

# Paul's Letter to the GALATIANS

*My Dear Friends in Galatia:*

**T**his is from Paul, a messenger<sup>a</sup>—not a messenger sent by men, nor by the authority of man, but by Jesus Christ and by God our Father who raised Him from among the dead.

<sup>2</sup>Greetings to all of you in the churches in the province of Galatia in Turkey. All the Lord's followers with me send their greetings as well.

<sup>3</sup>May God our Father and Jesus Christ our Lord grant you all the blessings of the Christian life, including peace of mind and heart.

<sup>4</sup>In obedience to what our God and Father wanted Him to do, Jesus gave Himself as a sacrifice on the cross for our sins, in order to rescue us from the evil influences and dreadful future of those whose god is this present evil age.

<sup>5</sup>May our Father be praised and revered thruout all of endless eternity! Indeed, may it ever be so!

## ***No Other Great News!***

<sup>6</sup>But I'm utterly shocked and amazed at you people! How is it that you've so quickly deserted our God, who called<sup>a</sup> you to Himself by means of the undeserved love and mercy He so graciously offers you thru Christ? Instead, you are now accepting a different "great news"!

<sup>7</sup>But there's no great news at all connected with what you're now accepting. Those who are confusing you want only to twist and destroy the Great News about the Messiah.

<sup>8</sup>But even if I myself or an angel from Heaven were to preach a different great news to you than the Great News I already brought you, may he be damned!

<sup>9</sup>So you will know that I mean what I've just said, I say it again: If anyone preaches any great news to you other than the Great News I already brought you, may he be damned!

<sup>10</sup>In making this harsh statement, am I merely trying to convince you of my opinion, or am I telling you what God declares? Or, do you think I'm concerned about what people wish to hear? If

I were still concerned about pleasing people, I wouldn't be a servant of Christ!

## ***Paul's Authority Is from God***

<sup>11</sup>But I want you dear friends to know, that no mere man had anything to do with authoring the Great News I've been preaching.

<sup>12</sup>Because I neither received it from man, nor did any man teach it to me. I received it by direct revelation from Jesus Christ.

<sup>13</sup>You've heard how I behaved in the past as a zealot of the Jewish religion, how I angrily and violently persecuted the Church of God and did my best to destroy it.

<sup>14</sup>Because I was so very devoted in upholding the traditions of our ancestors, I was advancing in the Jewish religion far ahead of many my own age in Israel.

<sup>15</sup>But even before I was born,<sup>a</sup> God had set me apart to be His messenger.

<sup>16</sup>And though undeserving of His kindness and mercy, it pleased Him to call me to Himself<sup>a</sup> and introduce me to His Son, and then send me to tell people in all nations that the Great News about Jesus is for them too.<sup>a</sup> But I didn't then immediately go and talk this over with others who are as human as I am.

<sup>17</sup>No, I didn't even go to Jerusalem to talk with those who were messengers of Christ before I was. Instead, I went to Arabia,<sup>a</sup> and then returned to Damascus.

<sup>18</sup>It wasn't until three years after my conversion to Christ that I went up to Jerusalem to meet Peter. I stayed with him at that time for 15 days.

<sup>19</sup>Even then I didn't see any of the other messengers, except James, the Lord's brother.

<sup>20</sup>I assure you before God that what I'm writing you here is the truth!

<sup>21</sup>Then I went to Syria and Cilicia.

<sup>22</sup>Before this time, none of the people in the Christian churches in Judea had met me personally.

<sup>23</sup>The only thing they had heard was the contin-

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1:1a Or *an apostle*.

1:6a Romans 8:28-30.

1:15a Jeremiah 1:5.

1:16a Acts 9:1-22.

1:17a ... *to be alone with the Lord, and confer with Him...*

ued report that, “The one who formerly persecuted us is now preaching the Great News, the very faith he once tried to destroy!”

<sup>24</sup>And they praised God for what had happened to me.

### *Paul Accepted by the Other Apostles*

**2** Fourteen years later, I went up to Jerusalem again. This time I went with Barnabas, also taking Titus with us.

<sup>2</sup>I went there because God had revealed that I should go. In a private meeting with the church leaders I told them what I preach as I give the message of the Great News to the Gentiles, as I didn’t want all the work I had done, or would do in the future, to come to nothing.

<sup>3</sup>Titus was there with me, and although he’s a Greek, they didn’t even demand that he be circumcised.

<sup>4</sup>The reason I went, was to confer with the church leaders, because false believers had infiltrated our churches in order to spy out the freedom from Jewish rules and regulations that we have in Christ Jesus, and to enslave us to those rules again.<sup>a</sup>

<sup>5</sup>But we didn’t surrender to them in any way, not even for one minute, so that the truth of the Great News would be preserved for you.

<sup>6</sup>But the point is, none of those leaders who seemed to be so highly respected—whatever they were, it doesn’t make any difference to me, because God doesn’t have any personal favorites—none of them had anything to add to what I had received from the Lord.

<sup>7</sup>Instead, they saw that God had given me the task of bringing the Great News to the Gentiles, just as Peter had been given the task of preaching it to the Jews.

