

January 2010

Tuesday, January 26th - Esther 9: 16-18

These verses record for posterity the fact that there were two days required for the Jews in Susa to accomplish what their provincial brethren completed in one day. Capital cities of worldly dominions can be more dangerous for believers than country settings. Not only do more crimes take place among such concentrations of sinners, but the sophistication and culture of the cities of this world can and do wage war against many believers' souls. Very different was life in the capital city of God's covenant nation, when His people trusted and obeyed Him and lived and served in accordance with His Law that directed them to love their neighbors and to be gracious to strangers in their midst.

Wednesday, January 27th - Esther 9: 18

The Jews in Susa took advantage of the legal allowance that Esther had secured for them to spend a second day defending themselves against the attacks of their enemies (Esth. 9:13). The fact that on the 14th day of the month the Jews killed 300 men in Susa in addition to the 500 men they had put to death on the 13th day, indicates to us the necessity and wisdom of the extended legal protection Esther won for the Jews. The fact that the Jews confined the killing of their enemies to the days allowed to them by express provisions of the law teaches us that the people of God in Esther's day submitted and confined their actions to the extent of the laws that governed them. Their confinement to the provisions of the law, and the fact that Scripture does not record any further attacks against the Jews in Susa, indicates to us that the people of God effectively and lastingly put down their enemies and secured their peace and security within the limits that the laws of God and men provided for them. We do well to abide by the civil laws that govern us (Rom. 13:1-7), knowing that such limits will not prohibit us from living lives of quiet security in all godliness and dignity (1 Tim. 2:1-3).

Thursday, January 28th - Esther 9: 18, 19

Although the duration of fighting differed between the Jews in the country and those in the city, the final result for all of them was the same. They attained complete victories that were followed by feasting and rejoicing. Yet, the feasts of the people of God were not gluttonous affairs, nor did their rejoicing degenerate into unrestrained self-indulgence. Generosity as well as loving and practical concern for their brethren characterized their celebrations. Those who call and depend upon God for their success and security should never forget that when they are victorious over their enemies, it is due to the lavish grace of their God, who prompts them to lavish loving respect, honor, and practical care upon their brethren, just as their heavenly Father has done for them.

Friday, January 29th - Esther 9: 20, 21

Mordecai recorded the events, presumably from the banquet of Ahasuerus, to Vashti's deposition and divorce, to the elevation of Esther as the wife and queen of Ahasuerus, to wicked Haman's promotion and Mordecai's refusal to bow to him, to Haman's decree of death for all the Jews of the empire, to Mordecai's charge to Esther and her waiting on the divine initiative, to the exposure and execution of Haman, followed by the Jews' victorious self-defense and exultant celebrations, accomplished according to the civil provisions written by Esther and Mordecai. In all of these events, the hand of God was manifestly for His people, causing every detail to work together for their good. Such mercies of God, wrought in the past, are good for us to remember so that our trust in the Lord would grow along with our comforting assurance that He is also working all things together for our good.

Saturday, January 30th - Esther 9: 20, 21

Mordecai not only recorded for the instruction of the Lord's people in every age the events of God's preserving and promoting grace, but he also instituted an obligatory annual celebration so that the Jews would together commemorate this redemptive historical event. The written account would serve for individual and family instruction and edification; the annual celebrations would provide opportunity for the Jews to give a corporate expression to their gratitude to God. Such corporate commemorations would also serve to strengthen the bonds of fellowship between the Jews who had been marked for separation from one another by Haman's death decree, as well as promote fellowship between their descendants who never would have been born had the Lord not preserved their parents. It is good and pleasant for the people of God to dwell in unity that is strengthened by their corporate remembrance of the mercies their God has showered upon them. We have a more full and perfect call to assemble each Lord's Day to feed on the means of His grace and to rejoice in the glorious freedom of our accomplished redemption from death, judgment, and hell.

Sunday, January 31st - Esther 9: 20, 21

The Jews were to celebrate annually on not only one of the original feasts days, but on both of them. For the Jews in Susa, their final victory over their enemies was delayed for a day after the final victory of their provincial brethren. The protracted fighting of the Jews in Susa would not ultimately deprive them of their entering into the earlier joys of their brethren in the provinces, nor would the later celebrations of the Jews in Susa exclude their provincial brethren. The instituted annual commemoration included both the 14th and 15th days, so that the people of God would learn that they had cause to enter into the full joys of all the people of God, since those who are in the Lord are members of one another, sharing the tears and joys of each other.

Monday, February 1st - Esther 9: 20-22

In v.20, Mordecai is said to have recorded the redemptive events of God, while in v.21, he is said to have obliged the people of the Lord not only to be informed of those divine deeds, but also to be properly moved by them with grateful celebrations. In v.22, the writer of Scripture reminds all readers of the Word of God of the foundational cause the people of God have in every age to celebrate the goodness of God as expressed to the Jews in Esther's day. The Lord transformed all of the threats, trials, and terrors that had hung over the heads of the Jews into glorious and lasting victory for them. Our religion is not based on feelings and wishes but rather on facts and solid deeds. The victory God gives His people is the cause, while the grateful and joyful celebrating of God's people is the effect. What the Jews had cause to celebrate on two days each year we who are in Christ have greater cause to celebrate each Sunday as we commemorate the resurrection of our Savior and His lasting victory over death and hell for us.

Tuesday, February 2nd - Esther 9: 22

The cause the Jews in Esther's day had for celebration was that God had saved their lives from death and turned their sorrow into gladness. The Lord would have His people then and thereafter to nurture and revive their gladness by their appointed times of commemorating His having turned their sorrows into joy. Our forgetfulness of the Lord's precious and potent mercies diminishes not only our gratitude to God but also our joy in the Lord that is our strength. Our God is ever and always the God of vital reversals for us, turning our curses into blessings and our afflictions into glory (2 Cor. 4: 16-18). We have abundant cause to rejoice in our Lord always (Phi. 4:4).

Wednesday, February 3rd - Esther 9: 22

The loving works of God's salvation produce unceasing cause for gratitude and joy in His people. Yet, their joy is not to be an intoxicated giddiness that makes them heedless of anything but their own gladness. The divine love that saves believers inspires within them a loving regard for their brethren who may be in need. We see this operating in the ordinance that directs the Jews to send gifts to one another and especially to the poor among them. True Christian love and joy are inclusive. They ever seek to bring others within their happy compass, especially those in sorrowful need.

Thursday, February 4th - Esther 9: 23-25

These verses tell us that the Jews complied with Mordecai's directive that they should celebrate and bless one another annually on the days when they had originally feasted after their victory over their enemies. We are also given a brief summary of the events that gave the Jews the cause for their perpetual celebrations. We may be tempted to think that at this point in the Book of Esther we are sufficiently familiar

with these events so that we do not need them to be rehearsed again. However, we are prone to forget, and so this reminder is good and necessary. But it is also a glorious story of practical import for believers in every age. It therefore bears telling again and again, in order that we may ever recall that the wisdom, love, and mercy of our God are the same yesterday, today, and forever. Whatever form the adversary of the saints of the Lord may take in any age, our God will ever, only, and always see to it that the evil of the wicked will return upon his own head and upon all sons of wickedness he has spawned.

Friday, February 5th - Esther 9: 23-25

In this summary of events, we are reminded that Haman had cast Pur (a lot or a die) to determine the best day for the Jews' annihilation (Esth. 3:7,13). The best that the wicked can do in their plots is to base their calculations upon chance. This gambling image is used by the Apostle Paul in Eph. 4:14 where he writes of the trickery of men used against believers. The word translated, *trickery*, comes from a Greek word from which we get the word, *cube*. It is a reference to men casting dice to determine from chance their best hope for success. Yet, the dicey chances of the wicked are no match for the solid and sure plans and purposes that our Lord has for us, to give us a future and a hope (Jer. 29:11).

Saturday, February 6th - Esther 9: 26

This verse informs us how the Jews adopted the name Purim for their annual feast commemorating their victory over Haman's death decree against them. The Lord had sinlessly overruled Haman's wicked endeavor, causing the die that was cast to determine the day of His people's destruction to serve, instead, as an indicator of the day of their joyful victory and exaltation over their enemies. Accordingly, the Jews rightly boasted in their Feast of Purim that the instrument used to threaten them had been transformed into a servant for their good. The plural, *Purim*, suggests the Jews' consciousness that what the wicked intended as a single day of deadly persecution, their God caused to be two days of His people's victory, followed by two days of their feasting celebrations. The greater the challenge against believers, the greater will be their triumphant celebration.

Sunday, February 7th - Esther 9: 26-28

While Mordecai obligated the annual observance of the Feast of Purim, he did so not by direct commandment from the Lord, but rather from a due sense of the appropriateness of such annual observance. The obligation was one of loving gratitude in response to loving mercies the people had received from their God. Therefore, it is referred to in v.27 as a custom rather than a religious holy day. The Lord has not given the rulers of His people authority to establish holy days that would distract from the weekly Sabbath that He has commanded His people to observe. However, by the good examples of godly leaders in His word, He allows

Church leaders to adopt appropriate customs that serve to glorify God and edify the flock under their charge. Such edifying family and personal customs are also allowed (Rom. 14:5).

Monday, February 8th - Esther 9: 26-28

The Feast of Purim was intended to bring to the remembrance of the people of God in every generation the historic reality and redemptive consequence of their deliverance from the death decree against them. While the Jews' enemies relied on chance and fell as victims to their own malicious designs, the people of God enjoyed solid joys and lasting pleasures. The perpetuity of this custom served not only to revive the Jews' grateful recollection of their deliverance from death, but also to portray a sign of the eternal character of all believers' salvation.

Tuesday, February 9th - Esther 9: 26-28

While the Feast of Purim was to be observed annually by every generation of the Lord's people and so serve as a sign of the solid joys and lasting pleasures showered upon them by the hand of their God (Ps. 16:11), by the coming of Christ and His accomplishment of our redemption we are to understand that Purim was part of the shadowy economy that pointed to the substance of our salvation in Christ. In place of this annual shadow that commemorated civil deliverance from physical death, we who trust Christ have a weekly commemoration of our Lord's resurrection and victory over death and divine condemnation for us. As good as the shadows were, the substance is much better.

Wednesday, February 10th - Esther 9: 26-28

The Feast of Purim was not only for the Jews, but also for all who allied themselves with them (v.27). Gospel blessings, even in the old economy of types and shadows, are open to all who have the faith of Abraham in the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and who accordingly are circumcised in heart, being true Israelites (Rom. 2:27-29). The call is open to all to cease being cursed slaves of wickedness delivered to death and to partake of the mercies of God and an eternal life of joyful celebration.

Thursday, February 11th - Esther 9: 29

This verse reminds us that the letters of Mordecai were written with the full civil authority of Queen Esther and King Ahasuerus. The first letter (Esth. 8:8-10) called upon the Jews to prepare to fight, while the second (Esth. 9:20-22) called upon them to feast and rejoice in the remembrance of the victory God had given to them. But as Esther and Mordecai were instituting this civil custom, nothing is said in these letters (or in the whole Book of Esther) about God. Yet, the people of God, who knew that their help was in the name of the Lord who made heaven and earth, knew in whom they trusted and to whom they owed gratefully and joyfully rendered praises, even though none of their civil ordinances told them. In our nation, where civil

acknowledgements of the Lord are fast being erased, we who know and serve the King of kings should recall that even when civil authorities deny the God who upholds them and gives them authority to rule, such denial does not cut short the saving arm of the living God.

Friday, February 12th - Esther 9: 29, 30

The letters written by Mordecai and Queen Esther were both sent to every corner of the empire of Ahasuerus. The character and consequences of both of them served to bring truth and peace. Even in the Jews' fighting, they were but defending themselves against wicked men who sought to destroy them, and they did so with full divine and civil authority that authorized them and resulted in peace not only for the people of God but also for all throughout the empire who refused to be swept into the murderous determination to destroy the Jews. In this vast, godless empire, the people with faith in God acted, as they do in every age and nation, as salt and light, causing the liberating truth and blessed peace of God to prevail wherever they shine and serve by God's grace and for His glory.

Saturday, February 13th - Esther 9: 30, 31

By the faith and faithfulness of Esther and Mordecai, the universal threat of death against the Jews and widespread confusion among the other peoples of the empire (Esth. 3:14,15) were replaced by universal peace and cause for celebration (Esth. 8:15-17). Peace blossomed in the place of fighting and the integrity and liberating power of truth overcame the cunning and deceptive malice of the wicked. All nations would benefit by their having many citizens who regard the God of truth and peace above the cunning of intriguers and the changeable, finite, and fallible rule of kings, presidents, and prime ministers.

Sunday, February 14th - Esther 9: 30, 31

The Feast of Purim directed that the Jews and their descendants should recall their fasting (Esth. 4:15-17) even as they feasted. It is good for believers to remember the fires from which they have been plucked. Our glorifying God with thankful praises diminishes when we forget that He has delivered us from our fear of death and from the sorrows that the shadow of death cast over our lives (Heb. 2:14,15). We do well to recall that we have been delivered by God from the dominion of sin, from death that is the wages of sin, and from Satan's accusations and from the condemning judgment and holy wrath of God. Of such manifold deliverance, the civil deliverance of the Jews was but a token.

Monday, February 15th - Esther 9: 32

This verse is not a needless repetition but rather a necessary emphasis upon the fact that the Jews' celebration of their Feast of Purim resulted not from their own fanciful desires but rather from factual deeds of deliverance and the full, legitimate

authority of God and of the civil government that was an instrument in His hand. Similarly, our weekly worship of our God on the Lord's Day, our hearing and heeding the great and precious promises of His Word, and our profiting from the administration of His sacraments all are based on the great, transforming, and everlasting transactions of redemption through the life, death, resurrection, and ascension of our Lord and Savior.

Tuesday, February 16th - Esther 10: 1, 2

In these two verses we learn how both Ahasuerus and Mordecai fared in the years following the critical events surrounding Haman's threat against the Jews. From the opening chapters of Esther, we saw how the king was an indulgent, weak, and easily manipulated man. Here at the end of Esther, we see how he has been transformed into a wise and competent monarch, who used his royal authority rightly to reign over his empire and to strengthen his power and secure his people. Even if a worldly man does not personally trust in God, he will prosper and be useful to others if he will rely on godly people, as Ahasuerus relied on Esther and Mordecai. From his reliance on the godly, such a man may come to trust in and glorify the Lord in whose people His glory shines through their good deeds. We should not be surprised to find Ahasuerus in heaven.

