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Salvation In Galatians. (2013)

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Salvation in Galatians.

INTRODUCTION: since the primary focus of this study is upon Scriptures (in most chapters in Galatians) that relate to salvation and are relevant to eternal life there are far too many different topics and titles to make a topics list, but I have faith that most who travel through each chapter will by the time they arrive at the end not only be enriched in their knowledge of salvation, but also enriched in God's love and God's grace in Christ.

Galatians 1

Paul, an Apostle through Jesus Christ and God the Father.

Galatians 1:1-5 ----- ¹Paul, an apostle—not from men nor through man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised him from the dead— ²and all the brothers who are with me, To the churches of Galatia: ³Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, ⁴who gave himself for our sins to deliver us from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father, ⁵to whom be the glory forever and ever. Amen.

The words, Paul, an apostle not from men, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father refer to the Paul's encounter with the Lord Jesus Christ on the Damascus road where Jesus called Paul to be a chosen instrument of the Lords to carry his name before the Gentiles and kings and the children of Israel (Acts 9:3-16).

Jesus Gave himself for our sins to deliver us from the present evil age: here we read that Jesus gave himself, throughout history there has been much controversy over who killed Jesus, some say, Judas, others say the prideful, hypocritical religious leaders, many blame the entire Jewish nation, while others worldwide say it was Pilate and the Romans, obviously they all had a part in Christ's death, but the words, "Jesus gave himself for our sins," shine a brilliant spotlight on the truth that we were all involved in his death, since not one of us can stand before the perfect Holiness of God and claim we are without sin and therefore it was for all of us that Jesus laid his life down to a brutal, bloody and cruel death which means we all had part in nailing him to the cross since not one of us can claim to be sinless before God. Added to this are the words, "According to the will of our God and Father" shows that Judas, the Jews and the Romans were simply the vessels God used to fulfil His eternal foreordained plan of salvation that existed in His eternal mind before time began.

NOTE: God's eternal foreknowledge is a stunning mystery to the human mind but majestically manifests the wisdom of God who has given mankind free will. Judas, the Jews and the Romans were acting from their own will, the Jews (primarily the religious leaders) acted from prideful envy that Jesus was gathering such enormous crowds and multitudes of followers, Judas acted from greed and Pilate simply wanted to appease the crowds screaming crucify him, yet all this is spoken of in the Old Testament. By foreknowledge God is able to allow us to do as we please and come what may our free will is still mysteriously working within God's Sovereign will and bringing about His eternal plan that He set in motion before the beginning of time such is the wonder of God's eternal foreknowledge and His eternal wisdom. God in the book of Isaiah says: -

- My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the LORD, for as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts (Isaiah 55:8-9).

Jesus came to deliver us from the present evil age: (v4) these words, show that we should never be surprised or shocked at the corruption we see in this world, not only at the level of the common people, but also in top levels of governments around the world, because the entire purpose of Christ's death and resurrection is to deliver us not from a righteous and holy world, but a corrupt and wicked one. For this reason we should not be shocked or taken by surprise when we see the destructive pain and horrors of sin manifested all around us since that is the nature

and character of this present world we live in. Some may shout, "Whoa, hold on James, there are mega millions of people in the world who do many good and kind acts for others." To them I would say, "Absolutely, yes there is with a definite Amen and add that I am often humbled by the self-sacrifice of the many good people I do see, but no matter how good we are before mankind we are still sinners before the Holiness of God and this world is still full of corrupt and wicked atrocities inflicted on the innocent and a corrupt money system of credit and profit that oppresses the poor.

Added to this wars are destroying the lives and homes of millions. In contrast to all this horror in God's future and eternal Kingdom to come there will be nothing on earth that will harm or hurt so in contrast to a world totally free of anything that is contrary to the law of love sadly our present world looks very dark and very corrupt indeed, unless one walks around blindfolded.

I am Astonished that you are Turning to a Different Gospel.

Galatians 1:6-10 ----- ⁶I (Paul) am astonished that you (the believing Galatians) are so quickly deserting him who called you in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel— ⁷not that there is another one, but there are some who trouble you and want to distort the gospel of Christ. ⁸But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to the one we preached to you, let him be accursed. ⁹As we have said before, so now I say again: If anyone is preaching to you a gospel contrary to the one you received, let him be accursed. ¹⁰For am I now seeking the approval of man, or of God? Or am I trying to please man? If I were still trying to please man, I would not be a servant of Christ.

Distort: (pervert in KJV) means to reverse, turn around or to change in this context it carries the idea of perverting, twisting and corrupting the Scriptures and the Gospel message.

Accursed: (anathema) refers to a religious ban, it carries the idea of someone being condemned and excommunicated from a religious group.

Anathema: carries the idea of something being extremely disliked or provoking extreme disgust (an abhorrence or abomination).

Abomination: means hatred and wickedness it carries the idea of something being intensely hated, abhorrent and extremely loathing.

The different gospel: Paul is stunned that there are amongst the Galatians "Some who are troubling them" (v6) by enticing them to turn to what Paul calls a different gospel, obviously there can only be one Christian Gospel this is the reason Paul clarifies his statement with the words, not that there is another one (v7) so what is this different gospel they are turning to? For those who had been taught by Paul this distorted gospel must have contained many truthful teachings concerning Christ otherwise no-one would believe it especially if they had originally been taught by Paul so for these reasons this twisted and distorted gospel most likely included the following teachings: -

- The death and resurrection of Jesus.
- Christ was Israel's Messiah the Christ and the Son of God.
- Christ will return.
- The dead in Christ will be raised everlasting life and eternal glory and those that are alive will be caught up with them to be forever with the Lord.

Yet there is something so twisted, distorted and offensive with this gospel that Paul says, "Let those who teach it be accused and banned from Christian fellowship" (v8). Paul makes this astounding statement even though it most likely embodies almost all of what faithful Christians believe, so how can it be so close to being right and at the same time, be so offensive and so wrong?

How is this Gospel any different to the one the apostles and Paul taught? To find the answer all we have to do is skip a couple of chapters until we arrive at chapter three and read the following words of Paul: -

- Foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you? It was before your eyes that Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified. Let me ask you only this: Did you receive the Spirit by works of the law or by hearing with faith? Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh? (Gal. 3:1-3).

Jewish leaders were teaching those who had accepted Christ through grace two distortions of the Gospel that totally robbed God's majestic and graceful plan of salvation from all its glory, wonder, mercy and grace. The two distortions they taught were: -

1. That even though people did believe in Christ they still had to keep God's covenant of circumcision and adhere to ceremonial rites, the Sabbath's, the Holy days and keep the religious Jewish customs and traditions etc., otherwise no-one could be saved.
2. Even if people did believe in the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ they still had to keep God's covenant of circumcision, the Sabbath's and Holy days, Jewish customs, traditions and ceremonial laws etc., to maintain their salvation otherwise they would be counted unworthy and lose it. This idea is also supported by the fact Paul in his introduction to this chapter said, "I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting him who called you in the grace of Christ (v6).

This was one of the great difficulties Paul had to contend with; Jewish teachers were teaching new converts to Christ that, faith alone is not enough to be saved they must add to it. Though this teaching totally distorts the Gospel it was nevertheless very deceptive especially to Jewish converts, because Israel had followed the Law of Moses for over four-thousand years therefore it made sense to many of them that faith in Christ alone was enough to save them to eternal life. Thousands of Jews accepted Paul's message, but many of them were still zealous for the Law of Moses, Jewish customs and Jewish traditions.

It was no-doubt many these passionate and zealous Jews who were telling Paul's converts at Galatia that they must add to their faith because the Good News of the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ is not enough on its own to save. These teachers were most likely teaching the Gospel of Christ plus religious rites, customs and good works to earn righteousness that leads to eternal life and to be counted worthy of salvation. This is what Paul was struggling with and anxious about; he feared his converts were being enticed back under the law to be saved.

The practical application of this today: Christians who faithfully attend church each Sunday, read their Bible every-day and pray, attend all the Bible study meetings or those who sing in a church choir and faithfully go to every practice lesson and even ministers who hold positions of great leadership and authority can all fall into the danger of thinking they are made righteous and saved by their faithful conduct in their service to the Lord Jesus Christ. Though all these things are good in themselves and will bring their own reward now and in eternity, not one of them can save us or even add to our salvation. As good as they might all be they are not only useless in making us righteous before God, but also rob the Good News of the Gospel from its glory, beauty, wonder and God's infinite love and grace that is without walls and boundaries to save to eternal life.