<sup>8</sup>They saw that God was working effectively thru Peter as a messenger to the Jews, and thru me as a

messenger to the Gentiles.

<sup>9</sup>And when James, Peter, and John, who seemed to be the pillars of the church, clearly recognized how much God’s favor was upon me, they shook hands with Barnabas and me as a token of their full agreement that we should go to the Gentiles, and they, to the Jews.

<sup>10</sup>All they asked was that we would continue to remember to help the poor, which was something I have always been eager to do.

### *Paul Corrects Peter at Antioch*

<sup>11</sup>But when Peter came to Antioch, I publicly told him face-to-face that he was wrong, because he needed to be reprimanded for what he was doing.

<sup>12</sup>Here’s what happened: When Peter first came to Antioch, he ate openly with the Gentile believers. But when some friends of James showed up, he stopped having anything to do with the Gentiles and separated himself from them, because of his fear of these men who believed that all Gentile believers must be circumcised.

<sup>13</sup>And the rest of the Jewish Christians joined him in his cowardly hypocrisy, so that even Barnabas was carried away by their double-dealing.

<sup>14</sup>But when I saw that they were not being open and honest in their loyalty to the truth God had given us in the Great News, I said to Peter in front of everyone there, “Peter, you are a Jew, but you live like the Gentiles rather than like the Jews. Why, then, are you now insisting that the Gentile believers live like Jews?”

<sup>15</sup>From birth we had the Jewish teachings instilled into us, and were not allowed to live in the sinful ways of the Gentiles.

<sup>16</sup>But we now know that no one can become right with God by obeying Jewish laws and ceremonies. Only faith in Jesus Christ can do that. So that’s what we’ve done: we’ve put our faith in Christ Jesus, so that we might be made right with

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**2:4a** It is not to be supposed that Judaism as such is contrary or the exact opposite of Christianity. Indeed, Christianity was essentially Jewish for the first two centuries. Paul’s contacts were almost always in the Synagogues.

It is a gross error to say that here’s evidence that the New Testament regards Judaism in all its forms as a religion distinct from Christianity and that Paul no longer considered himself a Jew. The historical bitterness that resulted from the persecution of Jews at the hands of a politicized and paganized church from the time of Constantine, is still with us today, and in no little degree contributes to the dis-

trust that most Jews have for Christians. It is now beginning to heal as God is again turning to His Jewish people just as He said He would do in their restoration, but the greatest is yet to come.

**2:16a** See Romans 3:19-26.

**2:18a** Romans 5 and 6.

**3:2a** He no doubt refers here to all the manifestations of the Holy Spirit that had been made to them: 1) In renewing them when they were converted, 2) indwelling them, John 14:17,23, 3) affirming His presence within them, Romans 8:16, 4) giving them power by the baptism of the Holy Spirit and the gifts of the Spirit, Acts 1:4-5; 2:1-21; 1 Corinthians 12:1-

God thru Him, and not by the Law, because there's no way that anyone can become right with God by obeying Jewish laws.<sup>a</sup>

<sup>17</sup> Now if I claim right standing with God thru faith in Christ, but then go back to my sinning, does that mean that Christ is now responsible for my sinning? Absolutely not!

<sup>18</sup> If I rebuild the old life I tore down, I am the guilty reprobate,<sup>a</sup> not Christ.

<sup>19</sup> But when I considered all the endless requirements of the Law, I died to all hope that I could ever become alive to God by obeying the Law.

<sup>20</sup> So now, in effect, I too have been put to death on the cross with Christ. But still, I'm alive! But it's no longer I who am alive and in control. The fact that I'm now spiritually alive is due to the fact that Christ now lives in this body of mine. So now as I live among all the problems, temptations, and cares of this life, I look for deliverance and strength from the Son of God, who so loved me that He gave His very life for me.

<sup>21</sup> I will do nothing to weaken or cancel God's gracious offer of forgiveness and eternal life thru Jesus Christ our Lord. Because if peace with God can be obtained by obeying Jewish laws and ceremonies, then Christ's death was useless and He died for nothing.

### ***We Are Justified by Faith!***

**3** O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you and convinced you to no longer obey the truth? Don't you remember how visibly and vividly I pictured Jesus being nailed to the cross for you?

<sup>2</sup> Tell me just one thing: Did you receive God's Holy Spirit<sup>a</sup> by obeying Jewish laws or by believing the truth you heard?

<sup>3</sup> How can you now be so stupid? After God has done so much for you thru His Spirit, do you think you are now being made perfect by obeying Jewish laws?

<sup>4</sup> Did you suffer so many things for nothing—if indeed it turns out now that it was for nothing?

<sup>5</sup> When God blesses you with His Holy Spirit<sup>a</sup> and performs miracles among you, does He do all this for you because you perform certain Jewish ceremonies, or is it because you believe what He has promised you?

<sup>6</sup> Consider what the Scripture says about Abraham in regard to this,

**Abraham believed what God promised, and because he believed what God said He would do for him, he was given right standing with God.<sup>a</sup>**

<sup>7</sup> So continue to realize this: Only those who exercise genuine faith are true children of Abraham.