Wednesday, February 17th - Esther 10: 2, 3

As for Mordecai, we have seen him develop from an exile dwelling in a foreign empire to one of the highest officials of that empire. His trust in the Lord and his faithful and loving rearing of Esther prepared him to be advanced from his small domestic sphere to the administration of a great empire. His good deeds that initially went unnoticed by men were removed from the secrecy of their obscurity and shouted from the housetops—all by the doing of his Lord who always rewards those who faithfully seek and serve Him (Heb. 11:6). This meek man of faith inherited most of the world in his day. He, like Joseph and David before him, was faithful in the little things assigned to him by God, and so prepared himself for promotion that God had prepared for him and for which God had prepared him to enter and use for His glory and for the good of many.

Thursday, February 18th - Esther 10: 2, 3

As Joseph was raised up by God from his humiliation to be second only to Pharaoh in his authority, power, and glory, so Mordecai was exalted by God from his humiliation to be second only to King Ahasuerus in his authority, power, and glory. By the exaltation of such godly servants of their heavenly Lord and earthly kings, these exalted servants not only received blessing and dominion and honor and power, but they used their exalted positions to do good to all men, especially to those of the household of faith. Their exaltation surely betokens the exaltation of all believers in Christ to reign in glory with Him forever. Ours is a glorious faith that

will lead us to work out our salvation unto a marvelous and everlasting glory. Through the opposition of wicked men and devils, through the valleys of humiliation and the shadows of death, God is with His people, though His name may be for a time hidden, to lead them inexorably to victory, glory, royal exaltation, and everlasting joy. This is the lesson and the priceless truth that the Book of Esther gives to us.

The Letter to the Galatians

Friday, February 19th - Galatians 1: 1

The Letter to the Galatians gives a clarion call for all believers to know that they have been justified in the sight of God by the saving grace of God alone, working through saving faith alone, in the person and work of Christ alone. It was written by the Apostle Paul, who knew from his dramatic and personal experience with the risen Christ on the Damascus road (Acts 9:1-9), what it was to be liberated by God from the bondage of legalism and to be transferred into the world of divine grace. Paul wrote this letter very likely before the Jerusalem Council of which we read in Acts 15, since the apostle makes no mention of that Council's letter (Acts 15:22-29) which, if it had been drafted before Paul wrote to the Galatians, would have been very helpful for him to refer to in his own letter. Accordingly, Paul may have written this letter as early as 48-49 A.D. If so, it stands as the apostle's earliest canonical epistle. It is fitting that he who had been so clearly saved by grace should be in his early apostolic career the champion of grace, as he remained throughout that career.

Saturday, February 20th - Galatians 1: 1

Profound and lasting marks of God's saving grace are clearly expressed throughout this opening verse. The very name of the author, *Paul*, speaks of the transforming grace of God in Christ, for Paul was the new name of a changed man. He had been born Saul of Tarsus, a Hebrew of Hebrews, of the tribe of Benjamin, and was circumcised on the eighth day according to the Law of God (Phil. 3:5). He was naturally proud of these endowments, but he also boasted in his religious attainments, such as his having become a Pharisee and a zealous persecutor of the Church, whose members claimed to have been saved not by their own righteous works but by Christ's atoning sacrifice for them on the cross (Phil. 3:6). Yet, when the risen Christ graciously encountered Saul the Pharisee and brought him under conviction for his persecution of the manifestly glorious living Lord of heaven and earth, Saul regarded his natural endowments and attainments as rubbish in comparison with the treasure of Christ and His salvation (Phil. 3:7-11). Accordingly, God

graciously gave to Saul a new name and new nature in which Paul forever thereafter would gratefully boast.

Sunday, February 21st - Galatians 1: 1

Not only was Paul's name and nature changed by God's grace. The Lord also gave to Paul a new calling, office, and authority. Paul was made an apostle, meaning, one sent to proclaim a message—in this case the blessed, saving gospel of salvation through Christ. This calling clearly was a work of God's grace, for Christ chose Paul when he was still Saul, who hated Christians and persecuted Christ. Paul was a chosen instrument of the Lord to bear Christ's name before Gentiles, and earthly rulers, and the sons of Israel (Acts 9:15). This choice took place when Saul knew practically nothing of Christ, except that his appearance on the Damascus road was glorious. All that Paul was and did after his encounter with Christ was a result of divine grace and made him a trophy and a champion of that grace. If we are saved, it is by that same profoundly transforming divine grace.

Monday, February 22nd - Galatians 1: 1

Paul declares that his calling and equipping as an apostle resulted not from men. No man or body of men elected him or commissioned him as an apostle. Neither did men play any part in his education and training as an apostle. It pleased God to transform the greatest and most capable and determined enemy of the Church and opponent of Christ into the greatest and most richly equipped apostle and champion for Christ, His gospel, and His people. By God's grace, sovereignly exercised, we have through the ministry and epistles of Paul the greatest contribution any man except for Jesus ever has or will make to the edification of the members of the Body of Christ. We do well carefully and thankfully to read ponder, and apply to ourselves the teaching of this apostle.

Tuesday, February 23rd - Galatians 1: 1

Paul declares that instead of men choosing and training him, he was made an apostle and equipped to serve faithfully and fruitfully in that high office by God alone. Specifically, Paul's apostleship was conferred by God the Father working in blessed harmony with Jesus Christ, God's Son, just as the Father and Son had blessedly cooperated in every aspect of the redemption of sinners, most clearly and wonderfully in the death of Christ for our sins and His being raised from the dead by God the Father as the fruit and seal of the Father's approval and full acceptance of Christ's justifying work on the cross (Rom. 4:24, 25). This apostle could not have been called and commissioned by any higher authority or greater power.

Wednesday, February 24th - Galatians 1: 2

Paul's letter was written to and circulated among several churches in an area he designates *Galatia*. Scholarly opinion is divided over whether these churches were in

southern or northern Galatia. It seems likely, from Scriptural data, that this region referred to by Paul was in the midst of modern Turkey, and probably included the churches Paul and Barnabas planted in Pisidian Antioch, Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe (Acts 13:13,14,46-52; 14:1-7). In those cities in that Gentile region, Paul faced terrible persecution from the unbelieving Jews, even to the point of their having stoned him and left him for dead at Lystra (Acts 14:8,19). However, Paul survived the stoning and carried on preaching the gospel and making disciples of Christ (Acts 14:20-28). These disciples were formed into churches, bodies of those literally called by God through His Word and Spirit out of darkness and death and into light and life through and in Christ. Paul also affectionately commends his accompanying co-workers as brethren, who had been made members of the mutually loving family of faith by the grace of God, just as the Galatians had been incorporated into that family of faith. We who trust in Christ are also among those blessed brethren.

February 2010

Thursday, February 25th – Galatians 1: 3

Paul, as an apostle of Christ, writes to these Galatians not simply as a man sharing with them human sentiments and opinions. Instead, he writes under the inspiration of God's Holy Spirit and is commissioned by God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ to convey to them (and to all who read this epistle) the grace and peace of the blessed gospel of God. Paul is here conveying to his readers an infinite treasure that comes from a source of infinite and eternal glory.

Friday, February 26th – Galatians 1: 3

We shall discover as we read this letter that the Galatians were in great need of the free grace of God and the peace of reconciliation that flows from that grace. Those to whom Paul was writing had been misled into a legalistic way of trying to please God through their works of the Law, rather than gratefully rejoicing in the salvation that God had accomplished for them in Christ. Although the Galatians had to some degree accepted such false, legalistic teaching that was antithetical to the free grace of God in, Paul still regarded them as members of churches of Christ in Galatia, and ministered through his apostolic authority and Christ-like love to recall them to the truth that alone sets men free from the sin that robs them of true peace with God.

Saturday, February 27th – Galatians 1: 3

The Galatian churches, through the influence of false teachers, had come to believe and live as though their standing before God depended on the degree of their conformity to His holy Law. Such teaching sounds plausible to poor sinners whose

awakened consciences have prompted them to seek peace with God. However, the truth of God is not only that men have sinned against the Lord and His holy Law; the whole truth of God includes the good news that God has graciously provided the salvation sinners need. Therefore, Paul first intones his benediction in this verse with grace, that is the root cause of salvation, then with peace that is the resulting fruit of salvation. The reversal of this order is what all natural men do when they seek peace by their own fearful flight from God or by foolish attempts to placate the Lord as they clothe themselves with feeble and faulty good deeds designed to cover the shame of their sin.

Sunday, February 28th – Galatians 1: 3

The grace that Paul conveys in his benediction is a favor of glorious character and infinite magnitude. It is not a mere sentiment of indulgence, but is an objective gift that transforms in time and for all eternity all who have received it. It is not grace from an emperor, or from men of the world, or grace from angels. Instead, it is grace from the God of heaven who, by His gracious disposition and dealings with sinners, has shown Himself to be the providing and abundantly blessing Father of all believers (hence the collective designation: *our Father*). It is this glorious heavenly Father's grace, not our grinding efforts, that gives us peace with God and makes us to be among loving brethren in the family of faith.

Monday, March 1st – Galatians 1: 3

The grace that genuinely saves comes to those who receive it from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. It is divine grace given to needy sinners to save them from the holy divine wrath that they rightly deserve and to give them peace with the Lord. That peace is manifold, consisting of a restful cessation of the sinner's exhausting flight from God, and the commencement of the saint's exulting joy in and love for the God who first loved him. This saving grace and the resultant blessed peace come to us from the Father who in love predestined us to adoption as His children (Eph. 1:4,5) and from the Lord Jesus Christ who loved us and gave Himself for us (Gal. 2:20).

Tuesday, March 2nd – Galatians 1: 3

Our salvation has resulted from the lovingkindness of both the Father and the Son. The divine love prompted the Father to pay the infinite cost of giving His Son to save us (Jn. 3:16), and prompted the Son to pay the infinite cost of His life for our redemption. With such great and costly divine love being the basis of our salvation, there is no reason why we should ever believe or act as though we were required to earn God's favor by our feeble and faulty attempts to obey His law.

Wednesday, March 3rd – Galatians 1: 3, 4

We receive saving and sanctifying grace from our Father in heaven and from the

Lord Jesus Christ. The peace that results from such grace also comes to us from God the Father and from our Lord Jesus Christ. Such grace and peace are not mere sentiments but are infinitely substantial. They have come to us and we have entered into their infinite depths through the person and work of Christ. It cost both God the Father and His only begotten Son infinitely to give us such grace and to make for us such peace.

Thursday, March 4th – Galatians 1: 3, 4

The cost of our salvation was paid in blood. That blood first coursed through the veins of the true humanity that the divine Son of God, at infinite cost, humbly assumed for the accomplishment of our Redemption. By His incarnation, Christ condescended from the glorious heights of His divine sovereignty to be a humble servant, and from the eternal and infinite dimensions of His divinity to the confines of a babe in his mother's womb, a boy in his peasant parents' household, and a Man ministering to sinful people. Finally, Christ shed His precious blood for the salvation of His people. Neither greater cost nor greater love is conceivable.

Friday, March 5th – Galatians 1: 3, 4

The Father gave His Son and the Son gave Himself for a very specific purpose. Jesus Christ was born, lived His life and was crucified, resurrected, and ascended to heaven, not merely to touch sinners with His teaching of truth or His deeds of loving compassion. The Son of God became Man to live and then to lay down His perfect human life so that all who come to Him by faith in His person and work might have His perfect righteousness and be delivered from their sins and from the wicked enticements and intimidations of the world of evil humanity who are in rebellion from God. Christ's giving Himself for our sins is the most significant act of God in all of time or eternity.

Saturday, March 6th – Galatians 1: 3, 4

Christ's giving of Himself for the sins of His people was done according to the will of God the Father. There was and always has been and forever will be the most blessed co-operation among the three persons of the Trinity. Our triune God is the source of our salvation. He is also the goal of our salvation. We have been saved by His graciously having planned and accomplished a redemption for us, and then having applied that redemption to us so that we might have a righteous peace mercifully and lovingly made for us through the redeeming work of the Lord Jesus Christ. Through the person and work of Christ, accomplished by the will and to the satisfaction of the Father, and applied to us by the Holy Spirit, we have been ushered into the holy love and joyful communion of the triune God, and therefore we have peace that passes understanding (Jn. 17:20-26).

Sunday, March 7th – Galatians 1: 3-5

Because the infinitely costly treasure of salvation with its manifold blessings has come to us from the gracious, wise, and loving planning, accomplishment, and application of God, to Him belongs all glory now and forever. Each and every facet of our salvation reveals distinctive features of our God's glory. The entirety of our salvation, with its perfection, and eternal blessedness, far exceeds in glory the sum of its individual facets. Our eternal fellowship in loving and holy communion with this glorious God of our salvation is the wondrous consummation of our sure hope of glory.

Monday, March 8th – Galatians 1: 6

From his apostolic introduction and benediction, wherein Paul touched summary notes that rang out reminders of the glorious God of salvation and the precious and inimitable glory of His redeeming grace, the apostle quickly turns to the crying need of the Galatians to whom he was writing. He speaks in v.6 in strong and pointed terms that expose and challenge the Galatians' turning away from Christ. Such challenging speech is not inconsistent with the grace and peace that the apostle pronounced in his opening benediction, but rather serves to confirm the readers of this epistle in the genuine grace and peace of the Lord which are experienced only when such readers' focus vitally upon the Lord and the ordinances of His grace. When believers drift from the Lord, they cannot hope to escape pain and misery so long as they neglect such a gracious Savior and His great salvation (Heb 2:1,3).

Tuesday, March 9th – Galatians 1: 6

Paul expresses amazement over the Galatians' departure from Christ. To those who are standing by a faith in Christ that justifies them and gives them peace with God, the drifting of those less faithful to the Lord causes great grief, consternation, and astonishment. Why would anyone detest such a glorious God, such a loving Savior, and such a great salvation? For such desertion there is no cause or reason that would rightly satisfy the faithful, or the holy angelic hosts of heaven, or the God of glory. When believers drift from Christ, all pure-hearted and sound-minded souls can only be astonished.

Wednesday, March 10th – Galatians 1: 6, 7

The Galatians were deserting Christ for another gospel. The way Paul expresses this is significant. It alerts us to how the Galatians viewed their movement and how the apostle by the light of God's truth viewed their movement. The Galatians were influenced by some who claimed to possess biblical knowledge superior to what Paul possessed. Those teachers also taught what they claimed were necessary components of the gospel that Paul had not taught. Therefore, the Galatians viewed their

embracing of the new teachers and their teaching as a good and right progression in the unfolding of the gospel. In the most clear and powerful terms, Paul declares that those who were influencing the Galatians were not teaching but troubling them; were not advancing them in the true gospel, but were thrusting them into a contrary and counterfeit gospel; and were not leading them into the truth that sets men free, but were luring them away from Christ, the only living truth and loving Savior. There is a way that can seem right even to believers, but the end of such a way is death.