A personal note: from my many years in Christianity I wonder if the majority of us have fully comprehended the enormity of God's grace in Christ to save from sin and to eternal life. Paul the only apostle who never learned the Good News of the Gospel by study and education, but got it by revelation considers any form of self-effort to earn righteousness to be counted worthy of being saved to eternal life, no matter how good to be an abomination to God, to Christ and to the Gospel of Christ. This no-doubt is because Paul understood that not one of us can by self-effort attain to the perfect standard of Holiness God requires and that the instant we think we can attain to God's Holy standard of righteousness by self-effort and good works is the instant we nullify what Christ achieved for us on the cross of Calvary.

The following words of Paul show the enormous importance of trusting in God's grace in Christ. Paul in his letters wrote: -

- I do not nullify the *GRACE* of God, for if justification were through the law (or any form of religious self-effort), then Christ died for no purpose (Gal. 2:21).

This means, when a brother or sister in Christ begin to justify themselves through the law and self-effort they nullify the grace of God and by their actions declare that Christ's death was of no value.

Equally as horrific as this Paul states: -

- When we forsake *GRACE* we separate ourselves from Christ because it was only by *GRACE* that God made us alive in Christ (Gal. 5:4) (Eph. 2:5).

Paul to highlight even more the majestic glory of grace wrote with absolute boldness that: -

- It is only by *GRACE* that any brother or sister has been saved (Eph. 2:8).

Paul in these verses is shining a brilliant floodlight on the truth that every brother and sister in Christ is saved, solely by faith and by grace and it is not their own doing, but the gift of God. This means that without grace no-one can be united to Christ and whoever is without Christ is separated from God and without God no-one can be saved to eternal life. This means in regards to eternal salvation, Christ, God, grace and faith, are all on an equal par with each other since no-one can be saved to eternal life without any one of them. This is the reason the author in the book of Hebrews spends so many chapters brilliantly and skilfully explaining to the Hebrews that they must stop their sin of trusting in religious works, the Levitical Law and their priesthood to be counted righteous before God and start trusting in the grace of God that is in Christ and in his righteousness to be saved to eternal life.

By extension this means that Christians must stop trusting in attending a church building every week, strictly adhering to ceremonial rites and holy days and keeping religious customs and traditions to be saved. Though the practise of some of these maybe good in themselves they become grossly sinful when believers trust in them for their salvation since not one of them has any power to save to eternal life.

Am I seeking the approval of man, or of God? (v10) these words of Paul are very relevant for today, since there are ministers in some religious circles that preach a prosperity and success Gospel that appeals to self, ego and pride, it is attractive and sounds very much like the true Gospel since it uses the same Bible, the same Scriptures and speaks the same language, but the underlying current of the true and the false is as far apart as the north is from the south. No Christian is going to be deceived by any teaching that denies Christ, his death and resurrection and the excitement of his return or the resurrection to eternal life and everlasting glory, so any form of deception has to be so subtle it is enormously difficult to recognise especially since self, ego, and pride like self-effort since it produce self-righteousness and in this pride can glory in that it exalts itself above others who it considers to be less.

This is one of the reasons God hates any form of self-effort to attain to righteousness acceptable for eternal salvation is because it not only produces self-righteousness, but also denies how far we as corrupted human creatures with all our sinful dysfunctions and aberrations have fallen from God's Holy standard of perfection.

If I am trying to please man, I would not be a servant of Christ: (v10) these words of Paul show that the instant we seek the approval or favour of men is the instant we have stopped becoming servants of the Lord Jesus Christ. This does not mean we should not try to win the favour of the lost, but if we have to deny our faith or Christ to win their favour or friendship then we have stopped becoming servants of Christ and become slaves of man's approval and acceptance.

The Gospel Preached by Paul is Not Man's Gospel.

Galatians 1:11-12 ----- ¹¹For I would have you know, brothers, that the gospel that was preached by me is not man's Gospel. ¹²For I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ.

Revelation: means to take off the cover and reveal. In this context it carries the idea of a dark veil being lifted off the limitations of the mortal mind and it being opened to the heavenly light of God's majestic and eternal plan of salvation, His never ending grace and all the truths of His spoken and written word clearly shining as a brilliant and glorious light in the mind revealing the beauty and wonder of God foreordained plan of salvation for all mankind and His eternal word. After Christ appeared to Paul he did not immediately go to the apostles and have a conference with them to learn the Gospel or add anything to what Christ had given him by revelation rather the full Gospel came to Paul by revelation not by learning or educations (v17-18) despite the fact he was a brilliantly will educated man and well versed in the Old Testament Scriptures.

God often uses the circumstances of people's lives to shape them for some unique field of service in His Kingdom. Paul's Jewish education and his enormous knowledge of Old Testament writings and Jewish traditions enabled him not only to be able to understand the feelings and emotions of the Jewish people, but also equipped him answer with wisdom the questions and arguments of the Jewish religious leaders. All who are converted to the Lord Jesus Christ are called by grace and saved by grace. It is God's pleasure to save and every conversion is brought about by the power of His grace. But there was something unique in the case of Paul, in the suddenness of it, in the greatness of his total change and reversal of direction and in the fact it did not involve any mediation of others to bring it about.

Paul's life was suddenly impacted by an extraordinary instance of divine power and divine grace his conversion and calling was unlike any other since it was brought about by Christ's personal appearance to him. This heavenly, majestic and glorious moment immediately affected Paul's entire mind and his thinking since it totally changed his goals, motivation and purpose in life.

Galatians 2

We are Saved and Justified by Faith not by Works of the Law.

Galatians 2:16 ----- ¹⁶yet we (Paul and those with him) know that a person is not justified by works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ, so we also have believed in Christ Jesus, in order to be justified by faith in Christ and not by works of the law, because by works of the law no one will be justified.

Paul tells the Galatian brothers and sisters that he and the Jews with him are fully persuaded that neither a Jew nor Gentile is justified by self-effort (i.e., by adhering to ceremonial rites, holy days and keeping religious Jewish customs and traditions) and therefore they have believed in the Lord to be justified by faith in Christ and not by works of the law. This is the Good News of the Gospel no matter whether a person is born a direct descendant of Abraham, a Hebrew, or a Jew, whether they are born a Gentile of any nation or are rich or poor, noble or lowly everyone is saved in the same manner, by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and by God's grace. This is because God grants righteousness that leads to eternal life as a pure and free gift to all who have faith in the Lord Jesus Christ since not one of us can attain to God's Holiness by our own self-effort.

If Justification were through the Law, then Christ Died for No Purpose.

Galatians 2:20-21 ----- ²⁰It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. ²¹I do not nullify the grace of God, for if justification were through the law, then Christ died for no purpose.

These words of Paul's are both tragic and yet so eternally majestic that they should be engraved on the forehead of every brother and sister in Christ. Tragic because we all have the potential to nullify the grace of God, meaning we by our own actions have the power to make Christ's horrific and brutal suffering count for nothing. This is because the moment we trust in anything other than faith and God's grace for our righteousness and justification we nullify everything the Lord achieved for us on the cross meaning that the grace of God is cancelled out and therefore Jesus died for no purpose thus the tragedy.

On the glorious and heavenly side Paul's words are eternally majestic because not one of us no matter how good we maybe or how much good we do to others can stand before God's Holy standard of perfection without sin and therefore are all condemned by the law to death. This is the reason these words of Paul's are so glorious, without grace not one of us would have any hope of eternal life.

The practical application for us today: it is very easy for us to fall back under some degree or level of self-effort and works since human pride and ego prefers self-effort to grace because self-effort produces self-righteousness and this allows pride to rise up and exalt itself above others which in turn produces a heightened sense of spiritual superiority (howbeit a false one) this is the reason we have to forsake any thought of attaining our own righteousness by self-effort.

Self-effort can take the form of trusting in any of the following: -

- Regular attendance of church and Bible reading.
- Singing in a choir and faithfully attending all practice meetings.
- Teaching the Lord's word or preaching sermons.
- Faithfully keeping religious rites and ceremonial practices.
- Praying, fellowshiping and worshipping the Lord etc.

Obviously all these things are good in themselves and spiritually healthy to practice, but the moment we think they have any power to make us righteous before God is the moment we nullify the grace Christ achieved for us on the cross.

Galatians 3

O Foolish Galatians! Who has Bewitched You?

Galatians 3:1-3 ----- ¹O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you? It was before your eyes that Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified. ²Let me ask you only this: Did you receive the Spirit by works of the law or by hearing with faith? ³Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh?

NOTE: to understand the glory and majesty of this chapter and what Paul is saying it helps to know beforehand that the Spirit in focus is the Spirit of righteousness also called, the Holy Spirit it is that Spirit that God is pleased to impute to those who faithfully follow Christ and trust in him for their righteousness and eternal salvation. Paul in this chapter brilliantly shines a floodlight on the God's abundant grace and the truth that it is spiritually and gloriously gift-wrapped in the eternal promised Spirit of God.

Bewitched: in this context carries the idea of the minds of the faithful in Christ being deceived.