<sup>8</sup> In fact, the Scriptures even foretold that God would give right standing to people everywhere, by means of their faith in His promises. God gave this Great News to Abraham in advance by telling him,

**People in every nation on earth will be blessed thru you.<sup>a</sup>**

<sup>9</sup> So then, all who believe God's promises are being blessed together with Abraham, the man of faith.

<sup>10</sup> But all who rely on their obedience to Jewish laws and ceremonies to save them are under a curse. Because the Scripture says,

**Everyone who fails to continually obey every single command that is written in God's Book of the Law is under God's curse.<sup>a</sup>**

<sup>11</sup> And the fact that no one is made right with God by obeying Jewish laws is also clear in the Scripture that says,

**Now the one who gains right standing with God will receive eternal life because he believes the whole message that God has given us.<sup>a</sup>**

<sup>12</sup> But the Law has nothing to do with believing. As another Scripture says,

**Only the one who perfectly and continually obeys these laws and ceremonies will have eternal life.<sup>a</sup>**

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**3:5a** Luke 11:13.

**3:6a** Genesis 15:6; Hebrews 11:8.

**3:8a** ... *because it is thru you that the promised Savior is to be born.* Genesis 12:3; 18:18; 22:18.

**3:10a** Deuteronomy 27:26.

**3:11a** Habakkuk 2:4. What does it mean to believe God? In these New Testament times, it first means to believe that God has sent His incomparable Son to earth in human form in the person of Jesus Christ, to die as a sacrifice for our sins, and be our Savior. Jesus was also God's Representative, His Spokesman. So we must believe and obey the mes-

sage He brought us. We are not saved by our obedience, but also, we are not saved unless we obey Him. We are not believing in Him (John 3:16) if we choose to ignore or disobey any of His commands or teachings, or the teachings of His apostles thru whom He spoke after leaving the earth physically.

Even Moses, many centuries before Christ, commanded that when Christ arrived on earth, we must listen to Him and obey Him. Deuteronomy 18:15,18-19; Acts 3:22-26. For further proof that faith includes obedience see John 3:36; Romans 2:1-16; 6:16; Hebrews 5:9; 11:8,17-19.

We must also believe that our sins can be forgiven.

<sup>13</sup>But Christ saved us from the curse that came upon us for not perfectly obeying the Law. He did it by taking upon Himself the curse that was upon us. Because the Scriptures also state,

**Anyone who is hung on a tree is under God's curse.<sup>a</sup>**

<sup>14</sup>So because of what Christ Jesus suffered for us on the cross, the blessing God promised Abraham is now available to everyone else as well. All of us may now receive the many blessings God has promised us thru His Holy Spirit, if we will faithfully believe God.

### ***The Law and the Promise***

<sup>15</sup>My brothers and sisters, let me illustrate my point. Even when men sign an agreement, none of those who sign can later add to or take from the obligations of that agreement.

<sup>16</sup>Now God made an agreement with Abraham and with his Descendant.<sup>a</sup> God didn't say, "... and to your descendants," referring to many people, but He uses the singular, "... and to your Descendant,"<sup>b</sup> referring to one person—to Christ.

<sup>17</sup>What I'm saying is this: God made an agreement with Abraham about Christ; and the Law, which God gave thru Moses 430 years later, doesn't set aside and cancel God's promise.

<sup>18</sup>Because if the inheritance God promised Abraham was to be obtained by obeying the Laws of Moses, then God's promise means nothing. But God gave the inheritance as a free gift to Abraham by promise!<sup>a</sup>

<sup>19</sup>Well, why then did God give the Law? It was given later to show mankind what was sinful,<sup>a</sup> and that there is an awful price to pay for sinning. But the Law was in force only temporarily, only until Abraham's Descendant, to whom the promise referred, had come. And God gave the Law to

angels to give to Moses, the mediator.<sup>b</sup>

<sup>20</sup>But a mediator is not needed when a person is alone and speaking for himself, and God was alone and spoke for Himself when He made the promise to Abraham.

### ***The Purpose of the Law of Moses***

<sup>21</sup>Is the Law of Moses, then, in conflict with the promises of God? Not at all! Because if a law had been given that was able to give life, then certainly peace with God would have been attainable by obeying that law.<sup>a</sup>

<sup>22</sup>But the Scriptures clearly declare that all people in the whole world are under God's judgment because of their sin.<sup>a</sup> The Law serves as a means of making this very clear, so that we will put our trust in God's promise that right standing with Him will be given those who are believing<sup>b</sup> in Jesus Christ.

<sup>23</sup>But before it was revealed that we could be saved by faith in Jesus Christ, we were guarded by the Law. We were kept in protective custody by it until it would later be revealed that we could be saved by faith in Him.

<sup>24</sup>So the Law acted as our guardian-teacher until Christ came, when we would be made right with God thru faith<sup>a</sup> in Him.

<sup>25</sup>But now that faith in Christ has come, we are no longer under the guardianship of the Laws of Moses.