Thursday, March 11th – Galatians 1: 6, 7

The Galatians were being told by their new teachers (and they thought accordingly) that they were advancing in the truth of Christ's gospel. In fact, they were plunging themselves into a different, distorted, and counterfeit gospel. With every new step of learning they thought they were attaining, they were moving steadily away from the grace and peace of God in Christ. There are doctrines that deviate from the truth and there are forms of devotion that are tantamount to a desertion from Christ. We do well to discern truth from error and love the former while hating the latter.

Friday, March 12th – Galatians 1: 6, 7

It seems unclear to some whether Paul is referring in v.6 to himself or to Christ when he writes of the Galatians so quickly deserting *Him*. Yet the apostle does not intend the reference to be either to himself or to Christ, but rather the Galatians' desertion was from both. Those who depart from Christ depart from His apostles and their teaching, while those who depart from Christ's apostles depart from Christ. Let us cleave to our Savior and to His apostles' teaching and to our brethren in the blessed grace and peace of the true gospel.

Saturday, March 13th – Galatians 1: 8, 9

While Paul used strong language in expressing his astonishment over the Galatians' defection from Christ and His gospel, the apostle uses searing words when he refers to those who had led them astray. The strong words written to the Galatians were not contrary to but consistent with the grace and peace of God and the brotherly love of Paul. The apostle used them to restore his spiritual children to the Lord and His ordinances wherein they would grow in the grace, knowledge and blessing of the Christ from whose grace they had defected. However, the apostle has no words of blessing, but only repeated and emphatic words of cursing to pronounce upon those who had led his spiritual children astray. In this, the apostle faithfully represents his divine Master, who declared that for the man who caused one of His little ones to stumble, it would have been better for that man to be drowned in the sea (Mt. 18:6). While there is no condemnation for those in Christ, however chastened they might be, there is nothing but condemnation for those who stand apart from the saving grace of God in Christ, and teach others to take such an accursed stand.

Sunday, March 14th – Galatians 1: 8, 9

Paul condemns anyone who would preach to God's people anything contrary to the gospel. Whether Paul himself began to preach contrary to the gospel or whether a heavenly angel so preached, the apostle lets his words of anathema stand. This is because people are not saved by apostles or angels but by the Word of God's sovereign and gracious salvation through Christ alone. Accordingly, the Bereans were regarded as being noble-minded when they tested Paul's preaching in light of the Scriptures (Acts 17:10,11). All believers are taught not to believe every spirit, but to test them to see whether they are from God (1 Jn. 4:1). For Satan can and does appear as an angel of light (2 Cor. 11:14), and the devil had already used another apostle, Peter, to speak contrary to the purposes of God (Mt. 16:23). No one who persists in speaking contrary to the gospel can be blessed or be an instrument of God's blessing.

Monday, March 15th – Galatians 1: 7-9

We should respect the workers of the Lord who preach the Word of life, but we should rely on the Word preached, not on the preachers themselves. We should rely only upon the good news of the whole counsel of God contained in Scripture because it is the power of God for salvation to every one who believes. Our respect for those who preach the gospel is based upon their commitment to and reasonable competence in declaring the gospel without distorting it.

Tuesday, March 16th – Galatians 1: 7-9

The words are significant that Paul uses to indicate the fatal flaws in the teaching of those whom he curses. The apostle writes that they *distort*, not that they *deny* the gospel (v.7). He further declares that they offer a so-called gospel that is contrary to the true gospel, not openly against it (v.8). The Greek preposition used in v.8 literally means *beside*, and not *against*. In other words, it is not just clear denials of salvation by the sovereign grace of God through Christ that are accursed, but also those formulations of the gospel that lay the requirement of some human merit or endeavor beside the gospel that are accursed. We are not saved by anything less than Christ; nor are we saved by anything in addition to Christ; but we are saved by faith alone in Christ alone.

Wednesday, March 17th – Galatians 1: 6-9

Paul is in these verses contending against another gospel, which is not simply another legitimate variation or expression of or perspective upon the gospel, but rather is something radically different from it. Yet, this radical difference is disguised by the apparent compatibility that the accursed counterfeit gospel has with the genuine gospel. Accordingly, the Galatians were guilty of (and we are warned against) a lack of spiritual vigilance and critical discernment. Martin Luther writes in his Commentary (p.63) on this letter: *No heretic comes under the title of errors and of*

the devil, neither does the devil himself come as a devil in his own likeness....Yea, even the black devil, who forces men to manifest wickedness, makes a cloak for them to cover that sin which they commit or purpose to commit. Any other gospel is no gospel at all, whoever may declare it!

Thursday, March 18th – Galatians 1: 6-9

A distorted gospel is not good news of blessing but an awful declaration of cursing. A distorted gospel moves men not to greater devotion to Christ, but rather to an ungrateful deserting of Christ. A distorted gospel does not convey grace that leads to godly peace, but rather it undermines grace and disturbs the peace and purity of the Church. As Martin Luther well observes in his Commentary (p.68): *It seems to be a light matter to mingle the law and the gospel, faith and works, together; but it does more mischief than a man's reason can conceive, for it does not only blemish and darken the knowledge of grace, but also it takes away Christ with all of His benefits....*

Friday, March 19th – Galatians 1: 10

The distorting teachers referred to in vv.7-9 criticized Paul, as we can gather from what he says of them throughout this letter, but the apostle cursed them. Should such cursing be in the Church of Christ? It should be when the saving truth of God in Christ is rightly apprehended in distinction from those errors that undermine that truth. Furthermore, Paul goes on in v.10 to declare that the serious and anathematizing attitude he has toward those who adulterate the gospel results from his close affinity with God and that such holy zeal pleases the God of grace whose gospel the adulterators were treating as deficient and defective. The apostle's cursing is a reflection and anticipation of the judgment of God when He says to those who rely on anything other than His gracious and precious gospel: *Depart from Me, you accursed into the eternal fire that has been prepared for the devil and his angels* (Mt. 25:41).

Saturday, March 20th – Galatians 1: 10

The apostle lived, preached, and wrote his epistles not as one seeking to please men but rather as one seeking to please God. He further declares himself to be a bond-servant of Christ, the One who was despised and rejected by men but who was beloved and approved by God. Paul was a man-pleaser when he believed and taught that men were saved by their keeping of God's Law. Such teaching pleased men because it spurred and nourished their pride to think that by their natural endowments and attainments they could stand before God as accepted and not accursed. Read of Paul's natural pride in Philippians 3:4-11 and note how his life, perspective, and value system changed radically when he came to know Christ. Read also in 2 Corinthians 11:22-33 how utterly Paul failed to be a man-pleaser after his conversion to

Christ. No one could rightly doubt that this apostle wrote as he did to please his heavenly Master and not to placate men.

Sunday, March 21st – Galatians 1: 11, 12

In v.10, Paul asserts that his faithful and forceful words contained in vv.6-9 pleased God. In vv.11,12, the apostle gives reasons why he was so zealous in his regard for the gospel. He declares the gospel to be of divine origin, and to have been immediately given to him by God. Rightly did Paul in his capacity of apostle and bondservant of Christ regard the gospel as the infinitely precious, unique, and potent power of God for salvation to all who believe in Christ.

Monday, March 22nd – Galatians 1: 11, 12

Paul declares that the gospel he proclaimed to the Galatians was not of human origin. This implies that it was of divine origin. Therefore, the gospel, being of divine origin, was like God Himself who gave it to Paul and through Paul to the Church. The gospel is pure, holy, without error, true, lovingly appealing, and powerful. Its doctrines are as eternally valid as is the God who gave it. Anything that man seeks to add to this gospel only obscures its glory and power and attempts to add imperfection and cursing to that which is perfect, blessed, and blessing.

Tuesday, March 23rd – Galatians 1: 11, 12

The gospel Paul received and declared was of divine origin. The finite and fallible speculations of man could not improve it but could only obscure its perfection. The gospel Paul received and declared also was communicated to him by Jesus Christ, the Son of God, Savior of sinners, and living divine Word. The true gospel is infinitely more than a collection of facts and doctrines, although it contains facts and doctrines. It is a communication through divinely inspired scriptural propositions of the person and work of the living Christ, the Lord of heaven and earth. At one point in His earthly ministry, Jesus declared to some of his opponents: *You search the Scriptures because in them you think you have eternal life; and it is these that bear witness of Me.* (Jn. 5:39). Every word of Scripture points to Christ, the living Word, as Jesus told the Emmaus Road disciples (Lk. 24:27), and the eternal life promised to believers in Scripture consists of our knowing God through Christ (Jn. 17:3). All Scripture points men to Christ because the living Christ is the central and pervasive theme of all Scripture. It was in light of his encounter with the living Christ that Paul came to understand that Scripture is not a book of directives for man's performance but rather a wonderful declaration of the good news of God's salvation of sinners through Christ.

Wednesday, March 24th – Galatians 1: 12

Paul says that he received the gospel through a revelation of Jesus Christ. The apprehension that Paul had of the glorious person of the resurrected and ascended

Christ on the Damascus road deprived him of his physical sight that he had so consistently and adamantly used to misread the Scriptures and to search for and persecute the followers of Christ. At the same time, the eyes of Paul's heart were opened to see and understand as much as, if not more than, what all the other apostles of Christ saw in their three years of walking with Jesus. It was for Paul a matter of Scripture being seen rightly in the light of the gracious Savior and glorious Lord Jesus Christ, and it was the good news of salvation of sinners through this Christ that Paul received by God to deliver to sinners to make them new creatures in Christ.

Thursday, March 25th – Galatians 1: 13, 14

The gospel Paul had delivered to the Galatians was not only of divine origin and communicated to the apostle by the risen Christ, but that gospel had radically changed Paul's life. Paul therefore reminds his readers of what they knew he had been before he received the gospel of salvation through Christ. He had been a Jewish Pharisee, feeding on the shadows of the ceremonial law while he despised, hated, and hounded those who devoted themselves to Jesus, the substance of salvation. Paul had been proud of his natural endowments and of his personal attainments, while he zealously guarded the Jewish traditions that had come, by his day, to smother the liberating truth of God contained in the Old Testament that pointed to Christ. He also with extreme determination persecuted the living stones in the one true church of God. That such an accomplished, proud, and zealously determined Pharisee should be transformed into the greatest apostle of Christ was compelling evidence of the power that the gospel Paul preached possessed to transform the lives of those who accepted it.

Friday, March 26th – Galatians 1: 13, 14

From Paul's own admission, he had lived his former life based not on pragmatism or gross immorality; neither had he lived a life of true piety. His natural disposition was one of religious pride (cf., Phil. 3:4-6). Yet that pride and all of Paul's religious performances were but a veneer that he had fearfully applied to cover the reality and shame of who and what he really was: a sinner dead in his transgressions and sin (Eph. 2:1-3). Paul was totally committed to his veneer and closed to and hostile against a gospel of grace that promised and provided salvation to needy sinners. Nothing could have changed Paul, certainly no distorted gospel consisting of an admixture of faith and works. Only the grace of God effectually working in Paul to raise him from his spiritual death could change him; and change him the gospel of Christ did and only that gospel did, forever.

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Saturday, March 27th – Galatians 1: 15-17

In these verses, Paul continues to write about his changed life in Christ. He speaks, in vv. 16, 17, of his actions as a new creature in Christ and as one called by God to be an apostle. Yet prior to those actions he writes of the gracious actions of God in the counsels of eternity and in His application of redemption to Paul by His having effectually called the Pharisee who was dead in sin to arise as a new creature to live, move, and have his being in the world of divine grace. By these words of testimony, Paul reminds his readers that their salvation results neither from their own natural worthiness and attainments nor from their deeds done as new creatures in Christ, but rather from the gracious actions of God before they had either their natural or supernatural lives. We are saved by God's grace, not only by the grace of His effectual calling in time, but also by the grace of His sovereign election and predestination in eternity. How could our poor works of legal obedience contribute anything to such infinite, eternal, and perfect divine grace?

Sunday, March 28th – Galatians 1: 15-17

Paul rightly regards his new life in Christ as well as his office as an apostle to be the fruits of divine election and not of his own endeavor. God does not wait to discover who will seek or strive to attain salvation; for the Lord infallibly and inherently knows that all sinners are unworthy, unwilling, and unable to seek, far less to earn, their salvation (Rom. 3:9-20). Apart from the sovereign and eternal election of God, none would be saved. But God has graciously elected His chosen people to inherit new life in Christ (Eph. 1:4-6). The Lord has also sovereignly determined the calling of His people into their various services and offices, with regard only to His gracious choosing and effectual enabling, not with regard to any soul's natural abilities or actions.

Monday, March 29th – Galatians 1: 15-17

Paul was what he was, not by his own endeavors but rather by God's electing grace. The apostle emphasizes this when he speaks of the Lord having set him apart to receive salvation and to serve as an apostle to the Gentiles. This setting apart was done before Paul was born, when he had done nothing good or evil, as was the case when God loved Jacob but hated Esau before either of those twins was born (Rom. 9:10-16). Although Paul was born a sinner who would seek to cover his guilt and shame with the fig-leaves of his formal and external conformity to God's Law, and although he grew in his Pharisaic pride and zealous hatred of Christ and of Christians, there was something deeper, higher, and more powerful at work throughout Paul's life than the righteous rage of the proud Pharisee. God's gracious plans and purposes, determined by the Lord from before the foundation of the world, would prevail. Thanks be to God that for Paul and for those of us who have likewise been elected and effectually called by God to inherit eternal life, those divine purposes have

been gracious and the Lord's plans have been to give us a joyful future and a glorious and certain hope.

Tuesday, March 30th – Galatians 1: 15-17

Paul writes in v.16 that God was graciously pleased, *to reveal His Son in me*. This phrase speaks volumes of vital theology. It alerts us to the wonderful truth that our God does not save us by His delivering to us merely principles that we must learn and seek to obey. The gospel is ultimately not about principles—even true and exalted principles of right and wrong. Rather, the gospel is about a Person, the unique God/Man, the Lord Jesus Christ, whom to know is eternal life (Jn. 17:3). That is why when Jesus was asked to articulate the greatest of the Ten Commandments, He summed them up, not in terms of man's moral obligation to obey a code, but rather in terms of man's loving God and his fellow man. We love our God through Christ, who loved us and gave Himself for us (Gal. 2:20). We may respect and admire a system of truth, but we can love only the Son of God who is the living truth.

Wednesday, March 31st – Galatians 1: 15-17

Our recognition of the sovereign, eternal, and gracious election of God wrought out in the Person and work of Christ, whom God's Holy Spirit reveals in our minds, hearts, and souls, slays our pride. Yet, it instills in us a humble confidence, not in ourselves, but in God's holy, good, and loving plans and purposes for us in Christ. Paul testifies to this when in vv.16,17 he speaks of his not having consulted with other believers or even with the other apostles about his faith in and calling by Christ immediately after his conversion. Accordingly, in place of brittle and puffed-up pride, there is in every believer a solid and unshakeable conviction of God's love and powerful calling.