The context of this chapter is righteousness and justification being obtained by faith and grace contrasted to righteousness and justification being obtained by adhering to Israel's ceremonial laws of purification (also called, Moses Law). These laws were given to Moses and the nation of Israel by God at Mount Sinai, and were written in a book. For over four-thousand years faithful Jews kept these laws (circumcision and many ceremonial religious rituals etc.). The brothers and sisters in the Galatian church were being strongly influenced by certain Jewish religious leaders who were enticing them back into believing that the only way to

righteousness and justification that leads to eternal life was by being circumcised and keeping their ceremonial rites, holy days and their religious customs and traditions as recorded in the book of Moses and the book of Leviticus.

The Law: the Law in the context of this chapter refers to the Jewish religious ceremonial rites and the laws of purification.

The Spirit: in this context refers to the Spirit of righteousness (also called 'the gift of righteousness') and the expression, receiving the Spirit refers to the Spirit that by honest heartfelt repentance toward God transforms the desire of a sinners heart from living solely for self to desiring to live a life that honours God and the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

It is that Spirit that influences the mind and heart toward the things of God (i.e., prayer, worship reading the Bible and fellowship with others that are in Christ etc.). This Spirit (also called the Holy Spirit) is that Spirit that through faith crowns and clothes those in Christ with righteousness and not only assures them that God's favour is upon them for their eternal glory, but also imparts various gifts for serving the Lord, for benefiting those in Christ's family and for encouraging and helping those outside of God's Kingdom.

Begun by the Spirit: means that the Galatian brothers and sisters spiritual walk in Christ began by faith and grace and not by self-effort (i.e., trusting in religious works to be counted righteous).

By the flesh: in this context refers to doing things by self-effort contrasted to faith, it refers to the Jews keeping the ceremonial laws of purification to earn righteous that leads to eternal life.

Suffer so many things in vain: the words, did you suffer so many things in vain (v4) refer to the persecution the Galatians brothers and sisters would have suffered, from the Jews who held strictly to Moses law and Jewish customs and traditions and the words if indeed it was in vain (v4) shows that Paul was hoping they would forsake those who were bewitching and enticing them to turn from faith and from grace to be counted as worthy, accepted and righteous before God and go back under Moses laws of purification and Jewish religious laws and ceremonial customs and traditions to be right with God instead of trusting in grace that God imputes to those who trust in Christ for their righteousness rather than trust in their own futile self-effort.

The practical application for us today: it is very easy for us to fall back under some degree or level of self-effort and works since human pride and ego prefers self-effort to grace because self-effort produces self-righteousness and self-righteousness allows pride to rise up and exalt itself above others which in turn produces a heightened sense of spiritual superiority (howbeit a false one). This is one of the reasons we should all forsake any thought of attaining to our own righteousness that leads to eternal life by self-effort.

Self-effort can take the form of trusting in any of the following: -

- Regular church attendance and systematically reading the Bible.
- Singing in a choir and faithfully attending all practice meetings.
- Teaching the Lord's word and preaching.
- Faithfully keeping ceremonial rites and religious customs and traditions.
- Praying, fellowshiping and worshipping the Lord etc.

Obviously all these things are good in themselves and many are spiritually healthy to practice, but the moment we think they have any power to make us righteous before God and trust in them to make us worthy to be accepted by God and deserving of eternal life is the moment we nullify the grace Christ achieved for us on the cross.

The Righteous Shall Live by Faith.

Galatians 3:10-12 ----- ¹⁰For all who rely on works of the law are under a curse; for it is written, "Cursed be everyone who does not abide by all things written in the book of the law and do them." ¹¹Now it is evident that no one is justified before God by the law, for "The righteous shall live by faith." ¹²But the law is not of faith, rather "The one who does them shall live by them."

The book of the law refers to Moses Law, the Ten Commandments, the ceremonial laws and the Jewish laws of purification thus those who rely on the law for their righteousness and justification are under a curse because if they break just one law they are pronounced guilty of breaking all the law.

This is because the law is such a hard taskmaster it requires every law to be kept if a person is going to trust in it for their righteousness and acceptance by God to be counted worthy of eternal life. All who trust in the law are clearly placing themselves under a curse because it is humanly impossible to perfectly fulfil the law and those who do not perfectly fulfil the law are declared guilty and condemned by it. This is because the universal and eternal law of sin and death states that the wages of sin is death (Rom. 6:23).

This means that whoever does not perfectly keep all the commandments of the law are declared by the law guilty and therefore condemned to death (2 Cor. 3:9) this is why being under the law is called a curse. But there is an eternal and divine law that by grace supersedes the law of sin and death which is called the Good News. This universal and eternal law states that all who trust in Christ have been granted the free gift of God which is, eternal life in the Lord Jesus Christ (Rom. 6:23), because, the law of the Spirit of life has set them free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death (Rom. 8:2). This means that the law of sin and death has no power over those who believe in Christ and faithfully follow him. This promise is guaranteed because it is not dependent on our self-effort, but on our faith this is why the Scriptures state: -

- Faith is counted to whoever believes in God who raised the Lord Jesus Christ from the dead who was delivered up to death for our trespasses and raised for our justification (Rom. 4:22-25).

And why Paul also wrote: -

- The promise to Abraham depends on faith in order that it may rest on grace and in this way be guaranteed to all Abraham's offspring (Jews and Gentiles) (Rom. 4:16).

God in his eternal foreknowledge and knowing human nature knew if He had made eternal salvation dependant on our self-effort there is no-way He could guarantee or promise it to any of us especially with an oath. This is the reason God in His great wisdom made eternal salvation dependant on faith and grace and another reason the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ is called the Good News.

NOTE.

It is not the Ten Commandments that are at fault, since they are not only perfect, but also express God's perfect will, it is our corrupt fallen nature with all its sinful dysfunctions and aberrations (self, ego, pride, greed, sensual thoughts, jealousies, envy, anger and such like things) that that are the problem since they prevent all of us from attaining to the perfection the law demands. Paul's entire focus in his letter so far has been to convince the Galatians that they cannot rely on the law to save them.

Living by faith: means believing that God counts us righteous because of our faith contrasted to believing we are saved by self-effort it is about having the faith that Abraham had, he not only believed against all the odds concerning the birth of Isaac (i.e., he was almost a one-hundred and Sarah was almost a ninety) and he didn't consider the condition of their bodies or their age, but rather chose to believe God's promise that he would have a son with the wife he loved, but also believed God was able even to raise his only son Isaac up from the dead when he was tested to offer him upon the altar (Heb. 11:17-19). Abraham believed God was able to keep His promises despite all the outward evidence appearing that it would be

impossible for them to come to pass. Likewise it should be with us, the body is corrupted it is full of sinful dysfunctions and aberrations that limit us from attaining to the holy perfection the law demands this is the reason we need to take our eyes off our bodies and stop relying on self-effort as Abraham did and fully surrender our trust to God's promise that states: -

- With the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved because the Scripture state, “Everyone who believes in Christ will not be put to shame” for there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; the same Lord is Lord of all, bestowing his riches on all who call on him because, everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved (Rom. 10:1-21).

Shall live by the law: means that those who are going to rely on keeping the law for righteousness must keep all the law since if they break any part of it they will be judged guilty by it, the law has no compassion and no grace if it is broken it without mercy declares those who broke it guilty and condemns them to death.

NOTE: since Paul clearly understood that those who rely on being righteous by keeping the law will in reality be declared guilty and condemned by the very law they are trusting in it is easy to see why the bulk of his letters is spent opposing those who entice new converts to Christ back under the law and why he shines a brilliant floodlight on faith and grace.

Grace and the Ten Commandments: obviously God's desire is that we all aim and endeavour to keep the Ten Commandments since they are an expression of His perfect will, but since the Lord understands we cannot attain to their standard of perfect holiness our aim is not to abide by them in an effort to earn our righteousness and justification (since we would fail every time), but rather because the spirit underpinning the law is love, because each law protects a human from harm. In the book of Romans Paul states: -

- Love does no wrong to a neighbour; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law. (Romans 13:10).

The Spirit of the law is to protect the innocent from physical, financial, sexual, emotional, verbal and spiritual harm, those who know God aim to keep the law because it is the right and loving thing to do and fulfils the royal law “Love your neighbour as yourself” (Mark 12:31) (Jas 2:8). Added to this it not only fulfils the law of love and pleases God but also brings a good testimony to His name and the name of Jesus and the Christian faith.

The Law and the Gospel: those who belong to Christ aim to keep the law not to get saved, but because they are saved. They understand that righteousness is a gift of God that comes through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and cannot be earned by self-effort. They know that the law is splendid as a guide to an understanding of God's will, but as a means of reunion with God, the God we have sinned against, it is a hopeless failure nevertheless both law and grace go together, the law without the Gospel is diagnosis without remedy, but the Gospel without law is only the Good News of salvation for people who don't believe they need it because they have never heard the bad news of judgment, the law is not the Gospel, but the Gospel is not lawless (Rom. 3:19-20) (Eph. 2:13-22).