<sup>26</sup>Because all of you are now children of God by means of your faith in Christ Jesus.

<sup>27</sup>Because all of you who were truly immersed into Christ have now taken upon you His feelings and concerns, His opinions and nature.<sup>a</sup>

<sup>28</sup>And those of us who belong to Christ Jesus are all on the same level, saved in the same way, whether we're Jew or Greek, slave or free, man or

en only because of Jesus' sacrifice for us on the cross. Our heart-attitude toward Him must be obedience (Hebrews 5:9), but also we can know that if our heart is right toward Him, we may ask His forgiveness whenever we may slip and fall (1 John 1:5-9) and He will again forgive and cleanse us. Psalm 51:12; Jeremiah 33:8; Titus 2:14.

This does not mean that we can freely sin because God will forgive us. No, because the mark of one who is right with God is that he will not continue to willfully sin by disobeying or ignoring any of God's commands. 1 John 2:3-6; 3:1-10.

**3:12a** Leviticus 18:5. That is how one must perform if he is to be saved by doing the works commanded in the Law. But no one has ever perfectly obeyed them, except Jesus. So the Jews and every-

one else need God's mercy in forgiveness. And God offers that mercy and forgiveness thru Jesus Christ.

**3:13a** Deuteronomy 21:23.

**3:16a** Jesus Christ.

**3:16b** Genesis 22:18; 26:4; 28:14; Acts 3:25, and the note.

**3:18a** Romans 4:13; Genesis 12:2-3; 15:5; 17:5.

**3:19a** Romans 7:13.

**3:19b** ... *representing the people before God.*

**3:21a** Laws are never given for the purpose of justifying anyone. Laws merely state what must be done or must not be done, and what the penalty will be for disobedience.

**3:22a** Psalm 14:1-3; Romans 3:23; 6:23. And all continue to be under God's condemnation until they accept the way God has provided for their for-

woman.

<sup>29</sup>And if you belong to Christ, then you are, in a special sense, true descendants of Abraham. And you are heirs of God, because you now believe<sup>a</sup> and share in the promise God made to Abraham.

**4** Now let me point out that as long as the son who has inherited his father's property is a child, he is treated no differently than a slave, even though he owns everything.

<sup>2</sup>He is constantly under the supervision of guardians and trustees until the time his father had previously set for him to take over the affairs of the estate.

<sup>3</sup>The same was true with us, when as infants in spiritual understanding, we were held in slavery by God's first instructions to the world about salvation.

<sup>4</sup>But when the time that God had set for our coming of age finally arrived, He sent His Son to us. He was born of a woman, and was Himself subject to the laws of God.

<sup>5</sup>He came to save those who had broken God's laws,<sup>a</sup> so that we might be adopted by God as His children.<sup>b</sup>

<sup>6</sup>And because you are now His children, God has sent the same Spirit into your hearts that is in the heart of His Son Jesus, causing you to tenderly and affectionately cry out, "O Father! My Father!"

<sup>7</sup>So you are no longer treated as a slave,<sup>a</sup> because you are now a child of God! And if a child of God, then you are also an heir of God, all because of what Christ has done for you.

### ***Paul's Concern for the Galatians***

<sup>8</sup>As for you Gentiles who didn't know God, you were also slaves—slaves to those idols and gods of your mythology who by their very nature could never be gods.

<sup>9</sup>But now that you have come to know God—or rather, to realize that God knew and loved you—how can you even think of turning to the weak and bankrupt elementary rules of the Jewish religion? Do you really want to be enslaved all over again?

<sup>10</sup>You are now trying to gain God's friendship by paying special attention to Jewish religious days, months, seasons, and years.

<sup>11</sup>I'm afraid for you! Can it be that all my hard work for you has been wasted effort?

<sup>12</sup>My dear brothers and sisters! I beg you to look at the truth as I now see it, because I also once believed as you now believe.

<sup>13</sup>It's not me you have wronged.<sup>a</sup> You have never done that. You will remember that the first time I brought the Great News to you, I spent quite some time with you because I was weak and sickly.

<sup>14</sup>But even though my illness was a great burden to you, you didn't despise or reject me with contempt. You received me as if I were one of God's angels; yes, as if I were Jesus Christ Himself.

<sup>15</sup>So what's happened to the great blessings you then rejoiced in? I'm a witness to the fact that if it had been possible, you would have plucked out your own eyes and given them to replace mine.

<sup>16</sup>Have I now become your enemy because I'm telling you the truth?

<sup>17</sup>These other men are anxious to gain your friendship, but not for your good. What they want is to separate you from us, in order to get you to eagerly support them.

<sup>18</sup>You were so right in your previous eagerness for the truth! But that's an attitude that must continue always, and not be evident only when I'm with you.

<sup>19</sup>Oh, my dear children! You are forcing me to go thru labor pains all over again, until Christ is formed in you.

<sup>20</sup>How I wish I could be with you now. The very

giveness and victory over sin. Romans 7:24-25; 8:1-17.