Thursday, April 1st – Galatians 1: 15-17

The consciousness that Paul had of his calling to be an apostle to the Gentiles was founded not upon the counsel of men but rather upon the commissioning of God as it was related first to the disciple Ananias, and then through him to Paul (Acts 9:10-16). No man could add anything to such a clear sense of divine calling. As William Still in his *Bible Reading Notes on Galatians* wrote:

He who can identify his calling in time and in experience with an ordination beyond his personal consciousness knows himself to be carried forward on a stream of grace so mighty that no human agent or agency can daunt his spirit. This man has something to say to men...(p.12).

Friday, April 2nd – Galatians 1: 15-17

Clearly, from a reading of Acts 9:19, we should understand that when Paul writes that he did not confer with flesh and blood, he is not denying that he had fellowship with other Christians after his regeneration. Rather, Paul denies that

he *conferred* with others, meaning that he neither explained his calling to them nor asked others to help him understand his calling. Those who, like Paul, receive a brilliantly clear calling from the Lord to minister the gospel of Christ, know that there are times when no man can help, but only hinder them in their fulfillment of that ministry. Such men, as under-shepherds, must also grow in their understanding that for the sheep of their flocks there come times when those sheep must grow in their direct fellowship with Christ alone. All faithful pastors should pray for believers to grow in direct fellowship with Christ, unmediated even by faithful pastors. John puts this in terms of believers' anointing (1 Jn. 2:20), while Paul himself puts it in terms of his presenting every man perfect in Christ (Col. 1:28), being rooted and grounded in love (Eph. 3:17).

Saturday, April 3rd – Galatians 1: 17b, 18

In these verses, Paul gives a brief account of his early contact with the other apostles. Immediately after his conversion and apostolic commissioning by God, Paul spent his first days in Christ in Damascus, where he had intended to persecute Christians but instead had fellowship with them. He also proclaimed Christ for a number of days until he was himself persecuted by the Jews who plotted his death. At that point, Paul left Damascus (Acts 9:19-25). He did not go to Jerusalem to be instructed or even consoled by the other apostles but went to Arabia, where no apostles and few, if any, Christians resided. Paul clearly sought solitude in which he could and obviously did reconsider his Old Testament learning in the light and vital reality of Christ crucified, resurrected, and ascended to His Father in heaven. The apostle Paul was, accordingly, no man's debtor for what he knew of Christ or His gospel, but he drank in the gospel directly from the fountain of the Lord.

Sunday, April 4th – Galatians 1: 17b-19

Paul spent three years in Arabia, apparently giving himself entirely to prayerful study of God's Word and edifying meditation. While he did not immediately after his conversion go to Jerusalem, neither did he stay indefinitely away from Jerusalem and the other apostles. After three years in Arabia, where he was thoroughly grounded in the gospel that he was to preach to the Gentiles, Paul went to Jerusalem for a short time to meet Peter and very briefly to encounter James, the brother of Jesus. It is difficult to determine where this brief visit fits in the account in Acts 9:19-30. Possibly this visit is alluded to in Acts 9:26. The point is that once Paul met any of the apostles, he was fully called, commissioned, and equipped as an apostle—all by the direct doing of the Lord. It is no wonder, then, that in the providence of the Lord, this particular apostle should have been the most effective evangelist and the writer of most of the New Testament epistles. By God's grace and wisdom, the last and least became the first and greatest to the highest blessing of all the Church.

Monday, April 5th – Galatians 1: 20

At this point, Paul inserts a declaration before God of the veracity of his account. By his writing this veritable oath, the apostle demonstrates his understanding sensitivity to those who would be tempted to doubt his assertion that all of his gospel training came to him directly from God and not from any man. Such a course of training would be fraught with such hazards as erroneous, idiosyncratic, and extravagant understandings and interpretations of Scripture, unless his training took place exactly as Paul said, at the hand of God. It is, of course, not only this oath but also the character of Paul's doctrine that indicate to us the truth of what he writes about how he had received his theological training.

Tuesday, April 6th – Galatians 1: 21-24

Paul's movement from Jerusalem to Syria and Cilicia seems to be alluded to in Acts 9:30. Tarsus, in Syria, was Paul's home town, and while he may have been known there by many, he was unknown to the churches throughout Judea except for the report they repeatedly heard that their greatest enemy had been transformed by God into the greatest apostle of Christ and champion of the churches of the Lord. The overtones of this amazing report spread extensively and rapidly from the one man whose life had been drastically and forever changed on the Damascus road. Rightly did those hearing it attribute the cause of this astonishing effect to God, and they glorified the Lord accordingly. May many see our lives changed by the gospel Paul preached and consequently glorify the God who has transformed us.

Wednesday, April 7th – Galatians 1: 21-24

Paul refers to the churches that were in and spreading out from Judea as being *in Christ*. In v.16, the apostle referred to Christ being in him. Both are true for all who have been made new creatures by the effectual calling of God in Christ. We are in Christ (Rom. 6:11; 8:1:2; Cor. 5:17), and Christ is in us (Rom. 8:10; Col. 1:27). Before his conversion, Paul had regarded Christ as a hated threat to his life and to his Jewish traditions. At and after his conversion, the apostle saw Christ to be no hated enemy but rather the true helper, Savior, and lover of his soul. He saw Christ as taking precedence over all that is natural and he saw his election in Christ to be the work of no foreign invader, alienating him from all he knew and loved, but rather the work of his loving God who delivered him from his sin and brought him into his true home in Christ and into the world of His grace. This is how Paul preached Christ and how we have accepted Him.

Thursday, April 8th – Galatians 1: 21-24

It was not only the titanic transformation in Paul's life that struck the believers with awe and prompted them to glorify the God who alone changes sinners by His saving grace and almighty power. It was also the fact that Paul had demonstrated that he had been thoroughly mastered by *the faith*, meaning the system of doctrine that

comprised the gospel of Christ. It was that faith that Paul, with masterful skill and loving passion, preached to others and of which he wrote in his richly edifying epistles. We who have benefitted from those epistles should join our ancient brethren in giving glory to our God who has so marvelously blessed His Church through this man whose life and career He so radically changed.

Friday, April 9th – Galatians 2: 1

Paul writes that he returned to Jerusalem after an interval of fourteen years. This interval could be counted from his conversion or from his first visit to Jerusalem mentioned in Gal. 1:18, that took place three years after his conversion. The starting point is immaterial. The point is that for nearly a decade and a half the apostle learned and taught the faith with no influence from the other apostles. His second visit to Jerusalem could be referred to in Acts 11:27-30, or Acts 15:1-4ff, or not referred to at all in Acts. The point of this second visit is that while Paul was not indebted to the other apostles for his office, commissioning, or equipping, he was not aloof from them either. We who are in Christ must pursue our Lord's calling in our lives but not without consideration of and loving cooperation with our brethren in Christ.

Saturday, April 10th – Galatians 2: 1, 2

The long interval of time that passed before Paul made this second visit to Jerusalem is significant in that it shows Paul's established self-sufficiency in Christ. The significance of the termination of this interval indicates that although Paul served for a time independent of the other apostles, he was not working in isolation from or competition against them, but rather in a divinely directed cooperation that facilitated the massive shift of the center of gravity of God's redemptive dealings from the Jews to the Gentiles—a shift that has remained to our day. Paul, the unique and superlative apostle of God's choosing and making, was the point man effecting this shift, but he had the full affirmation and support of all the other apostles of Christ. How wonderfully wise and efficient is the working of our God through His servants.

Sunday, April 11th – Galatians 2: 1, 2

As God had revealed His Son in Paul at the apostle's conversion (Gal. 1:16), and had led him to a training course of solitary contemplation in Arabia and independent preaching in Syria and Cilicia, so the timing and character of Paul's second visit to the apostles in Jerusalem was directed by divine revelation. So momentous and surprising, if not shocking, would be the evident shift in primary redemptive operations from the Jews to the Gentiles, that the Lord took care to show all people that He Himself was intimately and immediately superintending that shift through His dealings with Paul, His chosen apostle, who was and remains to the Gentiles analogous to what Moses had been to the Jews.

Monday, April 12th – Galatians 2: 1-3

Paul took with him, on his second and most critical visit to Jerusalem, Barnabas and Titus. Barnabas was the pacific Jewish reconciler of Paul to the disciples in Jerusalem on an earlier visit (Acts 9:26,27) while Titus was a Gentile who was reconciled to God in Christ through Paul's preaching of the gospel (Titus 1:4). These diverse men were representative of the work of God's reconciliation not only with Himself through Christ but also with one another in Christ. They were together the living fruits of the gospel's power to save the Jew first and also the Greek (Rom. 1:16).

Tuesday, April 13th – Galatians 2: 1-3

The revelation that God gave to Paul clearly did not only indicate that he should return to Jerusalem, but also informed the apostle of the character of that visit. Paul returned to Jerusalem not to obtain endorsement from the other apostles of his office and ministry. He returned in the interest of Church harmony, especially in view of the growing inclusion of the Gentiles in the Church. Paul makes this evident in what he writes in Eph. 3:1-12. The deep and expansive blessings of God for His Church can initially appear as a threat to Church unity instead of the enriching treasure that it is. The Lord graciously lessens this appearance of threat through the men He uses and the fruits He grants to those men as they extend the net of gospel proclamation.

Wednesday, April 14th – Galatians 2: 1-3

Paul writes in v.2 that he laid before the other apostles his gospel. By this he means that he presented to them not only the content of the message he preached, but also the man, Titus, as a validating fruit of Paul's gospel, a trophy of God's saving grace, and an incarnation of the good news the apostle was proclaiming to Gentiles who were dead in their sin. The genuine gospel is not merely a rightly ordered array of true principles, but most importantly is the power of God to produce new creatures in Christ.

Thursday, April 15th – Galatians 2: 1-3

The New American Standard version of the Bible translates v.2 poorly when it reads that Paul presented his gospel to the other apostles *for fear* that he might have been ministering in vain. The best translation is that Paul reported *lest perhaps* he had ministered in vain. The word, *fear*, indicates that Paul had doubts about his apostolic ministry; the words, *lest perhaps*, indicate that while he had no doubt regarding his apostolic office or ministry, he based his confidence not on his own certainty but was willing to have it verified by all of the apostles. Such apostolic consensus served to further the harmonious progress of the gospel in the churches and through the gospel outreach of the churches. The Lord led Paul to submit his gospel for this verification so that any clouds of suspicion regarding his apostolic office and work would be swept away.

Friday, April 16th – Galatians 2: 1-3

The result of Paul's submitting to the other apostles his gospel message and presenting to them Titus, the living new man in Christ, was that all of the apostles recognized Paul's gospel and its fruit as being complete and in need of no modification. This recognition of the complete nature of Paul's gospel extended to the matter of Titus not being required to receive circumcision. The original impulse of all of the apostles was to perceive and accept the less shadowy and more spiritual and substantial nature of the new covenant ushered in by Christ, the substance of redemption. This original impulse was right, but it wavered, even in some apostles under pressure of a party that insisted that circumcision was essential to salvation (see vv.11ff). The full liberating truth of the whole counsel of God is always under attack from some quarter, and we must ever be vigilant to stand upon the truth of God and not kneel under the pressure of misguided and misguiding men.

Saturday, April 17th – Galatians 2: 4, 5

In these verses, Paul informs us of the challenge that arose against his gospel and its fruits from false brethren. These were church members who had professed faith in Christ but who did not in sincerity and truth possess Christ or His perfect salvation. They were tares growing amid the wheat. For their salvation they depended not upon Christ but upon the enslaving burden of their own laborious and vain attempts to attain and maintain self-righteousness. Such self-righteous orientation casts contempt upon the person and work of Christ, who liberates His redeemed people from the thrall of their guilt, corruption, misery, and duteous drudgery in their vain attempts to command God's approval of the filthy rags that fail to cover their shame.

Sunday, April 18th – Galatians 2: 4, 5

Paul uses terms to describe the actions of the false brethren that indicate the behavior of enemies. He writes that they sneak into Christian churches, in contrast to Paul's open submission of his gospel mentioned in v.2. They spy out the gracious and glorious liberty that redeemed sinners have through the perfect saving work of Christ. They spy not to possess that work and its liberating power, but rather to pervert it and to drag the beloved and liberated saints of the Lord into that bondage to which the false brethren cling. Rightly did Paul know their enslaved and enslaving spirit that was kin to the proud Pharisaic spirit that had motivated him to count Christ as his enemy and Christians as pests deserving imprisonment and death. Rightly did Paul refuse to submit to them!

Monday, April 19th – Galatians 2: 4, 5

The bondage into which false brethren would drag believers is that of their subservience to sinful man. By cunning insinuation, like that used by the serpent in

the Garden, they would have believers defect from their completeness in Christ and return to subjection to a false system of ranking and supposed salvation by the woefully faulty merits of their own works. When Paul writes *we did not yield in subjection to them*, he means that neither he, nor Barnabas, nor Titus—men who had deeply imbibed the invigorating wonders and delights of salvation in Christ—were moved even for a little time to submit to the sneaking, spying sabotage attempts of the false brethren, but rather they stood fast in their faith in the Son of God who had loved them and given Himself for them.

Tuesday, April 20th – Galatians 2: 4, 5

Paul and his co-laborers resisted the subtle but deadly pressures of the false brethren not only for their own sakes but also for the sake of all Christians who would ever read this letter. Had the apostle's team yielded for the least measure of time, not only would they have been oppressed by the bondage of a works righteousness, but they would have served to lead countless others out of the blessed liberty of their salvation and into the bondage of those obligated to working perfect, personal, and perpetual righteousness in order to be accepted by God. Paul rightly refused to be an anti-Moses, leading God's people out of the freedom of their redemption and back into their Egyptian bondage.

Wednesday, April 21st – Galatians 2: 6-9

In these verses, Paul indicates something of the effect the false brethren had upon the other apostles in Jerusalem. In short, he tells us that the tares had no effect upon the apostolic wheat. None of the apostles were moved to embrace the bondage of self-righteousness while despising the precious liberty they had in Christ and proclaimed to others. Although Paul reiterates his refusal to yield to the false brethren, no matter what the other apostles did, he happily notes that the other apostles stood fast with him in the blessed liberty of Christ.

Thursday, April 22nd – Galatians 2: 6-9

Although the apostles remained true to the gospel and unaffected by the false brethren, Paul indicates to us something of the tactics the tares used in their attempt to manipulate the apostles. The mention of those who were of high reputation hints that these false brethren sought to employ flattery in order to create ranks in the Church—high ranks to which they could ascend. Had the apostles fallen for their flattery, rancor would have resulted in the Church, as it always has done in history when men create and crave purportedly high offices that are not countenanced by the Word of God.