- Micah wrote: “What the LORD requires of mankind is to do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with their God” (Micah 6:5-10).
- Isaiah says: “The LORD loves justice, hates robbery and wrong doing” (Isaiah 61:8).
- Jeremiah said: “Those who know God practise steadfast love, justice, and righteousness in the earth, because it is in these things that God delights” (Jer. 9:24).

The great prophets Micah, Isaiah and Jeremiah clearly show us that the people the LORD loves are not only those who acknowledge God, but who also uphold justice, do not lie, deceive or make promises they do not intend to keep, but speak the truth, do what is right, show respect and give help to others when able and make choices that lead to peace. These are the things the LORD delights in and that bring His favour.

Jesus famous Sermon on the Mount: the constant theme throughout Jesus famous Sermon on the Mount is doing what is right before God by seeking the way of peace in all situations. Jesus calls Christians to treat people fairly and with respect, dignity, decency grace compassion, kindness, mercy and to be quick to forgive. This means living a life that honours God and the Lord Jesus Christ is about doing all we can do to protect people from harm and being dominated by the thought, "What action can I take or do that will help and encourage this person." It is all about doing right to others. This is the reason the message Jesus spoke on the mountain is referred to as, "The Famous Sermon" because the principals if followed not only by Christians but all humanity are the only way to peace (Matt 5). A wicked person is primarily one who deliberately and consciously denies the existence of God and does harm to other humans.

For further information on Jesus Famous Sermon see: -

- Matthew 5 in Commentary New Testament (ON WEBSITE MENU).

Christ Redeemed us from the Curse of the Law by Becoming a Curse for Us.

Galatians 3:13-14 ----- ¹³Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us—for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree"— ¹⁴so that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we might receive the promised Spirit through faith.

The words, Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law means that those who belong to Christ are delivered from the struggle of keeping the law by self-effort to be counted righteous by God and justified. It means the law has no power to condemn those who belong to Christ and death has no power to hold them in the grave. The words, "Jesus became a curse for us," means that even though Christ never sinned he was nevertheless killed as a guilty criminal it is in this sense that: -

- God for our sake made Christ to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God (2 Cor. 5:21).

The Lord Jesus Christ became the ultimate sacrificial Lamb without blemish not only for us, but for the entire world. Paul's entire focus in this letter is still to convince the Galatian brothers and sisters that God counts them righteous because of their faith and not because of their self-effort in keeping the Law of Moses, the Jewish laws of purification and their religious customs and traditions.

Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree: throughout history there have been sceptics who have used the following Scriptures to undermine the Bible because traditional Christianity proclaims that Christ was crucified on a cross.

- Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us—for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree" (Gal. 3:13).
- The God of our fathers raised Jesus, whom you killed by hanging him on a tree (Acts 5:30).
- We (the apostles) are witnesses of all that he did both in the country of the Jews and in Jerusalem. They put him to death by hanging him on a tree (Acts 10:39).

The argument of those who use these verses to undermine the Bible is futile since what is important to God's eternal foreordained plan of salvation for all mankind is that Christ laid down his life for the world and that he died and rose again to eternal glory, what he died on is irrelevant to God's plan and makes not the slightest difference to the Christian message of salvation. Added to this the use of the word tree and the cross can be harmonised in the following two ways: -

1. Since the word tree as used in these verses comes from the Greek word (xulon) which can refer to a literal tree or any other wooden article, obviously the cross was made from wood so in this sense it was simply a tree cut and chopped and made into the shape of a cross.

2. The words, "Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree" are cited from the book of Deuteronomy in which the civil law of that era stated: -

- If a man has committed a crime punishable by death and he is put to death, and you hang him on a tree, his body shall not remain all night on the tree, but you shall bury him the same day, for a hanged man is cursed by God (Deut. 21:22-23).

These words were written in a time when men deserving death were hung on a tree and not crucified on a cross since crucifixion only began during the Roman era. Added to this Paul in (Gal 3:13) is not citing a prophecy of Christ, but a civil law that existed under Old Testament law thus the expression hanged on a tree is simply a Jewish idiom that in this context means put to death as a criminal.

We might Receive the Promised Spirit through Faith.

Paul's statement, "That we might receive the promised Spirit through faith" (v14) shows that the promise Paul now has in focus is the promise of the Spirit. In the context of this chapter it is the Spirit of righteousness (also called God's Holy Spirit). Paul in this letter is shining a brilliant spotlight on the Spirit of righteousness that God imputes to all who faithfully follow and trust in Christ so that they can be set free from the imprisonment and captivity of the law and by grace be justified, forgiven and granted eternal life in everlasting glory.

Paul's entire focus in this chapter is the gift of righteousness that comes by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ he is trying to convince the unbelieving Jews that Gentiles who have faith in the promised seed of Abraham the Lord Jesus Christ are now accepted by God and receive the same Spirit of righteousness as Abraham did.

The Seed of Abraham, God's Promises and the Law.

Galatians 3:16 ----- ¹⁶Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many, but as of one, And to thy seed which is Christ.

The LORD promised Abraham that He would make of him a great nation and that he would be the father of a multitude of nations. God swore He would make Abrahams name great, bless him, nations, and kings would come from him and He would give to him and to his seed after him all the land of Canaan/Israel for an everlasting possession.

God promised Abraham that his seed would be as the dust of the earth and the stars of heaven so that they cannot be numbered and God will be their God. The LORD confirmed this promise to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and their seed after them throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant, promising Abraham that in his seed and all the nations of the earth would be blessed.

(Gen. 12:1-3) (Gen. 13:14-17) (Gen. 15:4-7) (Gen. 17:1-8) (Gen. 22:15-18) (Deut. 9:5).

The Covenant of the Law Cannot not Annul the Promise.

Galatians 3:17-18 ----- ¹⁷And this I say, that the covenant that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of no effect. ¹⁸For if the inheritance be of the law, it is no more of promise, but God gave it to Abraham by promise.

The Law: primarily refers to the Jewish religious ceremonial rites, the Jewish laws of purification and the Ten Commandments.

The inheritance: refers firstly, to the promised seed of Abraham the Lord Jesus Christ as King of kings and Lord of lords the Saviour and beloved elder brother of all who believe and secondly, to the land and multitudes of brothers and sisters in Christ belonging to the family of God in the eternal Kingdom of God. Though the Law of Moses and the Jewish laws of purification came four-hundred and thirty

years after God made the promises to Abraham the law does not cancel the inheritance of God's promises to Abraham because the promise is not based on our self-effort but on the honour and integrity of the person who made the promise.

Concerning the guarantee of the promise the author of Hebrews wrote: -

- When God made a promise to Abraham, since he had no one greater by whom to swear, he swore by himself, ¹⁴saying, "Surely I will bless you and multiply you." ¹⁵And thus Abraham, having patiently waited, obtained the promise. ¹⁶For people swear by something greater than themselves, and in all their disputes an oath is final for confirmation. ¹⁷So when God desired to show more convincingly to the heirs of the promise the unchangeable character of his purpose, he guaranteed it with an oath ¹⁸so that by two unchangeable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have fled for refuge might have strong encouragement to hold fast to the hope set before us (Heb. 6:13-18).

Paul is using the truth that Abraham after patiently waiting received God's promise of a son (Isaac), to prove to the doubting Jews that those who are trusting in Christ will in the same way receive the promised eternal inheritance. God's promise is guaranteed for the following two reasons: -

1. It was made by God who swore by Himself (since there is no-one higher).
2. God cannot lie.

NOTICE: Paul is not teaching the history of Abraham to the Galatians, but using Abraham as an example to prove that salvation is by faith and not by the law. The context of the entire chapter is about the following two paths to justification: -

1. The law of faith and God's Grace.
2. The law of purification by religious works (which is not really a path at all).

Paul is shining a floodlight on Abraham's faith to prove that those who belong to Jesus Christ are blessed by being counted righteous by their faith just as Abraham was.

Why was the Law Added?

Galatians 3:19-22 ----- ¹⁹Why then the law? It was added because of transgressions, until the offspring should come to whom the promise had been made, and it was put in place through angels by an intermediary. ²⁰now an intermediary (mediator in the KJV) implies more than one, but God is one. ²¹Is the law then contrary to the promises of God? Certainly not! For if a law had been given that could give life, then righteousness would indeed be by the law. ²²But the Scripture imprisoned everything under sin, so that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe until the coming faith would be revealed.

When Paul is writing a letter he has no audience before him to ask questions so he often adopts a style of writing that enables him to raise a topic by asking a question himself. This type of writing has the following three benefits: -

1. Questions always grab the attention of the reader as they set the mind to seek an answer.
2. Questions give the author the opportunity to answer questions that they perceive they might be asked if in front of a live audience.
3. Thirdly questions raise a topic the writer wants to highlight and discuss.