**3:22b** See v 11, and the note there.

**3:24a** ... faith in *what Christ has done for us when He suffered and died to make it possible for God in righteousness to forgive our sins; and faith and acceptance of what Christ taught and commanded, both thru His personal teachings and His teachings thru His apostles.*

**3:27a** John 3:3,5; 2 Corinthians 5:17; 11:2; Galatians 6:15.

**3:29a** ... *just as Abraham did.* Genesis 15:6; Romans 8:16-17; Galatians 3:6.

**4:5a** ... *and were under sentence of a dreadful penalty* ...

**4:5b** God had in the first place made us like Himself, in His own image and likeness, to be His children. Genesis 1:26. But Satan has seduced all of us to rebel against our Father, and live under his corrupt control. And because of that rebellion, God's righteous Law has condemned all of us to both physical death and living spiritual death in Hell. But by Christ's sacrifice for us, He has made it possible for God to offer us forgiveness, and to adopt and restore us back into His family!

**4:7a** A slave of Satan, or a slave to the many, many rites and ceremonies of the Law of Moses.

**4:13a** It was God and His Son, Jesus, they had wronged, by now believing as they did. And they had also wronged others by their example. As the

tone in my message would be different than it was before. I'm truly perplexed and in doubt about you.

### *The Example of Hagar and Sarah*

<sup>21</sup> Listen to me, those of you who want to live under the Law: Aren't you aware of what the Law says?

<sup>22</sup> It says that Abraham had two sons, one by a slave woman and the other by a woman who had always been free.<sup>a</sup>

<sup>23</sup> The son born to the slave woman was born in the usual way. But the son born to the free woman was born because God had promised he would be born.

<sup>24</sup> Symbolically, these women represent two agreements. Moses received one agreement from God at Mount Sinai, which gave birth to slavery to the Law. This is Hagar.

<sup>25</sup> Hagar represents not only the agreement given at Mount Sinai in Arabia, but she also corresponds to Jerusalem in Israel, which, together with her children, even today, live in slavery to the Law.

<sup>26</sup> But the Jerusalem in Heaven is free. And it's this Jerusalem that's the mother of all of us.<sup>a</sup>

<sup>27</sup> Because it is written in the Scriptures:

**Rejoice, O childless woman who has been unable to bear children! Lift up your voice and shout for joy, you who never felt the pains of childbirth! Because the deserted wife will have more children than the one who now lives with the husband.<sup>a</sup>**

<sup>28</sup> Now my brothers and sisters, just like Isaac, we are children who have been born because of God's promise.

<sup>29</sup> But the same thing is happening now that happened then: Those who have only natural birth are

persecuting those who have been reborn spiritually by the Spirit of God.<sup>a</sup>

<sup>30</sup> But again, what does the Scripture say?

**"Send the slave woman and her son away, because the son of the slave woman shall never be an heir together with the son of the free woman!"<sup>a</sup>**

<sup>31</sup> Remember, dear friends, we are not children of the slave woman but of the one who is free!

### *Christ Set Us Free!*

**5** So take a firm and resolute stand for the liberty you gained when Christ set you free. Don't let anyone entangle you again with a yoke of slavery!

<sup>2</sup> Listen carefully to what I'm saying. I, Paul, state: If you become circumcised in order to gain God's favor, Christ's sacrifice won't do a thing for you.

<sup>3</sup> I also warn every one of you: If you become circumcised in order to gain God's favor, you become obligated to obey everything else in the entire Law of Moses, at all times.<sup>a</sup>

<sup>4</sup> All of you who are now trying to get right with God by obeying the Law of Moses have been cut off from Christ!<sup>a</sup> You have fallen away from His pardoning mercy, which you never did deserve.<sup>b</sup>

<sup>5</sup> But with the continued help of the Holy Spirit, we who belong to Christ because of our faith in what He has done for us, continue to eagerly wait for the fulfillment of the hope we have because of our peace with God thru Him.

<sup>6</sup> Whether we are circumcised or not is of no importance or concern to those of us who are trusting in Christ for salvation. What does matter is faith that expresses itself in true love for God<sup>a</sup> and for others.<sup>b</sup>

saying goes, "No man goes to Hell alone. He always drags many others with him."

**4:22a** Genesis 16:1-16; 18:1-15; 21:1-21.

**4:26a** ... all of us who believe in Christ for our right standing with God.

**4:27a** Isaiah 54:1. Paul is saying, "Salvation by faith in God's promises was at one time believed by very few, but now this truth has more followers than those who trust in the Law of Moses."

**4:29a** John 1:13; 3:1-8; James 1:18; 1 Peter 1:23 and notes.

**4:30a** Genesis 21:10.

**5:3a** ... or perish.

**5:4a** We must now obey Christ, and trust in His sacrifice for our sins. See Hebrews 5:9. Yes, it is possible to be cut off from Christ. See Colossians 1:23, and the notes.

**5:4b** And yes, it is possible to fall away from all the

future that is yours in Christ. Again, see Colossians 1:23, and the notes.