Friday, April 23rd – Galatians 2: 6-9

False brethren endeavor to create high ranks and unholy rancor in the Church. But the apostles did not lose sight of the fact that all believers were essentially children of

God and brethren to one another. They rightly held to the wonder of God's saving grace, wherein Christ descended to save sinners and exalt all of the redeemed to inconceivable glory, all by His grace.

Saturday, April 24th – Galatians 2: 6-9

Paul clearly kept Christ and only Christ as his focus. So did the other apostles. This meant that for them, as it should be for us, the only standard and approval that mattered was Christ's not men's, even be they of seeming high rank. Read in 1 Cor. 4:1-5 how Paul elaborates this attitude.

Sunday, April 25th – Galatians 2: 6-10

Although the opinion of men may mean nothing to those who stand and serve approved by God in Christ, it does not follow that brethren and servants of Christ have nothing to do with each other. Hence, Paul touches on themes of unity and diversity in the Body of Christ being maintained by harmonizing love. By the saving grace they shared, Paul and his team were in solid unity with the other apostles (v.9). They also stood unified in charity toward others (v.10). But they mutually recognized and respected their diverse divine callings in their ministry of the gospel (vv.7,8). Such harmony in the church is always beautiful, delightful, and effectively fruitful.

April 2010

Monday, April 26th – Galatians 2: 11

Paul moves in this letter from his giving an account of the most sweetly blessed cooperation among the apostles (vv.7-10) to his detailing a most painful conflict he had with one particular apostle. This movement from cooperation to conflict is made without Paul expressing the slightest sense of apology for such a drastic shift. This is so because both cooperation and conflict are part of normal life in the Church. Each one plays its part in the advancement and growth in the grace and knowledge of Christ among His people. Both are manifestations of the saints endeavoring faithfully and with loving diligence to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. Cooperation is the positive and sweet fruit of the Lord's gracious and effectual working being perceived by the Lord's servants, while correcting conflict rightly arises when defects in faith and practice spring up in the Church.

Tuesday, April 27th – Galatians 2: 11

The form and spirit in which Paul opposed Peter are mentioned in v.11. The form was a straightforward approach. Paul opposed Peter *to his face*. This does not mean that these apostles engaged privately, for v.14 informs us that Paul challenged Peter before a number of brethren in the church at Antioch. Because Peter had sinned publically, his conviction, repentance, and restoration would rightly be brought about publically. Similar public discipline had taken place when Jesus rebuked and restored

Peter in the presence of the rest of the disciples after he had proudly and vainly boasted before them that he would never deny the One he had previously confessed to be the Christ (Mt. 16:16; Jn. 18:25-27; 21:15-22). Public scandals are to be dealt with publically, while private and personal sins call for private dealings (Mt. 18:15-17). Cowardly gossip and malicious backbiting are never the way in which we are to speak the truth in love.

Wednesday, April 28th – Galatians 2: 11

As painful as this public rebuke of Peter surely was for all concerned, we have cause to thank our God that it took place in a public setting. It is right and loving that private and personal sins be lovingly covered (1 Pet. 4:8), but public sins that yield bitter public consequences are most lovingly and effectively dealt with in the presence and for the edification of all concerned. In this particular case, not only did Peter and the offended Gentiles profit from Paul's faithful public stand, but also, because Paul recounts the matter in this letter, believers in all ages may profit from this critical engagement and its edifying resolution.

Thursday, April 29th – Galatians 2: 11, 12

The church at Syrian Antioch that Peter visited was the home church of Paul and Barnabas (Acts 13:1-3). We do not know when Peter came to Antioch, but the timing of his visit appears to have been before the Jerusalem Council (Acts 15:1-35) and possibly as early as sometime before Paul and Barnabas were commissioned by the Church at Antioch to undertake what became Paul's first missionary journey. The spirit in which Peter visited Antioch was surely that of brotherly love, as indicated by his initial eating with the Gentiles there. This would indicate that Peter had already experienced the Lord's dealing with his prejudice against Gentiles through the vision he had received at Joppa and his subsequent leading the Gentile Cornelius to faith in Christ (Acts 10). It is therefore a sad and sobering warning to us all, that such an eminent and spiritually experienced apostle could revert to sinful prejudice simply through pietistic peer pressure. Let us take heed lest we, too, be tempted and fall into similar sin (Gal. 6:1).

Friday, April 30th – Galatians 2: 11, 12

We might wonder why Paul mentions his opposition to Peter in this letter to the Galatian believers. Is the apostle to the Gentiles inconsiderately opening old wounds in Peter, or exposing that apostle to continued censure? The fact is, as we shall see, that Peter had repented of his earlier sinful and injurious hypocrisy. Yet, there were Judaisers in the region of Galatia, actively teaching that Gentile converts to Christ must receive circumcision, and so troubling Galatian believers, as Peter's behavior had previously troubled Gentiles in Antioch. Therefore, Paul appeals to his previous faithful and open dealings with Peter as an apostolic precedent that should have served to settle this disturbing matter in the Galatian churches. When the apostles of

Christ, who were charged by the Lord to feed His sheep, agree on a disputed matter, it should provide clear and edifying guidance for all of the sheep of Christ's flock in all places and for all time.

Saturday, May 1st – Galatians 2: 11, 12

Would Peter have resented the reference in this letter to his earlier sin? He surely would not have protested having his own sin serve as an object lesson for the spiritual protection, comfort, and edifying education of the sheep in the wider Church. He would not have protested had he repented of that sin, any more than he had protested the fact that all of the Gospel writers told of his having denied Jesus. We know from John's account that Peter did repent of that sin and was graciously restored by Jesus (Jn. 21:1-22). Satan designs scandal and injury when he tempts believers, especially church leaders, to sin. The Lord's granting His sinning servants repentance and restoration enables them to use testimony of such sin and recovery to remove scandal, heal injury, and strengthen in faith and life others in the Church who struggle with similar temptations and lapses in faithfulness.

Sunday, May 2nd – Galatians 2: 11, 12

Peter's lapse from faith into fear was sinful against God and injurious to his Gentile and even Jewish brethren. Paul's condemning challenge was well deserved. The fact that Peter silently accepted this condemning challenge indicates his conviction by God. The fact that he writes about Paul so cordially in one of his own epistles (2 Pet. 3:15), indicates that Peter perceived and accepted in Paul's challenge the faithful wounds of a beloved brother. If others could truly profit spiritually from Peter's painful lapse and condemnation, that apostle would surely have rejoiced to know that his brethren could grow in the grace and knowledge of Christ as a result of the Lord's sinless use of his sin.

Monday, May 3rd – Galatians 2: 12

This verse tells why Paul so strongly and openly opposed Peter. The condemned apostle was moved by fear rather than faith. He was also influenced by Jewish party spirit rather than by the Holy Spirit. Accordingly, Peter lovelessly treated Gentile believers at Antioch as defective Christians simply because they had rightly regarded their baptism in Christ to supersede the shadowy rite of circumcision, and the mingling of their own blood with the blood of the covenant that had been shed for them by the Son of God to be unnecessary. Paul rightly regarded the Judaizers' demand for Gentile circumcision to be blasphemously offensive to God who had accomplished redemption at the infinite cost of the shed blood of His only begotten Son.

Tuesday, May 4th – Galatians 2: 12, 13

Paul touches in v.12 upon Peter's actions and his motivating fear of the circumcision party. In v.13, Paul calls Peter's action hypocrisy. Jesus designated such hypocrisy the leaven of the Pharisees, and He had warned His disciples, including Peter, against it (Lk. 12:1). We learn also from v.13 how such leaven spread from Peter to others, including the pacific and lovingly reconciling Barnabas. If Jesus pronounced woe upon the man who caused the least in the kingdom of God to stumble (Lk. 17:2), surely the condemnation is greater for those, like Peter, who caused prominent and productive servants of Christ to stumble. Peter should have feared Christ more than the circumcision party. Thankfully, Paul, the one apostle who had not been warned by Jesus to avoid the leaven of the Pharisees, served to restore Peter and Barnabas to a sincere and holy love for Christ and for their brethren in Him.

Wednesday, May 5th – Galatians 2: 13-15

Paul not only discerned Peter's hypocrisy, but he also openly denounced it. Paul did not practice an apathetic or fearful toleration of Peter's sin, but spoke out boldly and faithfully against it. The apostle to the Gentiles, who himself had been a Hebrew of Hebrews and an eminent Pharisee, knew that the best any Jew could do without Christ would be to affect a guise of sincere piety that in truth consisted of outward and public conformity to some aspects of God's Law, while hiding an inward and private failure to worship God in spirit and truth. Such Jews could only aggravate their essential sin by their vociferous demands that Gentiles keep God's Law in ways that the Jews themselves failed to do. How thankful Peter, Barnabas, the Gentiles at Antioch, the Galatians, and the Church to and beyond our day should be for the holy, loving, and judicious candor of Paul, that called such demonic hypocrisy out of its hiding and cast it out of the hearts and minds of the godly.

Thursday, May 6th – Galatians 2: 16

With the words of this verse, Paul shows the true magnitude of the evil that the circumcision party was bringing to bear upon Peter, Barnabas, and Gentile believers throughout the churches that were spreading from Jerusalem, Judea, and throughout the world. It was not merely a matter of Jewish party spirit confusing and offending Gentile believers. It was a contention over the very heart of the gospel. In short, Peter, by his withdrawing from the Gentiles, was asserting in practical terms that circumcision, an aspect of the ceremonial law, was required for any person to be fully saved. It was unlikely that James himself countenanced this contention, and also unlikely that the circumcision party visiting Antioch had consciously put this pressure on Peter. Had they done so, Paul would surely have challenged them as well. Paul rightly grasped that even a practical suggestion, especially from an apostle of Christ, that a person was required to keep personally, perfectly, and perpetually any aspect of the Law of God, nullified the necessity and perfection of the grace of God in the

saving work of Christ. The person and work of Christ must be the touchstone of all that a Christian thinks, feels, believes, says, and does. All that believers are and do must be brought captive to Christ.

Friday, May 7th – Galatians 2: 15, 16

Paul refers to the churches that were in and spreading out from Judea as being *in Christ*. In v.16, the apostle referred to Christ being in him. Both are true for all who have been made new creatures by the effectual calling of God in Christ. We are in Christ (Rom. 6:11; 8:1:2; Cor. 5:17), and Christ is in us (Rom. 8:10; Col. 1:27). Before his conversion, Paul had regarded Christ as a hated threat to his life and to his Jewish traditions. After his conversion, the apostle saw Christ to be no hated enemy but rather the true helper, Savior, and lover of his soul. He saw Christ as taking precedence over all that is natural and he saw his election in Christ to be the work of no foreign invader, alienating him from all he knew and loved, but rather the work of his loving God who delivered him from his sin and brought him into his true home in Christ and into the world of His grace. This is how Paul preached Christ and how we have accepted Him. Paul acknowledges that he—along with Peter, Barnabas, and the members of the circumcision party—were Jews by nature. As such they should have found it easier than could have the Gentiles, not to keep all that the Law of God demanded, but rather to know and accept all that it signified. The Law of God itself never promised salvation to anyone who kept it, but rather demanded what all sinners found impossible to give: perfect, personal, and perpetual obedience. The ceremonial law, with the blood of men (via circumcision) and animals (via sacrifice) pointed at the same time to what sinful men deserved (death) and what God graciously provided and accepted (a substitutionary atonement). Hence, the Law itself pointed beyond itself to the source of man's salvation. The Law, the prophets, and the entire Old Testament point to Christ crucified for man's salvation, and to nothing less, more, or beside Christ crucified.

Saturday, May 8th – Galatians 2: 15, 16

When Paul writes that he and those he was opposing were Jews by nature and not sinners from among the Gentiles, he is not denying that the Jews were sinners in the eyes of God. What he is alluding to is that the Jews had for centuries been privileged with certain advantages over the Gentiles, such as their being entrusted with the oracles of God (Rom. 3:1,2). As such, the Jews should have been the first to be convicted of their sin and humbled before God. They should have been the first to die to the Law of God as a means of salvation, and to be taught by the Law to look for the Lamb of God whose shed blood takes away not only their sin, but also the sin of the world. They should have known, too, that they were entrusted with the oracles of God to share them with the world, not to horde them and hide them under the increasing stench of their national pride and religious hypocrisy. The Jews pretended their

obedience to the Law, while Gentiles sinned in ignorant and open disobedience to God's Law. God forbid that we who now possess the oracles of God should ever become like those Jews who boasted only in their possessing the Law and vainly boasted of their performance of the Law, while refusing to be tutored by the Law to come to and abide in Christ.

Sunday, May 9th – Galatians 2: 15, 16

In v. 15, Paul acknowledges that he and his opponents at Antioch were Jews by nature. In v. 16, the apostle appeals to his opponents as his fellow-Christians who had been saved by God's grace through their faith in Christ alone. Peter, Barnabas, and the others knew better than to play such legalistic hypocrites. They knew what, by God's grace, we who are in Christ should know and rejoice in, namely, that the Law of God was not given by God to save sinners. The Law can only convict but never can convert a soul. The end of the Law is Christ in whom we believe and receive through such faith justification before God.

Monday, May 10th – Galatians 2: 16

Paul reiterates at the end of v.16 that no one is saved by works of the Law, and that by the works of the Law, no flesh ever has been or will be justified in God's sight. Men may be impressed by pretended and partial law-keeping, but the Lord is not so impressed. When Jesus summarized the Ten Commandments, He did not say that the Law teaches that we should obey the Law, but rather that we should love God and our neighbor (Dt. 6:5; Mt. 22:34-40). We initially love God not because He is great and holy and glorious, but because He is gracious and has first loved us, even while we were sinners (Rom. 5:8). Those who have tasted such love and have been delivered from their bondage to guilt and fear, desire and delight to love their neighbors best by pointing them to Christ, the loving Lord, and not to circumcision and the killing Law.

Tuesday, May 11th – Galatians 2: 17-19

These verses are challenging to understand. The reason is that in them Paul speaks in a hypothetical sense. He used this form of communication as an appeal to Peter to reason with him through the absurdity of what Peter's action entailed. When Paul uses the first person pronouns, *we* (v.17) and *I* (v.18), he joins himself to his condemned fellow apostle in a compassionate endeavor to walk with him out of his sinful folly. With such a hypothetical device, Paul can explore with Peter and with all readers of this letter the irrational and ultimately blasphemous ramifications of Peter's position from the perspective of reasoning rather than actual living so that the erring apostle could repent long before he aggravated his sin by long practice of it.