Paul asks the question, "Why was the law added?" (v19) and then answers the question himself by saying that the law was added for the following two reasons: -

1. Because of transgressions and wrongdoing.

2. To act as a guardian and protector (v24) until the promised seed of Abraham should come to his offspring (the nation Israel) to whom the promise had been made.

The Law was put in Place through Angels.

The word intermediary in this context refers to a go-between and by implication a reconciler (intercessor) (i.e., someone in the middle or between) and the word, mediator carries the same idea. God was the mediator (v20) who gave the law through angels to Moses who then gave it to Israel, while Moses was the mediator between Israel and God at Mount Sinai four-hundred and thirty years after God had given Abram the promises.

Paul asks the question "Is the law competing with the promise and in conflict with it?" And then immediately answers his-own question by saying, "Certainly not" (v21). Paul in these verses is explaining to the Jews and those being bewitched by them (v1) that the promise of God and the law are not in conflict with each other for the simple reason they both serve two entirely different purposes.

The Law: had no power to grant anyone righteousness since not one of us can attain to its perfect standard of holiness so rather than give life it imprisoned us all under sin (v22). This is because the law without compassion or mercy states, "Whoever does not perfectly keep all its commandments, is condemned to death (2 Cor. 3:9). This ministry of death carved in letters on stone is also called the, law of sin and death. This universal law states that the wages of sin is death (Rom. 6:23). This means that whoever's sins must die and since we all sin it also means that all mankind is held captive to this universal law and imprisoned by it until the promised seed of Abraham, the Lord Jesus Christ came (v23)

It is not the Ten Commandments that are at fault, since they are not only perfect, but express God's perfect will, it is our corrupt fallen nature with all its sinful dysfunctions and aberrations (self, ego, pride, greed, sensual thoughts, jealousies, envy, anger and such like things,) that that are the problem since they prevent all of us from attaining to the perfection of the law demands.

The purpose of the law: the law was added to the promises to control and limit sin until the promised seed (Jesus Christ) of Abraham came. Since the majority of mankind does not need to be told, murdering another human, taking another man's wife for sexual pleasure, stealing and kidnapping a person is wrong behaviour much of humanity was already living a lifestyle that was in harmony with many of the laws written in the Ten Commandments. So one might ask: -

- Why did God give them to Moses in such a dramatic manner?

The answers to this question is that God by descending from heaven in such a thunderous, dramatic and specular fashion on Mount Sinai and also by engraving the Ten Commandments on stone with His own finger shone a brilliant floodlight on them clearly showing the entire world the following three things: -

1. God's perfect will for mankind.
2. To shine a spotlight on the only way humanity has any hope of living in harmony and peace.
3. To sentence all mankind under sin.

The Spirit underpinning the Ten Commandments is love, because each law protects innocent humans from physical, financial, verbal, emotional and spiritual harm this is the reason Paul says: -

- Love does no wrong to a neighbour; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law. (Romans 13:10).

The laws of purification and the ceremonial laws were added to provide a way of redemption for those who did sin and to echo and point the way to Christ. The legalistic Jews believed that justification and salvation to eternal life came by the observance of the Law of Moses.

It is certain many Jews loyally preached faith in the promise and in its fulfilment in Christ, but mistakenly made the inheritance of the promise dependent upon the fulfilling of the law. Paul is shining a brilliant spotlight on the truth that trusting in the law invalidates the promise because salvation to eternal life must rests upon the promise not upon the law.

The Jews where teaching the Galatian brothers and sisters that salvation was dependant, both upon the promise and upon the law whereas Paul is highlighting the fact that if the promised inheritance comes through the law then it is no more of the promise and not only is faith made void, but the promise made becomes of no-effect (Rom. 4:14). The promise refers to the promise God made to faithful Abraham which when summed up states that he would be heir of the world not by fulfilling the law, but through the righteousness of faith (Rom 4:13) and that he would be the ancestor of the Messiah, the Christ and that in him all the nations of the earth would be blessed.

Since there cannot be two ways of obtaining the same promised blessing it becomes clear to those who have a logical mind that the law was given for another purpose altogether. The covenant God made with Abraham and his seed is still in force today through Christ the promised seed of Abraham. Whoever abides in Christ by faith are the spiritual offspring of Abraham. The promises of Abraham are first made to Christ and then by him to those who are by faith grafted into Christ, but when the promise is mingled with the law it is made nothing, but the law. This is the reason our righteousness must always be in Christ as a sure defence of faith against dependence on self-effort and human self-righteousness.

The glory, the beauty, the wonder and splendour of God's grace in Christ: the words, "For if a law had been given that could give life then righteousness would indeed be by the law" (Gal. 3:21) should give every brother and sister in Christ tremendous comfort and set them free from any form of mental torment or self-condemnation since these words clearly show that not only Paul, but God Himself knows that not one of us will ever attain to the perfect standard of the law no matter how much we might desire to or how hard we try. Both God and Christ know that any attempt we make to attain to God's perfect standard of Holiness to make us worthy of eternal life by our own human self-effort is doomed to fail before we even start this is the glory, the beauty, the wonder and splendour of God's grace in Christ.

The promise by faith in Jesus Christ: in total contrast to the law this promise gives life and life abundant because it sets all who believe totally free from self-effort and striving to keep laws to attain to righteousness that leads to eternal life.

The Scripture imprisoned everything under sin: (v22) this expression means that the Ten Commandments given by God Himself are so perfect they placed all of mankind under sin because fallen human nature has so many sinful dysfunctions and aberrations dwelling within (i.e., selfishness, ego, pride, lust, greed, anger, jealousy etc., just to name a few dwelling within) not one of us can attain to the perfect standard of the law.

But the Good News is that God has a much the higher law that supersedes the law of sin and death which states that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe (v22). This means that whoever has faith in Christ will be counted righteous not because of self-effort to attain to the high calling of the law, but because of their faith in Christ.

Until the coming faith would be revealed: the words, until the coming faith would be revealed (v23) refer to the majestic Good News of the Gospel which is about salvation from death to eternal life. It proclaims that salvation is by faith and grace through believing in the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is about recognising that one falls short of God's glory and absolute Holiness and about repentance, baptism and faithfully abiding in the faith. Throughout the entire history of mankind there has only been one man who has ever been able to attain to the high calling of the law, Jesus Sermon on the Mount and God's perfect standard of Holiness. The Gospel of salvation is about recognising this reality, repenting before God and accepting His foreordained plan of salvation. Salvation is about trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ, looking forward to his return and being raised to eternal glory.

The majestic Good News of the Gospel: states that whoever comes to God through honest heartfelt repentance and faith in His Son the Lord Jesus Christ is not only approved of and accepted by God the Father, but all their SINS are forgiven, not because they are deserving of it, or by any self-effort or religious good works, but because through faith in Christ righteousness is imputed from God to them as a pure and free gift, but this is not the end of the Good News of the Gospel since God's promises also state that the faithful in Christ will be resurrected to eternal life and everlasting glory. Can there be any better news than this? Clearly one of the reasons the Gospel is called the Good News.

The Law was our Guardian/Schoolmaster until Christ Came.

Galatians 3:23-25 ---- ²³Now before faith came, we were held captive under the law, imprisoned until the coming faith would be revealed. ²⁴So then, the law was our guardian (schoolmaster in KJV) until Christ came, in order that we might be justified by faith. ²⁵But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian (schoolmaster in KJV).

The idea of the guardian/schoolmaster here is of one who watches over his students for the sole purpose of restraining them from acting wickedly and from temptations that would bring their lives to ruin. The use of the word, schoolmaster in this context carries the idea of a principal of a school whose care students are committed to and who taught them in ways that would protect them and help them prosper in life. The schoolmaster made use of discipline and kept a strict eye and hand over the performance and duty those who were under his authority and restrained them from many things that their fleshy and sensual inclinations led them to by threatening them with the fear of death when disobedient and inflicting its penalties and punishments on those who broke its demands and thereby subjected them to bondage.

The schoolmaster taught: -

- The moral law, the letter of the law and the writing on the two tables.
- The many other statutes and judgments and the duty to God and to mankind.
- What is to be done and what is to be avoided.
- What is righteousness and what is not.
- The nature of sin, its disadvantages, shortcomings, imperfection and consequences.

But not one of these give, any instructions about a saviour or about righteousness that comes by faith and by God's grace in Christ.

The schoolmaster was only intended to be temporary: the fact the law is referred to as a schoolmaster shows that the use of it was always only intended to be temporary and the duration of its use only for a certain period of time. No student is expected to remain forever under a schoolmaster since the goal of every teacher is to bring their students to a proper and mature age for a greater and higher exercise of life so the law was designed to continue and did continue to be of this use and service to the Jewish nation until Christ came.