**5:6a** One who truly loves God sincerely seeks to please Him in all things.

**5:6b** Mark 12:28-34.

**5:9a** Yeast here refers to false teaching.

**5:10a** We are to preach, teach, and persuade as we plant the seed of God's message in human hearts and minds, and then water and cultivate it; but it is God who makes things grow, even in human hearts. 1 Corinthians 3:7.

**5:11a** ... as some claim I am ...

**5:11b** It appears that these false teachers had been telling the Galatians that even Paul preached that circumcision was necessary for salvation. But Paul here most firmly denies this.

**5:12a** Castrate.

**5:13a** Besides disobeying God, you almost always

<sup>7</sup>You started out running so well. Who was it that got in your way and kept you from continuing to be convinced as to what the truth really is?

<sup>8</sup>That kind of persuasion isn't coming from God, who is calling you to freedom in Christ!

<sup>9</sup>Remember, it takes only a little yeast<sup>a</sup> to change the whole batch of dough.

<sup>10</sup>But I still have full confidence in you. I'm sure the Lord will convince you that what I've told you here is the truth.<sup>a</sup> As for the one who is troubling you, whoever he is, he will have to bear the judgment of God that he deserves.

<sup>11</sup>And listen, brothers and sisters, if I'm still preaching that circumcision is necessary for salvation,<sup>a</sup> why am I still being persecuted by the Jews? If I preached that, there wouldn't be any problem with the Jews about the cross of Christ.<sup>b</sup>

<sup>12</sup>As for those who are causing you all this confusion by insisting you must be circumcised, I wish they would go all the way and emasculate<sup>a</sup> themselves!

<sup>13</sup>Because, my brothers and sisters, you have been called to freedom. But you must not use your freedom to satisfy the various desires of your body and mind in a wrong way. Instead, you are to live for the good of one another in the spirit of love.<sup>a</sup>

<sup>14</sup>Because the whole of the Old Testament Law is summed up in one command. It's this:

**You are to love others in the same way that you love yourself.<sup>a</sup>**

<sup>15</sup>But if you keep on biting and tearing at each other, watch out or you'll completely destroy one another.

### ***The War Between Flesh and Spirit***

<sup>16</sup>That's why I challenge you to think, speak, and

act in obedience to the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Then you won't be in any danger of gratifying any selfish or wrongful sensual desire.

<sup>17</sup>Because all selfish desires, and all sensual appetites and desires you are tempted to satisfy in a wrongful way are in violent opposition to the desires of the Holy Spirit for you. And the desires of the Holy Spirit for you are in opposition to the wrongful desires that tempt you. There's a constant war going on inside each of us. The Holy Spirit is waging war against our selfishness and against our temptations to satisfy our sensual appetites and desires in a wrongful way, in order to keep us from the wrong we are tempted to do.

<sup>18</sup>So then, if you allow yourselves to be led and controlled by the Holy Spirit,<sup>a</sup> you are free from any need to put yourselves under the restraints and control of the Law of Moses.

<sup>19</sup>Now the actions produced by corrupt and unrenewed human nature are very evident. They include: adultery, sexual immorality, all forms of unclean sexual acts, loose living,

<sup>20</sup>idolatry,<sup>a</sup> witchcraft, hatred,<sup>b</sup> fights caused by disagreements, jealousies, outbursts of rage,<sup>c</sup> selfish ambition, violent disagreements, heresies,

<sup>21</sup>envy, murders, drunkenness, carousings, and all other such things. As I warned you before, I warn you again: Those who indulge in any such practice will not inherit the Kingdom of God!<sup>a</sup>

<sup>22</sup>But when you allow the Holy Spirit to control your life, the fruit He will produce in you will be: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,

<sup>23</sup>gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against such behavior.<sup>a</sup>

<sup>24</sup>Those who belong to Christ have put to death

cheat and harm others when you satisfy your desires in a selfish and harmful way. Again, remember, God is always watching, and He pays wages both for the good and the evil you do. See 6:7, and note.

**5:14a** Leviticus 19:18.

**5:18a** Romans 8:5-13.

**5:20a** Idolatries include anything on which affections are passionately set; extravagant admiration of the heart. Ephesians 5:5; Colossians 3:5.

**5:20b** Hatred is bitter dislike, abhorrence, and ill-will against anyone; tendency to hold grudges against or to be angry with someone.

**5:20c** Refers to turbulent passions; domestic and civil turmoils; rage; determined and lasting anger.

**5:19-21a** This Scripture is prophetic in nature, issuing a warning against sins of the flesh, proclaiming that a person who so indulges his flesh

will not inherit the Kingdom of God. In vss 22-24, Paul describes the true Christian as one who lives in obedience to what God has revealed in Scripture. Contrasting the two pictures should enable one to understand what is necessary for one to enter into eternal life with the Lord.

"This passage is full of fearful warning to those who indulge in any of these vices. Paul, inspired by God, has solemnly declared that such people cannot be saved. They cannot enter into the Kingdom of Heaven as they are. Nor is it desirable that they should. What kind of place would Heaven be if it were filled with adulterers, fornicators, idolaters, with the proud and envious, and with murderers and drunkards? To call such a place Heaven would be an abuse of the word.