Wednesday, May 12th – Galatians 2: 17

Paul in this verse invites Peter and the readers of this letter to think through the

logical conclusion of Peter's action. The gist of what he writes is as follows: *What if it were so, he begins by saying, that we who both have sought our justification in Christ alone, having been prompted to do so by Christ who had clearly and repeatedly taught us that He is the one thing necessary, the Lamb of God who alone takes away the sin of His people, find that our faith in Christ alone has proven insufficient to justify us before God? Such an experience would make Christ a deceiving or at best mistaken minister of sin, would it not? Because Christ told us that no man could come to the Father except through Him, and now, by our practically adding that circumcision is necessary as well as Christ for our justification, we have found that had we completely believed in Him we would still be in our sin.* To this logical outworking of what Peter was believing and teaching by his action of withdrawing from the Gentiles and clinging to the circumcision party, Paul declares: *May it never be!* For Paul rightly realized that Christ, the Son of God, the living truth of God, and the Savior of sinners, could never be such a minister of sin.

Thursday, May 13th – Galatians 2: 18, 19

Paul continues to reason hypothetically in v.18. He says that if he were to rebuild the belief that to any degree his salvation depended upon him fulfilling the Law, a belief he had demolished by the clarion proclamation that a man is justified by faith alone in Christ alone (v.16), he would not attain salvation but would confirm himself in his sin. For the Law of God can only convince a man of his sin but is powerless to convert him from his sin. The right use of the Law is to point a sinner not to the Law that only convicts and kills him, but to the Savior in whom by faith we have eternal life with God (Jn. 17:3). This right use of the Law, Paul came to know and practice as he declares in v.19.

Friday, May 14th – Galatians 2: 20

With this verse, Paul emerges from his illustration of the self-destructive, blasphemous, and condemning hypothetical reality he painted in vv.17-19. The apostle counters that hypothetical construction with the glorious reality of his regeneration and faith in Christ. Here the scaffolding of the Law, that prior to the coming of Christ pointed men to Christ, has fallen away and in its place stands a living, loving, forgiving, and justifying Savior, who has silenced all accusations against His people from whatever source, even from the Law of God.

Saturday, May 15th – Galatians 2: 20

This verse explains how Paul died to the Law (v.19). It is a single sentence that pulsates with strong and glorious life. Paul states a series of things that are not hypothetical, theoretical, speculative, or even symbolic, but that are awesomely real. He tells in profound and concentrated terms of the radical change that Christ

made in his life—a change infinitely beyond anything that the Law ever did or could have done for him.

Sunday, May 16th – Galatians 2: 20

Paul's death to the Law was one of crucifixion. He does not say only that Christ was crucified for him, although that was blessedly true for him and for all believers is Christ (Rom. 6:1-3). Instead, he asserts that he had been crucified with Christ. This is not true, of course, in a physical and literally historical sense, but it is true and radically real in a spiritual sense. The apostle tells us in Rom. 7:7-11 that prior to his regeneration the Law killed him, implying that its convicting power spiritually mortified him in the same way that physical death was bound to come upon him one day as the wages of his sin (Rom. 6:23). But crucifixion is a very specific kind of death. It is a judicial execution. For the unregenerate, after their death comes judgment (Heb. 9:27). But for Paul, by his union to Christ through faith, he in Christ experienced full divine judgment and execution for all of his sins. This is why for every believer, not even the Law of God can any longer bring an accusation, (Rom. 8:33,34) for the penalty of violated Law has been fully punished by God in Christ, and God does not impose double jeopardy on those who are in Christ.

Monday, May 17th – Galatians 2: 20

The Law could prescribe righteousness through its codified commandments, and it could describe righteousness symbolically through its ceremonial aspects (e.g., a lamb without defect for sacrifice). But the Law could not provide righteousness to any sinner. It could only convict and kill sinners. Yet, by faith in Christ, Paul was crucified and made alive. By his union to Christ in His death, Paul died to sin (Rom. 6:6,7), and by his union to Christ in His resurrection, the apostle was made alive to God (Rom. 6:4,5,8-11), not as a Law-obsessed Pharisee, desperately donning the filthy rags of his own vainly attempted righteousness, but as a beloved son clothed in the perfect righteousness of Christ.

Tuesday, May 18th – Galatians 2: 20

The sequence of existence for all unbelievers is: life, death, judgment, condemnation, and eternity in hell. The unbeliever senses the force of this sequence even apart from the Law of God, and for that reason he suppresses the truth not necessarily of what is revealed in Scripture (to which many, if not most, unbelievers are never exposed) but rather of this intuition that God has made known to all men (Rom. 1:18,19). Accordingly, unbelievers cling to life and dread and avoid a voluntary crucifixion. For believers, the sequence is: life, crucifixion, resurrection, ascension with Christ, vindication on Judgment Day, and reigning with Christ forever in glory in unimaginable joy (Ps. 16:11). Therefore, Paul writes of his crucifixion with Christ not as a dreaded curse, but as the portal through which he was ushered into new, abundant, and eternal life with Christ.

Wednesday, May 19th – Galatians 2: 20

Although he has been crucified with Christ, Paul confesses that he yet lived in the same flesh and blood that were his from the time of his conception and birth. However, his flesh and blood were all that for the time of his earthly pilgrimage remained unchanged in him. For his mind, soul, and will were mastered by a radically new and animating power through the Spirit of Christ indwelling him by faith (Rom. 8:9-17).

Thursday, May 20th – Galatians 2: 20

Paul summarizes his new life in Christ as a life he lived by faith in the Son of God. This is radically different from the life he had lived by the power of his own natural endowments, endeavoring to attain, at best, an external conformity to the Law of God. Instead, the apostle lived by the power of faith, given to him by God's grace (Eph. 2:8,9), and that faith united him to the living, resurrected, and ascended Son of God who is seated at God's right hand ever to intercede for His people. There is no comparison between this living Savior and the letter of the Law to which Paul had died.

Friday, May 21st – Galatians 2: 20

When Paul says that he lived by faith in the *Son of God*, he speaks of the person of his Savior. In particular, this saving person is the divine and only-begotten Son of God who is eternally beloved of the Father. Earlier in this verse, Paul referred to his Savior as *Christ*, indicating His anointed office as the unique God/Man who came into the world to save sinners. Paul lived by faith in no ordinary or low person, but rather by faith in the majestic and glorious Son of God, who gave Himself and who fulfilled the Law for the salvation of His people.

Saturday, May 22nd – Galatians 2: 20

The attitude that prompted the Son of God to save Paul and all other believers is indicated by the phrase, *who loved me*. The demands of God's Law were satisfied by the person and work of Christ. However, the reason behind such redeeming work having been accomplished by God's Son for sinners has nothing to do with the Law. It has everything to do with the love of God the Father, who gave His Son to die on the cross (Jn. 3:16), and it has everything to do with the love of Christ, who voluntarily gave Himself to die so that sinners might by faith in Him live. In and through Christ, the loving mercy of God triumphs over the condemning judgment God's Law demands for sinners.

Sunday, May 23rd – Galatians 2: 20

God the Father lovingly gave His beloved Son, and the Son of God lovingly gave Himself for the salvation of sinners in a very specific way. Christ did not give Himself primarily as a teacher or worker of miracles, although He did those things in

the course of His earthly ministry. Supremely, the Son of God *delivered Himself up*, meaning that He submitted to the judicial demands of God's Law in both His active obedience, wherein He obeyed the Law perfectly, and especially in His passive obedience, wherein He who knew no sin consented to be made sin and bear God's judgment and condemnation for sin on behalf of His people. Greater love has no one than this.

Monday, May 24th – Galatians 2: 21

Anyone who thinks, feels, acts, or teaches by word or example (as Peter had been doing) that we are saved by Christ *and* our obedience to the Law, does not simply obscure or diminish the infinitely precious and potent grace of God, but he nullifies or makes into nothing that divine grace. The reason Paul gives is that if righteousness is earned by man to any degree, it may and must be earned to a perfect degree. Such an assertion makes God's wisdom foolish, in that God acted needlessly in giving His Son, and Christ bore the exquisite and infinite anguish of His death needlessly. We can therefore see that even the slightest legalistic tendencies in us or others in the Church have monstrous and blasphemous implications.

Tuesday, May 25th – Galatians 2: 21

With this verse, Paul concludes his instructive reference to Peter's hypocrisy and to Barnabas having been affected by it. Did Peter and Barnabas repent? Read Acts 15 to learn how united Peter and Barnabas were with Paul in their arguing prevailingly at the Jerusalem Council for the full standing of Gentiles in the Church by their faith in Christ alone. It appears very likely that the bonds of such a strong consensus and confession were forged at Antioch when one man, Paul, stood against the sin of his brethren, and won them for the glory of God and the good of Christ's Church.

May 2010

Thursday, May 27th - Galatians 3: 1

Paul has recounted to the Galatians how he had visited Jerusalem to present both his gospel and Titus, the verifying Gentile fruit of that gospel. Paul also recounted his confrontation with Peter at Antioch, when Peter had let lesser considerations overshadow the great reality of Christ having made Jews and Gentiles together justified by their faith in Him alone. These things were written for the instruction and edification of the Galatians, who were being plagued by legalistic teachers who maintained that Gentile believers were not fully justified until they submitted to the rite of circumcision. While the apostle anathematized such teachers of a false gospel (Gal. 1:8,9), he now turns directly to the Galatians and challenges them for their having allowed themselves to be drawn away from the substance of salvation and back into redemption's shadows. False teachers rightly deserve to be condemned, but

those conceding to them rightly deserve to be corrected. Faithful are the corrective wounds we receive from those who call us back to Christ when we drift from Him.

Thursday, May 27th - Galatians 3: 1

Paul does not anathematize the Galatians, but neither does he treat their drifting from Christ lightly. He makes very clear to them in this verse the seriousness of their problem. First, he informs them that *they* have a problem. No longer does the apostle speak in collective terms in which he included himself (cf. his use of *we* in Gal. 2:15-17). Rather, he speaks now pointedly to the Galatians, employing the pronoun, *you*. They were the ones drifting from Christ, not the apostle who had proclaimed Christ crucified to them and who continued to cleave to Christ alone by faith. While we share many sins as believers, we do not all wrestle with the same sins. A pastor who knows well his own heart and the character of his flock may often speak inclusively as *we* who struggle with our sins, but there will also be times when he must faithfully declare to at least some in the flock, *Thou art the man!*

Friday, May 28th - Galatians 3: 1

Paul does not anathematize the Galatians, but he does refer to them as having become foolish through their having allowed themselves to be bewitched. The devilish nature of the false teaching the Galatians had received and the deadly folly of their having received it is stated most starkly in Gal. 5:2-4, where Paul declares that if anyone receives circumcision as a religious rite, he will show himself to be severed from Christ. Let us be sobered by the knowledge that even seemingly small errors in faith and practice can have devastating consequences. Let us take heed, therefore, to what teaching we listen.

Saturday, May 29th - Galatians 3: 1

The Galatians' folly is evident by their having heeded assertions that the shadows of Christ were as essential as the substance of Christ. Their embracing of such legalistic teaching was done contrary to the redemptive fact that Christ had been crucified as the perfect atoning sacrifice for His people. This fact Paul had publically proclaimed to them, along with his teaching the justifying significance of the Savior's person and work having been apprehended by the faith of the Galatians. Faith lays hold of the facts of God's redemptive work; folly gropes for the imaginings of fallen, finite, and sinful man. Who but a fool would turn from the substance of bread to feed himself the shadows of bread?

Sunday, May 30th - Galatians 3: 1

The Greek word Paul uses that is translated *foolish* in our English versions literally means *against the mind*. Faith in Christ is supra-rational, but faith in anything other than or in addition to Christ is irrational. It is a Christian's duty to know truth, to think through his faith, and to grow in the grace and knowledge of the Lord. We are

commanded to love God with all of our heart, soul, strength, *and mind* (Mt. 22:37). Ignorance and folly are condemned and dispelled by God's Word. To know Christ is to know the truth that sets us free. Satan seeks to lead us into ignorance, mental darkness, and confusion, for only when we are mentally incapacitated do his evil spells work on us.

Monday, May 31st - Galatians 3: 2-5

These verses summarize the folly of the Galatians in terms of their experience. Paul asks a series of questions designed to awaken them to the folly and failure of their new position. For these Galatians, works of the Law were supplanting God's grace and contradicting the Galatians' justification by faith. They had been bewitched into feeling an obligation and acting on it. By their own symbolic swooning (via circumcision), and their own cosmetic applications of legal obedience, they were attempting to attain a perfection they had come to believe was lacking in Christ crucified for them. Step by small and almost imperceptible step they had been led into such demonic folly. By his questions in these verses, Paul leads them from folly to faith, while he keeps us walking by faith away from folly.

Tuesday, June 1st - Galatians 3: 1, 2

The Galatians had drifted from the fact of Christ crucified for their salvation (v.1). In vv. 2-5, Paul appeals to legitimate and undeniable aspects of their Christian experience from which they had also drifted. He begins his appeal to their experience with a question that touches on their initial reception of the Holy Spirit. He asks whether they had received the indwelling, edifying, and empowering Holy Spirit by God's grace through faith or by their own merit attained through their perfect works of the Law. The answer is obvious, for it is the cross of Christ that constitutes the witness of the Holy Spirit and is the power of God unto salvation for sinners. The true work of the Holy Spirit, so far as God's holy Law is concerned, is to turn poor sinners from the Law they have violated and to Christ crucified for all of their transgressions.

Wednesday, June 2nd - Galatians 3: 2

The perfect Holy Spirit manifests perfection in His application of redemption to sinners. Perfection for sinners is not in the Law, even though it is the holy Law of God, for the Law is powerless to save sinners. What the Law was incapable of doing, God Himself did for sinners through His Son's incarnation, perfect life, and redemptive death (Rom. 8:3). It is the death and resurrection of Christ that is perfect in its redemptive character and that perfects sinners as the Holy Spirit applies that redemption to them and they receive it through faith. The Galatians had seen this through Paul's preaching of Christ crucified and had experienced it through the regenerating and indwelling work of the Holy Spirit. Their works of the Law had absolutely nothing to do with their redemption in its accomplishment by Christ or application by the Holy Spirit.

Thursday, June 3rd - Galatians 3: 2, 3

Paul answers the question he posed in v.2 when he writes in v.3 that his misguided Galatians had, indeed, begun their new life in Christ by the agency of God's Holy Spirit. In v.3, the apostle exposes through his questions the folly of believers' seeking to replace their initial dependence upon the Spirit's work of applying to them the benefits of Christ's redemption with a dependence upon their own good works to perfect them in Christ. Such a shift in dependence entailed not only an abandonment of Christ (Gal. 1:6), but also an abandonment of the Holy Spirit. It is supreme folly to contemplate, let alone commit oneself to such manifold abandonment.