The ceremonial law had something both awful and tremendous in it.

- The awfulness was in the reality that every beast that was slain in sacrifice was not only an instruction to those offering it that they deserved to die as that creature did, but also carried in it an acknowledgment and confession of their own guilt and that God's handwriting of ordinances was against them.
- The something tremendous contained within it is the hints of the Gospel and the way of salvation by Christ that it gave Israel by signs, by figures, by shadows and by types, through its ceremonial rites and its sacrifices.

The sacrifices and offerings were designed to shadow and echo the Messiah the Christ and to introduce him to the world while the moral law of God was designed to show people their sin and the danger of living a life of sin. The purpose of the law is to condemn and thereby lead us to right behaviour and God's forgiveness and grace that come through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ the redeemer of us all. The entire focus of the law is to guide people into right behaviour and to magnify sin so that sinners would seek after God and eternal life and be turned away from wrong behaviour.

This is the effect preaching of the Gospel should have since it is right that people should be made to feel that they are sinners in order that they may be prepared to embrace God's offer of mercy and grace that is received by faith in the Lord Jesus who is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes (Rom. 10:4).

The schoolmaster acted like a military guard: there is no such thing as justification by the law it is clear that no blessing could be expected from a schoolmaster who acts like a military guard keeping those under it shut up as in a prison and who treats all who are under its rigid and severe discipline as convicted and condemned criminals until Christ the deliver came and by God's free gift of grace through faith ended the schoolmasters unrelenting bondage of achieving righteousness by self-effort and by keeping the demands of the law and ceremonial rites, holy days and religious customs and traditions.

The following words of Paul should be of enormous comfort to every brother and sister in Christ since they clearly show that we are counted righteous and justified, and saved to eternal life totally apart from the law' –

- Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes (Rom. 10:4).

These majestic words beautifully show that the law has no power to condemn those who are faithfully trusting in God's free gift of righteousness which comes by grace and through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

NOTE: obviously keeping the law should be the aim and endeavour of every Christian since it is not only the right and loving thing to do, but also fulfils the royal law of God, "Love your neighbour as yourself (Mark 12:31) (Jas. 2:8). Added to this it honours God and the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Endeavouring to keep the law only becomes wrong when our motivation to keep the law is not to glorify God and to benefit others, but is driven by our own self-effort to attain to our own standard of righteousness to make us worthy of eternal life rather than trusting in God's righteousness that comes by grace and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

You are Abraham's Offspring and Heirs According to Promise.

Galatians 3:26-29 ---- ²⁶for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith. ²⁷For as many of you as were baptised into Christ have put on Christ. ²⁸There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. ²⁹And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise.

Here we see the brilliance of Paul's knowledge and the clarity of his thinking he begins with the Galatian brothers and sisters being bewitched (deceived) by Jewish teachers and takes them through God's eternal promises to Abraham to bring them to this stunning and glorious conclusion, Christ is the promised seed of Abraham therefore whoever belongs to Christ are Abraham's decedents because of God's covenant to Abraham that he would be the father of many nations and that his seed would be the heir of the world. It is not those who are biologically Abraham's offspring that are counted as the heirs of the promise, but those who by faith belong to Christ no matter whether they are Jews or Gentiles if they belong to Christ God counts them as the offspring of Abraham.

In some circles of religion today there is a mindset that Israel will have an exalted position in the eternal Kingdom of God, but these verses clearly show that this is a mistaken theory since God is now establishing one nation in Christ made up of both Jews and Gentiles.

There are no favourite nations in Christ we are all one in him as Paul states, "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female," clearly showing that all are equal in Christ no matter whether they are Jew or Gentile, noble or common, gifted or lowly, rich or poor, powerful amongst nations or ordinary, whether a leader of a global church or the church cleaner we are all equal in Christ, no-one is superior to another. As Paul so beautifully proclaimed, "If you are Christ's, you are Abraham's offspring and heirs according to promise."

Galatians 4

When the Fullness of Time Came, God Sent His Son.

Galatians 4:4-8 ----- ⁴But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, ⁵to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons. ⁶And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!" ⁷So you are no longer a slave, but a son, and if a son, then an heir through God. ⁸Formerly, when you did not know God, you were enslaved to those that by nature are not gods.

The fullness of time refers to the birth of Christ by his mother the Virgin Mary (notice Jesus was born under the law). Paul is writing to the Galatian church which has within it Jews and Gentiles, which means that the words, "To redeem those who were under the law" refer to the Jews who were under Moses Law and the Levitical laws of purification. The words, "You were enslaved to those that by nature are not gods" (v8) refer to the time prior to the Jews knowing God (or God calling them out of Egypt and thereby knowing them) when they were much like the Gentiles who worshipped idols and pagan gods.

Paul is speaking to both Jews and Gentiles in the Galatian church and though what he is saying primarily refers to the Jews, the same principal applies to anyone (i.e., Jew or Gentile) who trusts in outward religious works (i.e., adhering to ceremonial rites, holy days and keeping religious customs and traditions) to earn righteousness and be counted worthy of eternal life. Paul in this chapter is basically saying that Christ came to deliver the Jews from the bondage of the law and Gentiles from their pagan gods so that they might both be adopted as sons and daughters of God through faith in Christ.

Abba! Father! The Spirit in the following verse, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!" (v6) refer to the Spirit of love. The Spirit that motivates anyone to praise and exalt another with such endearment is love. God through Christ's horrific, cruel and brutal death has produced in the heart of all who have faith in Christ such great love for God's Son that they are by this love not only adopted by God as His sons and daughters and thereby become heirs of everlasting life and eternal glory, but are also delivered from the bondage of the law, the deception of all other religious belief systems and from any form of self-effort as a means to know God and to attain to righteousness that leads to salvation and eternal life, this is the reason Paul states, "We are no longer a slave, but a son and if a son then an heir through God" (v7).

Until Christ is Formed in You.

Galatians 4:19 ----- ¹⁹my little children, for whom I am again in the anguish of childbirth until Christ is formed in you!

This verses shows the true spirit of a shepherd and the compassionate heart of Paul, even though he is hurt, disappointed and in anguish over the Galatian brothers and sisters who are putting greater trust in Jewish religious teachers than they are in Paul he does not dismiss them, but still affectionately continues to speaks to them as his little children. Paul sees himself not only as a teacher of the Gospel, but also as a father to those he teaches. At the moment Paul's spiritual children are being led astray so out of compassion and an intense love for them he

as any natural father does is speaking harshly in the hope they will forsake those who are leading them astray. Paul's one desire and highest goal for all who he teaches and by extension all who read his letters is that, Christ would be formed in us, thus the reason he is so passionate about encouraging the Galatians to remain in the Gospel of grace that they once embraced and trust in Christ alone for their righteousness and not their own self-effort and religious works.

Until Christ is formed in you: Paul's highest goal for the Galatians and by extension every brother and sister in Christ is that "Christ would be formed in them" (Gal. 4:19)

Christ being formed in you carries the following two ideas: -

1. That our heart and mind would be full of love, compassion, mercy, kindness and forgiveness etc., not only toward our brothers and sisters in the Lord, but also toward those outside the Kingdom of God.
2. That God's will, God's eternal plan, God's love, His purposes and promise are engraved in our hearts and in our minds and that the Lord Jesus Christ is our greatest love and our greatest desire.

God has designed our hearts, minds, imaginations, memories and emotions in such a connected manner that whoever we deeply love and worship is automatically and mystically formed in us, (i.e., every married person who has ever experienced self-sacrificing, compassionate and supporting love will have experienced the one they loved being formed in their heart their mind and their emotions).

When someone loses a spouse, family member or friend they have been close to for many years and loved deeply the presence of that person will remain as a real entity in their heart, their mind and their emotions. For some it will remain to the end of their lives while for others it will dissipate over time (depending on the depth of love and the length of time they have loved) for others though the memory will remain, the spiritual presence will pass when new love blossoms.

The following is a true story and a good example of a person being in the heart of another. An eight-year old disabled girl, whose best friend was her mother was doing her first live stage show at her school. The mother loved her daughter but could not be at the opening show as she was in hospital with terminal cancer. A television reporter asked the mother's daughter if she would be sad and miss her mother at the opening of the show. The young girl with tears in her eyes said, "Yes I will miss her, but she will be in my heart where she belongs." Love for a person creates the reality and presence of that person in the human heart, the greater the love the greater the presence.

It is in this way that the spiritual presence of Christ is formed in those who believe in him, the more we come to realise how far short we fall of God's perfect holiness and the deeper we understand what it cost God and the Lord Jesus Christ to save us and the more central the majestic eternal hope of being raised to eternal life and everlasting glory becomes to our thinking the more our love for the Lord deepens and the greater the love, the greater the spiritual presence of Christ is formed in us.