"The human heart must be changed, or man cannot be saved. We should rejoice that such people

the wrongful passions and desires of the flesh.<sup>a</sup>

<sup>25</sup> Since it is the Holy Spirit who has given us new life and hope, we should always let Him run and control our lives.

<sup>26</sup> And we shouldn't be conceited and boastful. If we are, we will only drive one another to jealousy and hard feelings.

### ***Be Deeply Concerned for Others***

**6** My dear brothers and sisters, if a fellow Christian is being overpowered by some sin, it is the duty of those of you who are allowing the Holy Spirit to lead you, to restore that person.<sup>a</sup> But do so gently, with humble consideration, realizing how concerned you yourself also need to be to keep from falling to temptation.

<sup>2</sup> So share each others burdens of conquering

cannot, with their present characters, be admitted to Heaven. We should rejoice that there is one world where these vices are unknown, a world of perfect and eternal purity."—*Barnes' Notes*.

**5:22-23a** Ordinarily every sinner who turns to Christ has a crisis experience when that one turns from self-indulgence to surrender to the love and will of God. This experience is called conversion. The final results of true conversion are the fruits of the Spirit, which are listed here. These fruits are seen in greater measure as one grows in the knowledge of God's message to mankind, yields to God the Holy Spirit, and is filled with the Spirit.

**5:24a** They have determined in their hearts that they will fully obey God, and not wrongfully satisfy any of their fleshly and selfish desires.

True Christians have turned their backs on their old life, crushing and crucifying it. But besides the initial crisis experience of turning from the old life to the new life in Christ, there must be a daily dying to sin and self.

We must make it our constant concern to crucify the corrupt passions and desires of our flesh. Christ will never recognize those as His own who surrender themselves as servants of sin!

On the other hand, we should display those fruits of the Spirit which Paul specifies here; this is just as much our duty as the crucifying of the flesh. It is altogether necessary in order to give evidence of our sincerity in the faith. It is not enough that we stop doing evil, but we must learn to do what's good and right. Our Christianity obliges us not only to die to sin but to come alive to doing right; not only to oppose the passions of the flesh, but also to produce the fruits of the Spirit as well.

Those who have this mind and determination can have the assurance that the promise of Heaven is

the temptations that so harass us. By doing so, we are doing what Christ commanded us to do.<sup>a</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Because anyone who thinks he's doing fine spiritually while he does little or nothing to help others, is only fooling himself.

<sup>4</sup> Each of us, then, must carefully examine our own actions. And when we pass the test, we can rejoice in what we ourselves are doing, and not just in what others are doing.

<sup>5</sup> Because on Judgment Day, everyone will be judged individually. Each of us will be held accountable for what we have done or have failed to do.

<sup>6</sup> Now our concern for others must include sharing all of the good material things we are receiving with the one who is teaching us what God wants us to know.<sup>a</sup>

theirs, as they both yield to God and understand that they need His constant leading and strength in order to be able to follow thru in this determination.

**6:1a** When a Christian appears to be losing interest in the things of the Lord, or is known to be indulging in sin, it is not enough merely to pray for that person. We are responsible before God, according to this Scripture, to go to that person, and talk to him and try to win him back to a vibrant life in the Lord.

We are sinning before the Lord if we neglect such people. We need to earnestly pray for them, yes, but praying is not enough. God will do His part, if we pray, but He expects us to do our part as well. We need to go to them and impress upon them the absolute need of walking closely with the Lord.

"True Christians do not commit sin deliberately, as a part or plan of their life. But they may be surprised by a sudden temptation, or urged on by impetuous or headstrong passions, as David and Peter were. Paul does not speak of the possibility of restoring a person who deliberately plans to sin. He doesn't even consider such a one to be a Christian."—*Barnes' Notes*. If such a person is a church member, he certainly needs to be visited and dealt with as one who needs to be born again.

**6:2a** John 13:34-35.

**6:6a** See 1 Corinthians 9:11-14.

**6:7a** Many people deceive themselves by believing they can fool God and get away with their sin. The warning here is that we will definitely harvest what we have sown. Many times we reap a harvest in this life. Even then, a harvest reaped here is just a first payment of what will be reaped in eternity if we continue in our sin. The same principle can be applied to reaping blessed rewards. God is faithful



<sup>7</sup>Don't be fooled! You can't turn up your nose at God and insult Him by ignoring what He's telling you to do or not do, and get away with it. You will harvest exactly what you have sown.<sup>a</sup>

<sup>8</sup>The person who sows to please the cravings of his lower nature, will from that sowing reap destruction.<sup>a</sup> But the one who sows what he knows is pleasing to God, will from God reap everlasting life.<sup>b</sup>

<sup>9</sup>And let's not allow ourselves to grow weary of continuing to do what's good and right, because in due time we will definitely reap a most fulfilling, amazing, and wonderful harvest, if we don't get discouraged and give up.<sup>a</sup>

<sup>10</sup>That's why we should use every opportunity we have to do good to everyone, and especially if they are followers of the Lord.<sup>a</sup>

### **Final Warnings**

<sup>11</sup>*Notice how big the letters are when I write to you now with my own hand.*

<sup>12</sup>Those who are telling you that you must get circumcised are only concerned about what others will think. Their only reason for trying to compel you to be circumcised is so they won't be persecuted for preaching that the only way you can obtain God's forgiveness is by believing that Jesus suffered and died on the cross for you, as a sacrifice to God for your sins.