Friday, June 4th - Galatians 3: 3

When Paul refers to the Galatians having begun by the Spirit, he means that the Holy Spirit was the divine agency by which they had been regenerated and initiated by their faith in Christ into the kingdom of God's grace. It is specifically the work of the Holy Spirit to glorify Christ's person and work in the minds and hearts of believers (Jn. 16:13,14). This work of the Holy Spirit is consistent with the witness of God the Father at the baptism and transfiguration of Jesus when the Father declared: *This is My beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased* (Mt. 3:17; 17:5). Not a single Person of the divine Trinity says anything about sinners' merit through their works of the Law.

Saturday, June 5th - Galatians 3: 4

In this verse, Paul reminds the Galatians of the many things they had suffered in connection with their faith in Christ. The way the apostle puts the question indicates the folly of their suffering manifold persecutions, not for the great blessing and reward of incomparable glory (Mt. 5:10-12), but for the vanity of their futile attempt to save themselves by the merit of their own works. Only a foolish and bewitched soul would exchange for the emptiness of an imperfect personal works-righteousness, the comforting treasure of knowing that current sufferings are not worthy to be compared with certain future glory--a glory that is made certain for believers only by the perfect work of Christ.

Sunday, June 6th - Galatians 3: 5

With this final question of the series of questions that probe the past and current experience of the Galatians, Paul asks whether Christ's continual provision of His Spirit to the Galatians was earned by their works of the Law, or was given by Christ as a gracious gift that the Galatians received by faith alone. This question makes clear that the Galatians (and all people in all ages) must either be certainly saved by Christ alone or certainly condemned by their futile attempts to save themselves. Christ gives His Holy Spirit not as a mere jump-start for believers to save themselves, but rather as the pledge and seal of a full salvation (Eph. 1:13,14). Believers work out that salvation by faith in Christ alone and with the reverential and rejoicing knowledge

that God's Holy Spirit indwells them to enable them to will and do God's pleasure, which is that they hear and heed His beloved Son alone (Phil. 2:12,13).

Monday, June 7th - Galatians 3: 6-9

In v.1, Paul challenges the Galatians' drift from Christ crucified. In vv.2-5, the apostle challenges their drift from the person and work of the Holy Spirit, as well as from their experience of sanctification, as they grieved the Spirit who alone enabled them to do works of holy and loving power, and, instead, depended on themselves vainly trying to earn God's favor. In vv. 6-29, Paul contends that the Galatians had drifted from the testimony and teaching of Scripture. He begins by taking his readers back to the Lord's justifying Abraham by faith in order to show that the righteous do not live by their feeble attempts to fulfill God's Law, but rather live by faith. The more we grasp the whole counsel of God, the less we will wrest any portion of Scripture to our own destruction (2 Pet. 3:14-16).

Tuesday, June 8th - Galatians 3: 6-9

The witness of Christ, of the Holy Spirit, and of Scripture all agree. Christ said Himself that the Scriptures testify of Him (Jn. 5:39). The Word of God as a whole, and every portion of it when rightly understood in its context, proclaims that God is the Savior of His people through the person and work of His Son alone. Not an iota of the Word teaches us to save ourselves.

Wednesday, June 9th - Galatians 3: 6

In addition to their having drifted from Christ crucified, from the Holy Spirit's person and work, and from the testimony of Scripture, the Galatians also had drifted from Abraham, the father of the faithful, as well as from the faith of Abraham and from the righteousness that is imputed by God and received by faith. The Galatians' acceptance of the false teaching of self-justification through works righteousness had gained them nothing and was costing them everything that pertained to true salvation. Theirs was a grievous and most costly foolishness that all who read Paul's letter to them do well to avoid like the worst of plagues.

Thursday, June 10th - Galatians 3: 6

Paul commends to his wayward Galatians the example of Abraham. That great patriarch did not contribute perfecting works to a salvation that was imperfect and merely potential. Instead, Abraham contributed nothing except his sin and his being, at the time of his justification, near to his death that would have been the wages of his sin. Abraham was not a contributor to but was entirely a recipient of salvation. In the passage from which Paul quotes in this verse (Gen. 15:1-6), Abraham merited nothing before God, but rather he received what the Lord promised, and what the patriarch knew he could not himself produce. Abraham acknowledged his inability naturally to produce the son God had promised, but instead of his trying harder to produce that son

of promise, he grew strong in his faith, believing God to have power to provide what He had promised (Rom. 4: 18-22). It was that faith alone that was reckoned by God to Abraham as righteousness. So it is by faith alone in Christ alone that righteousness has been reckoned to us.

Friday, June 11th - Galatians 3: 6, 7

The faith of Abraham was not unique to that patriarch. Instead, Abraham's faith was the proto-type of justifying faith for all believers. True sons of Abraham are not descended from his loins but rather from his faith. All those who have been united to Christ by faith have come to possess a faith like Abraham's, and they alone are true descendants of that great father of faith and possessors of a righteousness that is provided by God and accepted by God. Read Rom. 4:1-25 for an expanded consideration of the faith of Abraham.

Saturday, June 12th - Galatians 3: 6-8

The testimony of Scripture is not only that Abraham by faith in God was justified (v.6), but also that the immense and everlasting blessing the patriarch enjoyed as a man justified by faith would be shared by people from every nation who would come to possess a faith like that of Abraham (v.8). Therefore, while God promised Abraham a son in Isaac as a wonder of the Lord's gracious power (Gen. 15:4), at the same time the patriarch received from God a promise of a multitude of descendants who would outnumber the stars of heaven (Gen. 15:5). This multitude of descendants was promised to Abraham prior to the Lord's promises of Isaac (Gen. 12:2,3), and Paul here makes explicit what was implicit in that promise, namely, that the blessing of salvation would be enjoyed not only by the natural descendants of Abraham (the Jews) but also by people among all the nations of the world (Gentiles). The significance of this prior promise of divine blessing upon the Gentiles indicates that they would be fully justified by their faith and not by their being made to become Jews, just like Abraham was justified prior to his being circumcised (Rom. 4:9-13).

Sunday, June 13th - Galatians 3: 9, 10

In v.9, Paul makes a transition from the faith of Abraham to the blessing the patriarch obtained through that faith. In v.10, Paul makes clear that the only alternative to anyone receiving that blessing through a faith like Abraham's is a curse. Apart from a justifying faith in the person, promise, and provision of God through Christ, all people are sinners earning death as their wages and, after death, condemning judgment (Heb. 9:27). Even those who try to obey God's Law are cursed, because no sinner can keep the Law perfectly as Christ has done for those who receive His person and work by faith.

Monday, June 14th - Galatians 3: 9, 10

Paul divides all of humanity into two and only two orders of being. People are either

of faith or of the works of the Law. Those who are of faith are blessed by having Christ as their penal substitute, who has propitiated God's holy wrath against them because of their having been sinful violators of His holy Law. Those who are of the works of the Law may try, more or less, to obey God's holy Law, but are doomed to fail personally, perpetually, and perfectly to perform such obedience. Accordingly, they must face divine condemnation for their own sinful violations of God's Law. From our human perspective, we behold many variations among the whole of humanity; but in the eyes of God, all men either trust Christ for salvation or rely on their own foolish understanding and filthy rags of self-righteousness to justify them before the God whose Law they have perpetually violated.

Tuesday, June 15th - Galatians 3: 11, 12

These verses advance the contention Paul states in vv.9,10 when he writes that those who are of faith are blessed while those who are of the works of the Law are cursed. Not only are those relying on self-righteousness attempting an obviously impossible thing when they endeavor personally, perfectly, and perpetually to establish their own performing of the Law as the basis for their acceptance by God; they also are attempting something that the Word of God itself clearly curses. Moses declared that God commanded the people of Israel to obey His Law with all their hearts (Dt. 26:16), and that they would be blessed if they so obeyed perfectly and cursed if they failed to obey perfectly (Dt. 27:26; 28:1-68). The subsequent history of Israel showed that the curses stated in Deuteronomy came upon the nation of Israel. Accordingly, by the lessons of redemptive history, we learn the cursed end of the works of the Law, while Scripture clearly states, centuries before Israel received God's Law, that Abraham was by faith regarded as righteous by God.

Wednesday, June 16th - Galatians 3: 11, 12

It may be objected that if God clearly commanded His people through Moses to keep His Law with all their hearts, when He really meant that He would only justify those who were of faith, then the Lord was being disingenuous in His dealings with His people. Paul responds in v.12 that the Law itself shuts up all people to faith. In sum, the Law is but a part of God's revelation to man. It is the holy standard of man's duty, but no sinner has any hope of keeping the Law. Hence, a sinner who endeavors to save himself by his own works of the Law is cursed. The Lord has always made this clear in His Word, saying in Lev. 18:5, which Paul cites in this verse: *a man may live if he does them*. The only man who ever did perfectly obey God's Law was Christ, whose justifying work sinners receive by faith and rejected by their foolish endeavor to justify themselves by their own works of the Law.

Thursday, June 17th - Galatians 3: 13

From a discussion of the faith of Abraham and the blessing of that faith, Paul turns to

the object of saving faith and the substance of faith's blessing in this verse. While God's Law is holy and good and is the standard of that holiness without which no man can see the Lord, the terms of man's salvation never depended on the performance of sinful men--whether Jew or Gentile. Rather, it depended upon the performance of a Son (Gen. 3:15), who was foreshadowed in Abraham's son, Isaac, and fulfilled in Christ, by whose work on the cross redemption from the curse of the Law was accomplished for all who receive it by faith.

Friday, June 18th - Galatians 3: 13

Paul has shown from Scripture how the Law of God is but a part of God's revelation--a part that was never intended to serve as a basis for sinful man's salvation. Scripture prescribes faith for all who would be saved, from the time of Abraham (Gen. 15:6) through to the time of the prophet Habakkuk (Hab. 2:4), and beyond to the end of the world (Rom. 4:23-25). In this verse, Paul brings to the attention of his readers the object of saving faith. It is to the person of Christ and His redeeming work that faith unites the believer. Faith is the sole instrumental cause of our salvation; Christ is the sole material cause of our salvation. Neither the Word of God nor the God of the Word recognize or require any other cause.

Saturday, June 19th - Galatians 3: 13, 14

In these two verses, Paul writes of redemption accomplished (v.13) and applied (v.14). The work of redemption speaks of a costly purchase. In this case, the cost was infinite, since every sin committed by sinners is committed against an infinite God. Christ paid that infinite cost by His incarnation, wherein He assumed our nature and lived a perfect life in fulfillment of the Law of God. By His death on the cross, He took upon Himself our penalty and provided for us His perfect human righteousness, infused with infinite merit due to the perfect union of His divine with His human nature. Our works of the Law could not begin to pay such an infinite price.

Sunday, June 20th - Galatians 3: 13, 14

Paul declares that Christ redeemed us. We were unable and unwilling to redeem ourselves. All that we contributed to the transaction of redemption was our sin and all of its infinite guilt before and debt to God. We could not possibly have redeemed ourselves, but we who have faith in the person and work of Christ have received freely this redemption of infinite and effectual value.

Monday, June 21st - Galatians 3: 13, 14

Believers have been redeemed from the curse of the Law by Christ. That curse of divine condemnation comes justly upon every sinner due to his repeated and ceaseless violation of God's holy Law. However, by the grace of God, Christ took on our curse. By His sufferings--that included His humiliated station in life, His death on the cross, and His enduring the condemnation that we deserved--He satisfied the divine justice

that we had offended and so provided for us a perfect righteousness (Gal. 2:21). Our attempts at self-righteousness cannot compare with this.

Tuesday, June 22nd - Galatians 3: 13, 14

Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law by becoming a curse for us. It was not by persuasive arguments or by powerful appeals that we were redeemed. Nor was our redemption accomplished by material expenditure. The transaction of saving redemption was intensely personal. The curse of God was upon all people, because all had sinned (Rom. 3:23). But by the grace of God, Christ, who knew no sin, was made to be sin for us, so that in Him and by His atoning work we would be made the righteousness of God (2 Cor. 5:21; 1 Pet. 2:24,25). Not one of us could to any degree have borne the curse that we earned. We should be eternally grateful that Christ graciously became the cursed One in our place.

Wednesday, June 23rd - Galatians 3: 13, 14

Christ was crucified on a cross. He did not simply die, nor was he killed by sickness or injury. He was executed as a criminal in a way that indicated His bearing in His death the curse of God. Scripture clearly states that a dead man hung on a tree indicates that such a man was cursed by God (Dt. 21:22,23). Not a single detail of the redeeming work of Christ was incidental. Every detail was part of His comprehensive, perfect, and absolutely necessary work to redeem His people. Our haphazard and half-hearted works of the Law cannot compare to His saving work.

Thursday, June 24th - Galatians 3: 13, 14

Christ suffered to satisfy divine justice and to justify His people. He accomplished His costly work of redemption in order to remove from us our sin, guilt, and corruption, and to save us from the curse of God. Christ also applies to us this costly and perfect redemption through the work of His Holy Spirit (Jn. 16:7-15). That is how the blessing of God comes to the Jew first, but also to the Gentiles, who receive it in all of its perfection and power by faith alone (Rom. 1:16). By such faith we become beloved children of God (Jn. 1:12), not workers who have earned our place in heaven.

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Friday, June 25th – Galatians 3: 15-17

At this point in his letter, Paul begins to expound the true place of the Law in the lives of believers. He begins on a lovingly personal note, referring to his readers as his *brethren*, although they had been temporarily bewitched (Gal. 3:1). Faithful teachers of God's Word should not speak the truth only, but rather should endeavor sincerely and warmly to convey the love of God along with the divine truth that sets sinners and misguided saints free.

Saturday, June 26th – Galatians 3: 15-17

The apostle begins to expound the place of the Law in the lives of all believers by employing an analogy drawn from human dealings. Even finite, fallible, and changeable men produce and respect legal documents such as deeds and testaments. In this instance, Paul especially has in mind a testament, as we can determine from v.18 where he specifically refers to an inheritance. Whereas a covenant is a legal agreement between two or more parties, with stipulated obligations for each party, a testament is a legal expression of one's will to dispose of his estate. A testament more clearly has a promissory character, and once the testament has been probated subsequent to the death of the testator, no man, least of all the testator, can change the provisions of the testament. Paul uses this illustration as an argument from the lesser to the greater. If it is true that finite, fallible, and changeable men make and keep legal agreements, it is much more true that God, who promised salvation in His covenant of grace, would keep to the provisions of His own covenant. If men rejoice to inherit an estate through the provisions of another man's last will and testament, much more should believers rejoice to be recipients of the inheritance from God's saving grace.