NOTE.

Those who faithfully follow Christ do not aim to keep the law to be saved, but rather their motivation is from this spiritual love for God and the Lord Jesus Christ hidden in the heart and mind of all who know Christ. It is this love that is the motivating power driving those faithful to the Lord to follow (howbeit not perfectly) God's laws, do-good and keep the Lord Jesus Christ's teachings since love desires to honour the one loved.

Mystical phenomena and spiritual moments: though all the above is the natural way in which Christ is formed in us, God's presence and his spirit should never be limited since there always remains a certain amount of mystical phenomena that cannot be explained by human reasoning or human understanding, especially in times of great crisis and sorrow when God by His spirit often overrides any power

or lack of it within us and invades our hearts with comfort and our minds with guidance and wisdom etc. These spiritual moments are individual, intimate and personal experiences that cannot be explained and in most instances only have true spiritual value and meaning to the ones who experience them.

Galatians 5

The Hope of Righteousness.

Galatians 5:5 ----- ⁵For through the Spirit, by faith, we ourselves eagerly wait for the hope of righteousness.

This means that at this present time we are righteousness by our faith in Christ which is not yet manifested, which means that the words, "Eagerly wait for the hope of righteousness" refers to the following awe-inspiring words Paul wrote to the Corinthian brothers and sisters: -

- There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; so also is the resurrection of the dead, the body is sown in corruption it is raised in incorruption it is sown in dishonour it is raised in glory it is sown in weakness it is raised in power it is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body (1 Corinthians 15:41-44).

Added to this eternal glory Paul said: -

- Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither can corruption inherit incorruption this is the mystery; we will not all sleep, but we will all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye; the last trumpet will sound and the dead will be raised incorruptible and we will be changed because this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal body must put on immortality so when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, "Death is swallowed up in victory" (1 Corinthians 15:50-54).

Then will the glory of God's perfect righteousness abiding within be manifest in all its holy splendour for the world to clearly see.

NOTE.

When salvation to eternal life is spoken of as the hope of the faithful in Christ, it is not called hope because it might or might not happen, but because it is unseen and yet future. The hope itself is guaranteed because it is based on God's promise and he cannot lie. The apostle Paul wrote; "In hope of eternal life, which God, who never lies, promised before the ages began" (Titus 1:2).

The Christian hopes to be resurrected from the grave to be raised up to eternal life and everlasting glory to be made perfectly free from sin; to be everlastingly happy, but it is faith that gives these things a mental reality in the mind and it is under this influence of faith that those in Christ allow these unseen and yet future events to control their mind as if they were a reality now.

Faith and hope: the difference between faith and hope is that by faith alone we are sure of eternal salvation it is certain and guaranteed by faith whereas by hope we look forward with confidence that we will be raised to eternal life. All Christian hope stands on faith since it is faith that secures and guarantees the promise of God. Faith and hope go together they are partners that complement each other since the same things that are the focus of our hope are the same things that our Faith is trusting in. Faith secures while hope looks forward to what is secured by faith.

Righteousness apart from the law: to highlight to us all that righteousness is a gift apart from the law and apart from adhering to ceremonial rites, holy days and religious customs and traditions Paul wrote: -

- The righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law (Rom. 3:21).
- Faith was counted to Abraham as righteousness (Rom. 4:9).

- Abraham received the sign of circumcision as a seal of the righteousness that he had by faith (Rom. 4:11).
- Death reigned through that one man's trespass much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man Jesus Christ (Rom. 5:17) (See also Rom. 5:15-16).
- The wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Rom. 6:23).
- By grace you have been saved through faith and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God (Eph. 2:8).

God at this present moment counts those in Christ as being righteous because of their faith in Christ and not because of self-effort or their practise of religious works, but as we all know this perfect standard of righteousness that God imputes to us as a pure and free gift is not yet manifest, nevertheless there is in the heart of every faithful brother and sister in Christ and eager and passionate desire for that DAY when the Lord returns in glory and the righteousness that dwells by faith in the heart, in the mind and in the Spirit of the Sons and daughters of God is outwardly manifested in eternal glory.

A personal observation: throughout my Christian life I have seen faithful brothers and sisters in Christ being enormously harsh on themselves even to the extent of mentally condemning themselves because they could not attain to the perfect standard of righteousness they deeply desired. On the positive side this attitude shows that they have that Spirit of righteous that God imputes to the heart and spirit of all who are in Christ, but on the negative side it clearly shows that they do not understand that they are saved by grace And faith and not by achieving a certain standard they consciously or unconsciously set for themselves.

Only Faith Working through Love, Counts for Anything.

Galatians 5:6 ----- ⁶For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything, but only faith working through love.

Paul's words, only faith working through love counts for anything in this context is not referring to earning our righteousness for salvation that leads to eternal life, but rather that it is not by adhering to the laws of circumcision or any other religious law, custom or tradition that will bring any reward from God, but only those things we do from love. This means whenever we show kindness, mercy, grace, compassion, forgiveness and justice to another person especially a brother or sister in Christ God notices and stores rewards accordingly in the eternal vaults of heaven for those who show love in this manner to others in contrast to simply adhering to ceremonial rites, holy days and keeping religious customs and traditions.

Reward and Loss.

Within the global Christian church there are religious teachers who develop a mindset in their followers that every teaching of the Bible is linked to salvation therefore all doctrines must be perfectly interpreted for one to be saved and should someone hold a different view they cannot be saved or will lose their salvation, such a mindset produces a response of argument, attack and defence when a brother and sister with different views talk about the Christian faith rather than being able to sit in unity together and reason in the spirit of peace.

Certainly we must know the message of the cross and Gospel that leads us to Christ and to salvation in him, but outside of this knowledge is just knowledge to help us understand our life in Christ in a brighter light, to strengthen our faith and teach us how we should behave while we wait for his glorious return. Once we are established in Christ it is the behaviour of those who belong to Christ that will either bring reward or loss when Christ returns, but even though some may suffer loss they will still be saved because their righteousness is determined by their faith in Christ and God's grace.

Paul in his letter to the Corinthian brothers and sisters stated the same thing in the following words: -

- No one can lay a foundation other than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ whoever builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw— each one's work will become manifest, for the Day will disclose it, because it will be revealed by fire, and the fire will test what sort of work each one has done. If the work that anyone has built on the foundation survives, they will receive a reward, but if anyone's work is burned up, they will suffer loss, though they themselves will be saved, but only as through fire (1 Cor. 3:11-15).

These verses clearly show us the following two things; -

1. Not everything is a matter of salvation to eternal life.
2. That everything we do is a matter of reward or loss.

The Fruit and Works of the Spirit.

Galatians 5:22-25 ---- ²²But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. ²⁴And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. ²⁵If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit.

The fruit or works of the Spirit: embraces every action and deed that stems from love which means the works of the Spirit are everything we do that benefits or enhances another person's life in some manner this is why there is no law against the fruits of the spirit, not one of them will ever bring harm to another human.

The character of the Spirit: is humble, modest, respectful, giving, kind, gracious, polite, courteous and well-mannered.

Living in the Spirit: means living in love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control and such like things.

Setting the mind on the Spirit: is to focus the mind on the things of God and on Christ, it means when we plan our lives and what we do our minds are always conscious that what we do can either honouring God or offend God. It means we are always consciously aware that our behaviour, speech and lifestyle will either honour or dishonour the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

It is about being mentally conscious that we are a reflection of the Lord on earth and being alertly aware that we can be a good or bad reflection. Setting the mind on the Spirit is about being determined to be a good reflection of Christ in whatever career path we take and in all we do and say. Simply put, setting the mind on the Spirit is being determined to live in the Spirit (as explained above).

Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires (Gal. 5:24), these words of Paul do not refer to the natural physical body, nor does it mean we should starve or afflict our bodies with lashings as a certain few do in some religions. The word flesh in this context refers to the corruption of the old nature, the old man and carnal heart (the world calls it the lower nature). The phrase, crucified the flesh with its passions and desires means that the power of the flesh to dominate and control our lives has been broken, since the supreme heartfelt desire of the faithful who are in Christ is to honour God and the name of their Lord. Crucified the flesh means that all the affections, passions, and lusts and all the disorderly wishes and desires that we may feel and desire contrary to love and contrary to what is right and good have lost the governing, controlling and dominating power that they once had.

BUT: this does not mean that we are totally free from the flesh (the corrupt nature) with its indwelling sinful dysfunctions and aberrations since it is still alive, but it's alive as a person fastened to a cross may be alive, though they cannot act and move as before, being under restraints, so the flesh though crucified and under the

restraints of God's love and grace cannot dominate, reign and govern as before, yet it is alive, and acts, and operates, and oftentimes has great sway and influence. It is in the sense that the flesh is deprived of its reigning power that it is said to be crucified.

