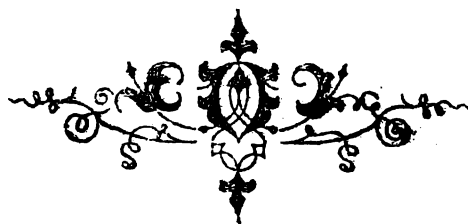
be tempted. The law of Christ was to bear one another's burdens, instead of finding fault with one another continually, or requiring my brother to love me as himself. A fault finding spirit was to think one's self something, but grace had put the Christian in the place of nothingness. Let every one then prove his own work, and then he would have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another, for every one should bear his own burdens. Those who were taught in the Word were privileged to communicate help in temporal things to their teachers. Verses 6-10 are general exhortations in allusion to this, the Apostle alluding to God's general principles of government in this world, as to reaping corruption or reward, and this principle is of all importance to see; whilst grace saves eternally. The government of God blesses, on the contrary, according to a man's works. In the case of the child of God, he is under the government of the Father, who now judges him according to his works. See 1 Peter i. 14-17, Heb. xii. The world will be judged afterwards. The child of God is judged now.

From v. 12-16 he sums up the whole epistle, in a few words, 1st, referring to the law teachers who were the occasion of his writing the epistle. They wanted to make a fair show in the flesh, and so constrained the Galatians to be circumcised; but all the time it was that they might not be persecuted for the cross of Christ. They themselves did not keep the law; but they desired to have the Galatians circumcised that they might glory in their flesh. But the cross of Christ was death to the flesh, and the Apostle would glory in nothing else, by which the world was crucified to him, and he to the world. For him flesh, law and the world were gone for faith. All pretensions as to fleshly super-

iority as a Jew was given up. He looked at himself as having died out of that state, and to have been introduced into the new creation in Christ Jesus, where circumcision availed nothing nor uncircumcision, but only the new creation. This the flesh could not support, and hence persecution. Verse 16 gives the rule for the walk, as many as walk by this rule, peace be unto them, and unto the Israel of God. Blessed summary of the truth of God. The flesh and the law teachers who would set it up are thoroughly exposed. Nothing is to be gloried in save the cross of Christ which writes judgment on the world. The Christian is seen in Christ, not in the flesh, in a position where circumcision and all the ordinances of the law have no place, and the rule for the walk is the rule of the new creation. The true Israel were to be known by owning such truths. Paul had on him better marks than those of circumcision. He carried in his body the marks of the Lord Jesus. Let no one henceforth then trouble him. The best wish of the great Apostle was, that *the grace* of the Lord Jesus Christ might be with their spirits. May that same grace be with those that read these lines. If you are under the law, whether for justification (Gal. iii. 6-14) or life (iii. 17-27) or as a rule of life (Gal. v. 4-18) to maintain yourself in this position, you are under condemnation; for cursed is every one that continueth not in all things written in the law to do them; but if on the contrary you are under grace, you have entered into that position by having died to the law, having been crucified with Christ, as to the flesh and to the world. On the other hand you are in Christ, in a position outside the flesh, and in a new creation, and that new creation is your rule of life. Let that new creation life then manifest itself by dependence on the one hand

on the Son of God, and by a walk in the Spirit, bearing its fruits day by day to God's glory and praise.

NOTE.—There are three great parts of the Christian life taken up in this epistle. 1st, justification. Gal. iii. 6–14, 2ndly, life in Christ giving the position of sons, of which the Spirit is the seal. Gal. iii. 15–29, iv. 1–7, 22–33. 3rdly, walk. Gal v. As to the 1st the law is not for justification, it can only curse. Gal. iii. 10, 11. As to the 2nd it cannot deliver or give life, (v. 21, 22) but only can give the knowledge of sin. As to the 3rd, if we are led of the Spirit, we are not under the law (v. 18) so that the law is set aside in each respect. At the same time the Christian walking by faith, and in the power of the Spirit, fulfils its righteousness, yea more, he manifests Christ in this world.



ERRATA.

On Page 4 line 12, the sentence should end "on account of them." The words "though still keeping up the link with the Jewish remnant;" ought to come in after "Matt. xiii." lines 4 and 5.

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