<sup>13</sup>But not even those who insist on circumcision obey the rest of the Law. Still, they want you to be circumcised so they can brag that you are their converts.

<sup>14</sup>May God help me never to brag about anything

to all His promises as well as to all His warnings.

Consider the laws of sowing. 1) You always reap what you sow! 2) When sowing spiritually and morally there is always a harvest as a result of your sowing. 3) You always reap more than you sow. For one result of sowing good seeds see Luke 6:38. See also Malachi 2:6.

**6:8a** If your body is involved in your selfishness and sin, it is in your body that you will be judged — both in this life and in The Judgment to come. You will be judged in relation to whatever you worship and for what purposes you have lived.

Again, salvation by works is not the point. But the clear teaching of the Scriptures as a whole is that “unless you are born again you will never see or experience the Kingdom of God.” Paul says it in other words in 2 Corinthians 5:17, “So when anyone in truth becomes a Christian, he becomes an altogether new person. His old goals and ambitions and his old way of living are things of the past. Listen! Everything about him or her is now new!” Is this the kind of conversion to Christ that you have experienced? It's the only accepted experience by God. Read *The Amazing Story of God*—Appendix 247, page 520.

**6:8b** What's Paul saying here? Hasn't he just been saying that everlasting life is obtained by faith in what Christ has done for us? But now it sounds like there are some works involved. The answer is that two things are necessary for salvation, not just one. The two things are justification and regeneration. *We are justified* by God when we put our faith in Christ. *We are regenerated* by an act of the will, being willing to allow the Holy Spirit to now regenerate us and make us into a new person—one who loves and obeys God.

Jesus called regeneration being “born again”.

James 2:14 and Romans 2:13 state that a faith that does not work does not save. Such a “faith” is false, and not true saving faith at all. See also 2 Corinthians 5:17; Acts 26:20. And notice that in Romans 6:23 Paul is addressing Christians, as well as unbelievers, when he warns, “The wages for sinning is death.” For further information on regeneration see Appendix 211, page 476.

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*“So now, turn from your sinning and be converted, so that the record of your sins may be blotted out.”*—Peter, in Acts 3:19. And as Paul said in Acts 20:21, “*You must both turn from your sinning and obey God, and believe in our Lord Jesus the Messiah as your Savior.*”

**6:9a** The rewards God has promised those who continue faithfully are almost too good to be true. But they are true, because it is God who has promised!

Many begin well, *but because of their anxious concern about their earthly problems, and being deceived by wealth and by desire for many other things*, the word of God is choked out of their lives, until they become unfruitful. Mark 4:19. We constantly need to keep our minds and hearts centered upon the ultimate goal of eternal life—life that will never end—a life of glory and riches and endless joy with the Lord! Unless we constantly remind ourselves that we are only pilgrims here, we will be tempted to slight our Lord and neglect the salvation and other needs of our fellow human beings.

What an awful loss many will sustain because they took their eyes off the goal and looked instead at the short-lived joys, comforts, and pleasures of this brief and uncertain time.

**6:10a** Our main concern for our fellow Christians should be to help them grow spiritually. But that

except about what our Lord Jesus Christ has done for us on the cross. And because of Him, the things of the world have become of little importance to me, and those who love the world don't consider me to be of any importance either.

<sup>15</sup>Being circumcised or not being circumcised has nothing to do with our being included in Christ's Kingdom. The only thing that does matter is that we become altogether new and different people than we were.<sup>a</sup>

<sup>16</sup>May God's peace and mercy rest upon all of you who believe and live according to this truth. May the same be true for all of God's true people everywhere.

<sup>17</sup>I don't want to be troubled about this matter

any more. I bear in my body the scars from the beatings I have received because of my stand for the freedom we have from the Jewish Law thru the Lord Jesus.

<sup>18</sup>My brothers and sisters, may the Lord Jesus Christ be especially gracious and big-hearted toward all of you. Indeed! So be it!

Most Sincerely,  
Paul

should not be our only concern for them.

6:15a 2 Corinthians 5:17, and note; John 3:1-8.

**H**y dear brothers and sisters, if a fellow Christian is being overpowered by some sin, it is the duty of those of you who are allowing the Holy Spirit to lead you, to restore that person. But do so gently, with humble consideration, realizing how concerned you yourself also need to be to keep from falling to temptation.

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<sup>3</sup>Because anyone who thinks he's doing fine spiritually while he does little or nothing to help others, is only fooling himself.

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<sup>5</sup>Because on Judgment Day, everyone will be judged individually. Each of us will be held accountable for what we have done or have failed to do.

—Galatians 6:15