Paul being fully aware of this principle wrote earlier in this letter to the Galatians: -

- I have been crucified with Christ it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me and the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. I do not nullify the grace of God, for if justification were through the law, then Christ died for no purpose (Galatians 2:19-21).

This means when the flesh did get the victory over Paul he did not condemn himself or mentally beat himself up, but rather embraced the grace of God in Christ Jesus. Paul's deepest desire was to live perfectly before God, but he knew because of the flesh this noble and high desire of his heart and mind was unattainable, so he chose to trust in the Good News of the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ that states that those in Christ are counted righteous by God because of their faith in His Son who laid his life down for them and therefore Paul's trust and dependence for righteousness was not in his own self-effort to attain to it, but in his faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

This is what Paul means when he said: -

- I do not nullify the grace of God (Gal. 2:21).

Paul the perfect example for all who faithfully followed Christ is gloriously shining a brilliant floodlight on the fact that he does not condemn himself in those moments the flesh gains a victory and thereby make the GRACE of God that Christ achieved for him on the cross serve no purpose. Paul statement: -

- If justification was attainable through the law, then Christ died for no purpose. (Galatians 2:21).

Means that if any one of us could attain to the high and perfect standard the law demands then Christ death was pointless since there would be no need for it which clearly shows that the flesh though crucified in that it has lost its reigning power and governing control over us will in certain circumstances and weak moment still seize the opportunity to raise its ugly head, this is the reason Paul said, "He lives his life by faith and in God's grace" as we all should.

Galatians 6

Paul's only Boast was in the Cross of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Galatians 6:14 ----- ¹⁴But far be it from me (Paul) to boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.

Paul's statement, far be it from me to boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ means that he is not going to boast in any merit of his own no matter how good or in any spiritual gift he has. This is because Paul is fully aware that it is only by God's grace in Christ that he is free from the condemnation of the law and its legal right to proclaim him guilty and sentence him to death. Paul clearly understood the words of John who wrote: -

- If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us, but if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us (1 John 1:8-10).

This is the reason Paul was not going to boast or trust in any form of self-effort to attain to righteousness to be saved to eternal life other than his faith in Christ and God's grace. Some glory in their conformity to religious laws, rules traditions, others in their zeal and passion of their faith or their talents and their learning, but the chief glory and supreme boast of every brother and sister in the Lord should only be in, the cross of Christ for to it we owe all our joys and eternal hopes.

The world has been crucified to me, and I to the world: (v14) the world Paul has in focus in this statement, does not only refer to the secular world, but also embraces the religious world without Christ. Paul's past world was not the things of this secular world (i.e. wealth, success, riches, material possessions, etc.), his passion was not for these things, but rather his heartfelt zeal was set on the Jewish religious world that he had been born into. Paul had been circumcised, he had accurate training in the knowledge of the Scriptures and Jewish law and was possessed with a zeal that surpassed his Jewish equals and his life under the law was blameless as far as conformity to the Jewish religion required and in which he had been trained (Phil 3:4-8).

This is the world that meant everything to Paul, until he met Christ, since in that moment everything Paul had loved, was passionate about and expertly trained in was not only crucified to him, but he willingly counted it all as loss in comparison to the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus the Lord (Philip. 3:8) not one iota of his past religious life had any hold over him.

The practical application today: the words, the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world if applied to brothers and sisters in Christ today means the following two things: -

1. That the things of this secular world (i.e., wealth, success, riches, material possessions, fame and power etc.), should not be the driving force or motivating power of our minds and our hearts.
2. That any past religious laws, rules, ceremonial rites, customs, traditions or spiritual experiences we may have had that were outside of Christ should not only be laid aside, but have absolutely no hold over us.

Circumcision Counts for Nothing, but a New Creation.

Galatians 6:15-18 ----- ¹⁵Neither circumcision counts for anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation. ¹⁶And as for all who walk by this rule, peace and mercy be upon them, and upon the Israel of God. ¹⁷From now on let no one cause me trouble, for I bear on my body the marks of Jesus. ¹⁸The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit, brothers. Amen.

Neither circumcision nor uncircumcision and by extension any form of law keeping to make ourselves righteous and worthy of eternal life is not only powerless to achieve such a high and heavenly goal but also counts for nothing since it is futile, thus the majestic and glorious words, "But a new creation" this new creation refers to the following eternal and awe inspiring words that Paul wrote to the Ephesian brothers and sisters in Christ: -

- Gentiles were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the Commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world have now been brought near by the blood of Christ because he has made Jews and Gentiles both one by abolishing the law of commandments and ordinances, that he might create in himself, one new man (also called a new nation and a new creation) in place of the two (Jews and Gentiles) and thereby reconciling Jews and Gentiles both to God in one body through the cross. So Gentiles are now fellow citizens with the Jews and members of the household of God, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, in whom the whole structure (the one new man-new nation-new creation) of Jews and Gentiles is being joined together to grow into a holy temple in the Lord and a dwelling place for God by the Spirit (Ephes. 2:11-22).

Under the New Covenant God is creating, one new man also called a new nation and a new creation made up of Gentiles and Jews in Christ. Christ is the head of this new creation with its Jewish and Gentile citizens being fully equal to one another since in Christ we are all brothers and sisters in the same eternal family that God now is establishing in the Lord Jesus Christ. The practical application of what this means is that all the future and eternal promises God made to Israel also apply to all who belong to Christ.

The book of Revelation states: -

- When Christ returns everyone will see him (the Gentiles) and those who pierced him (the Jews). And tells us, Jesus the faithful witness and the ruler of kings on earth loves us (Jews and Gentiles), freed us from our sins by his blood and ransomed a people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation to be a kingdom and priests to God and they (Jews and Gentiles) will reign on the earth (Rev. 1:5-10).

Peace and mercy be upon the Israel of God: the words, all who walk by this rule, peace and mercy be upon them, and upon the Israel of God (v16) teach us the following three things: -

1. That the true Israel of God is not those who are the natural offspring of Abraham, but those who have faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.
2. Jews should never think they are right with God just because they are direct descendants of Abraham and keep Moses laws of purification, religious Jewish customs and traditions nor should Gentiles think they are saved simply because they are born into a Christian family, attend church every week and keep its religious customs and traditions.
3. To find peace in God both Jews and Gentiles must stop trusting in their own self-effort to attain righteousness and trust in their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and in God's grace this is the secret to finding peace in God since it is the only way to cease from the bondage of the law and the futile struggle of self-effort which only leads to condemnation and mortal and eternal death.

Paul bears on his body the marks of Jesus: Paul's words, I bear on my body the marks of Jesus (v17) literally refer to his countless beatings (often near death) the five times he was whipped with thirty-nine lashes the three times he was beaten with rods and of course the time he was stoned (2 Cor. 11:23-28). Figuratively marks in the body in this context can refer to any physical or emotional hurt a brother or sister suffers because of their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Paul's suffering's prove his devotion: considering all the suffering Paul experienced and endured for God and the Lord Jesus Christ it clearly shows he was not in the ministry for his own gain since neither a self-serving person nor a fearful person would continue to endure such hardships and dangers in serving another in their own strength as Paul did. His sufferings clearly manifests the amazing power and glory of God that was working in his life and shows that God's love dwelling within by far superseded any form of selfish ambition, ego and pride and not only surpassed the riches and wealth of this world but also was far more precious than his own well-being and his own life (2 Cor. 15:23-28). Paul beautifully sums the entire chapter up in his final farewell words, "May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your all."

SUMMARY: The message of Salvation in Galatians proclaims: -

- All mankind is imprisoned under sin.
- Jesus laid his life down to a brutal, bloody and cruel death so that we could be saved from our sins and raised to eternal life and everlasting glory.
- God by His majestic power raised Jesus from the dead and will raise all who belong to the family of the Lord Jesus Christ.
- No one will be justified by works of the law, if any man or woman could be justified by the law then Christ died for no purpose.
- In order to be saved to eternal life, we must by faith believe in Christ and not rely on our own self-effort.
- Salvation to eternal life comes by justification through faith in Christ and by God's grace and not by adhering to ceremonial rites, holy days and keeping religious customs and traditions.

- God's promise of righteousness to eternal life is given to all who have faith in Jesus Christ and live by faith, and not by self-effort or the works of the law.
- Whoever accepts Jesus Christ becomes an adopted Son of God and heirs to all the eternal promises of God.
- All who are baptised into Christ are sons of God, through faith and by faith and are Abraham's true offspring and heirs of the eternal inheritance according to the promise.
- Jesus loves all who believe in him and who endeavour to live a lifestyle that honours his heavenly Father.
- The faith of every brother and sister of Christ will be completed at the resurrection when they will be raised from the dead to eternal life and Christ will be perfectly formed in them.

End.