Sunday, June 27th – Galatians 3: 15-17

It is those who make too much of the Law who pervert the Lord's covenant, not those who exult in the saving grace of God in Christ. God, by His giving His holy Law in both its moral and ceremonial aspects, did not supersede His covenant of grace, but rather gave greater emphasis to the necessity of His grace by the convicting work the Law performed. It is by God's gracious giving, not by our Law-keeping, that we are saved.

Monday, June 28th – Galatians 3: 15-17

If the covenants of men can be respected and relied upon, the covenant of God should have our unshakeable respect and reliance. Paul, having made this point, proceeds to advance his argument, first by his stating in v.16 some very significant features of God's covenant of grace. We are reminded that the dealings of God with Abraham had the character, not of God's legal demanding, but rather of the Lord's gracious promising. Salvation is not of man's performance but of God's promises.

Tuesday, June 29th – Galatians 3: 16

Every time God spoke to Abraham, the divine communications took the form of promises. When the Lord called the patriarch from his native country, it was in order that Abraham would receive great and precious promises (Gen. 12:1-3). When Abraham became old and feared that he would have no son, the Lord promised him not only a natural son, but innumerable spiritual descendants, and, above all, the Lord promised Himself to Abraham as the patriarch's supreme blessing (Gen. 15:1-6). God promised Abraham's descendants the land of Canaan (Gen. 15:18), and promised

Abraham—fifteen years after the patriarch had sinfully produced Ishmael—that he would not only have his legitimate son in Isaac, but also that the aged patriarch would be the father of a multitude of nations (Gen. 16:16-17:7). Nothing was required of Abraham except that he should believe the divine promises and accept the gracious and abundant gifts of the Lord. Even such faith in the Lord comes to believers as part of God's gracious giving (Eph. 2:8,9). For petty legalists, this all sounds too good to be true, but to needy sinners this is all too good not to be true!

Wednesday, June 30th – Galatians 3: 16

Of all the divine promises spoken to Abraham, Paul focuses our attention upon what the Lord promised in Genesis 17:7,8. There the Lord spoke of His establishing His covenant with Abraham and his descendants. With the birth of Isaac, and from Isaac the birth of Jacob, and from Jacob the birth of the heads of the twelve tribes of Israel, we rightly conclude that God was making good His promise to Abraham. However, Paul keenly observes a supremely significant detail of the Lord's covenant promise that was expressed in Genesis 17:7,8. While it is true that the patriarch and all of his spiritual descendants were promised an extravagantly blessed interest in the covenant of grace, Paul rightly perceives that when the Lord made His promises to Abraham in Genesis 17:7,8, He explicitly made a promise to be God to Abraham and to a singular, uniquely significant descendant of Abraham. That one seed (also promised in Gen. 3:15) was Christ. It would be Christ, the promised seed of the woman and of one of her descendants, Abraham, who would alone perfectly fulfill God's Law for all of His people, while taking upon Himself the curse of God that was due to His people for their many violations of God's Law. Through the perfection of Christ's person and work, all who would look to Him for salvation by faith would be reconciled to God as their God, and God would be reconciled to them as His people. All of this results from the Law-keeping only of the singular, saving seed that is Christ. The rest of us receive it as a gift of God's amazing grace.

Thursday, July 1st – Galatians 3: 16

Paul reduces the promises of God in this verse from their application to a believing multitude from every tribe, tongue, and nation of the world in all ages of time. The apostle focuses upon two characters, each of whom is seminal in the gracious and saving purposes of God. The Lord's promises were spoken to Abraham, who was the father of faith and of the faithful, as well as the natural father of the Jewish people and nation to whom the oracles and laws of God were given. The Lord's promises also were spoken to Abraham's seed, Christ, the object of faith and the end of the Law for His people because He perfectly fulfilled the Law for them. When Abraham believed God and was thereby justified, he believed God's promise not only or even especially that he would have a son and many descendants, but supremely that from him would come the seed who would be infinitely greater

than the father from whom He would in His humanity descend (Mt. 1:1). Accordingly, Jesus declared that Abraham saw His day and rejoiced (Jn. 8:56), as all who look to the saving promises and provision of God should do.

Friday, July 2nd – Galatians 3: 15-17

In v.17, Paul states clearly and significantly the conclusion of the argument he was building in vv.15,16. The Lord unilaterally and unconditionally promised salvation to Abraham and his seed (Christ) as well as to all who like Abraham looked by faith to Christ for salvation. All of this was a gift of God's grace to be received by Abraham and his spiritual descendants through faith. Centuries after God made these promises, the Law of God was declared through Moses. The Lord's declaration of His promises and of His Law were separated by centuries of time with the divine intention of making clear to believers that they should not confuse grace and Law, still less that they should ever think that Law took priority over grace. It is not only those things that God has joined together that we should not tear apart, it is also those things that our Lord has kept distinct that we must never confuse.

Saturday, July 3rd – Galatians 3: 17, 18

Salvation issues from God's gracious promises, not from man's obedience to God's Law. Any assertion otherwise is erroneous, absurd, and cruel. Sinners were violators of divine Law even before and certainly after the Law was declared through Moses (Rom. 5:12-14). Not one of them could ever have saved himself through his own keeping of the Law. Because of this, God graciously promised to sinners a Savior of His giving as the only way of salvation for them. It is erroneous and absurd for men to think and teach that these gracious divine promises were made void by the giving of God's Law. Man's need remained unchanged, and God's gracious covenant stood unaltered by the giving of the Law. It is also perversely cruel for men to assert that Law overturned grace, for such assertions deprive sinners of any hope of salvation and obscure the glory of God's grace.

Sunday, July 4th – Galatians 3: 18

The costliness of God's gracious promises and provision of salvation is alluded to by Paul's use of the term, *inheritance*. One comes into his inheritance after the death of the testator. The abundant and glorious lives of believers issue from the death of the Son of God. The atoning death of Christ is the heart and bedrock of redemption. The promises of God mentioned in v.16 were that Abraham and his spiritual descendants would have life through Christ's death. The promises of God to Christ, the singular seed of Abraham, were that He would redeem His people from death by His laying down His life for them. If such promises were based upon believers keeping the Law, they would be no promises at all, since no sinner is willing or able to keep God's Law. The Lord did not give Abraham a potential blessing based upon his

performance, but rather a free, full, and certain promise of eternal life through the death of His beloved Son.

Monday, July 5th – Galatians 3: 18

The reference in this verse to *inheritance* casts a controlling light on the character of the promises of God mentioned in v.16 and of the covenant mentioned in v.15. While the covenant of grace is a binding commitment cast in the form of a legal contract between two or more parties, its essential character is that of a specific type of contract, namely, a testament. Legal contracts stipulate rights and responsibilities of the parties and have nothing to do with death. Testaments are the legally protected instruments of a single party wherein the testator disposes of his estate, and the disposal takes place after the testator's death. All that the beneficiary named in a testator's last will and testament does is to receive his inheritance. He does not work for it. Therefore, the legalistic assertions of the Judaizers who were bewitching the Galatians were based on ignorance of the essential character of God's covenant of grace.

Tuesday, July 6th – Galatians 3: 19

Only after Paul has made clear the essentially gracious and unalterable character of the covenant of God's grace does the apostle move to a consideration of the Law of God. Grace ever has preceded and ever will precede Law in God's dealings with His people. Law never should be considered apart from the prevailing intention, character, and consequence of God's saving grace.

Wednesday, July 7th – Galatians 3: 19

Paul raises the reasonable question as to why God gave His holy Law to the people to whom He had promised salvation. In answer to the question the apostle teaches that the Law did not alter or supersede grace, but rather has served to emphasize grace as the basis for our salvation. The Law came after grace not as a substitute but as an addition, given by God to accent grace. My dear Scottish friend and pastor, William Still, prior to his promotion to glory, aptly represented the Law as a gracious counsel of despair, not as a legal commandment for our keeping. The Law given to sinners exposes sin but can neither confer righteousness nor convey an inheritance. Its purpose is not to stimulate our obedience to God but to drive us to the perfect obedience and blood of Christ graciously shed for our salvation.

Thursday, July 8th – Galatians 3: 19

The good and holy character of the Law is acknowledged by the way Paul says it was delivered to God's people. It was communicated through angels to God's chosen mediator, Moses, who in turn delivered it to Israel. This angelic participation in the delivery of the Law is clearly noted by Moses in Deuteronomy 33:2, and is mentioned also in Hebrews 2:2. And yet, even such glorious angelic messengers and the godly

Moses were inferior instruments of promulgation when compared with God who directly promised salvation to Abraham and with God's Son, the Mediator of the substantial (as opposed to shadowy) administration of salvation. This manner of delivery serves further to emphasize the supremacy of grace over Law.

Friday, July 9th – Galatians 3: 19

The Law was at a later time and in an inferior way added to the promises that God gave to Abraham and his seed. The Law was added neither to be adored nor to be obeyed by the people of God as a means for their salvation. It was added to highlight in God's people the consciousness of their sin and consequent need for God's promised salvation. That salvation was not through the exodus led by Moses, but through the death of Christ, the seed of Abraham.

Saturday, July 10th – Galatians 3: 19

The Law was added to the promises of God *because of transgressions*. This means that the Law of God, in its moral, ceremonial, and civil facets, was given by God for a very specific reason that had to do with the sins of God's people. According to the legalists who were drawing the Galatians away from Christ (Gal. 1:6), the Law's purpose was to perfect God's people as they sought to obey it. According to the genuine gospel that Paul preached, the Law was given by God not to amend or even to diminish the transgressions of His people, but rather to reveal sins and even to excite the sin nature to produce its bitter fruits in actual transgressions. The Law came to increase transgressions and to excite sin so that where sin increased, God's people would not increase but rather cease their efforts to obey the Law and would look, instead, to the Christ who perfectly fulfilled the Law for them (Rom. 5:20,21; 7:7-13).

Sunday, July 11th – Galatians 3: 19

R.C.H. Lenski, in his *Commentary on Galatians*, likens the Law to a stick that hits and awakens a sleeping lion. The stick does not make the lion a beast of prey, nor can it kill or change the beast. It can only agitate and arouse the beast to show its true nature. The purpose of God in giving us His Law was not to command our obedience but to reveal our disobedience and drive us to the grace of God by which alone sinners are transformed into saints, and rebels against God are made into adopted and beloved children of God.

Monday, July 12th – Galatians 3: 19

God gave His Law to point His people to Christ, the one seed of Abraham in whom all of the promises of God would be fulfilled. Therefore, in the economy of God's gracious redemption, the Law serves a provisional purpose in contrast with the permanence of the substance of salvation God promised and provided in and through Christ. As John, the beloved disciple, rightly apprehended through his experience of the love of God demonstrated in the death of Christ, the Law was given through

Moses to point God's people to the saving grace and truth that were realized through Jesus Christ (Jn. 1:17).

Tuesday, July 13th – Galatians 3: 19, 20

The fact that the Law was given to God's people through the mediator, Moses, shows the subsidiary nature of the Law of God to the promise of God. The Law was given indirectly to the people of the Lord, but the promise of salvation was given by God directly to Abraham, and the provision of salvation came directly through the Son of God. The point Paul makes in v.20 is that a mediator commonly is a disinterested third party performing a function on behalf of two negotiating parties. Although Moses was a member of Israel and a sinner who himself needed salvation, in his calling and function as the giver of God's Law, Moses played the part of a third-party mediator. However, with the promised seed, Christ, the Mediator between God and man was in His singular person both very God and fully man. Thus, Christ acted directly from His own divine authority and for His own divine glory when He laid down His life and took it up again (Jn. 10:17,18), and did so out of love and for the good of His people.

Wednesday, July 14th – Galatians 3: 21

In this verse, Paul guards his teaching on the supremacy of grace over the Law against antinomian excess. In his asserting the supremacy of grace and explaining that the Law was additional to and a subsidiary of God's grace, the question arises as to whether the Law might be contrary to the promises of God. The apostle answers strongly that God's Law is not contrary to God's promises according to the way God gave both. The Lord gave His Law after He gave His promises to emphasize the sinner's need for the divine promises, not to replace the promises with demands that the sinner save himself.

Thursday, July 15th – Galatians 3: 21

If the Law had been given by God to replace His gracious promises, then it would have been necessary for the Law to convey enabling power for the people of God to obey it personally, perfectly, and perpetually, for without such power, no man would be saved and the promises of God would have been entirely empty. The Law of God has never contained power to enable sinners to obey it. However, it was not necessary that it have such power because the Law did not replace the promises but strengthened them. It is what the divine promises provide, through Christ, that enable believers to will and to do God's good pleasure (Phil. 2:13).

Friday, July 16th – Galatians 3: 21, 22

Paul has made clear the subsidiary place the Law has in the economy of redemption. It came after the promises and did not alter them but rather added strength to their necessity for sinful people (vv.15-18). The Law also served a

provisionary purpose that has been fulfilled with the coming of Christ (vv.19,20). With vv.21,22, the apostle brings forward the greatest lack in the Law that makes it impossible for the Law to serve as a basis for the salvation of sinners. The Law lacks power to produce life. It cannot reconcile any sinner to God, the fountain of life, nor can it regenerate those who are dead in their trespasses and sins. The Law can only convict and condemn those who are dead in sin. This was its nature, its power, and its intended use by the God who gave it to drive His people away from any proud and foolish notion of their keeping the Law as a basis for their salvation. The Law is divinely designed to show a sinner his death so that he might seek life, not in the Law but in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Saturday, July 17th – Galatians 3: 22

Paul does not say that we rightly understand the Law by dwelling on the Law. Rather, we understand the Law with true precision and edifying grasp as we consider it in its context of the whole counsel of God as revealed in Scripture. The teaching of the whole Word of God locks up all things that pertain to God's people (their thoughts, words, deeds) to sin, with the gracious intention and effect that the covenant people find by faith alone their salvation in the one thing God promised: salvation in Jesus Christ alone.

Sunday, July 18th – Galatians 3: 21, 22

The Law is not contrary to the promises of God, but is instead complementary to the divine promises. The Law describes the character of God and provides the standard of what is righteous in His sight. The Law also convicts and condemns sinners so that they stop assuming that they are right and do right. The Law, especially the ceremonial portion of the Law, also points to Christ. But the Law cannot convert or impart life to a single sinner. For this reason, Scripture contains more than the Law. It contains divine promises, prophecies, and precepts that portray the Person and work of Christ. It is the whole counsel of God that the Holy Spirit uses to bind up sinners in a blessed bondage to Christ, who is the one thing necessary and the singular focus of justifying faith.

Monday, July 19th – Galatians 3: 22

This verse literally says that Scripture has *shut up* all things under sin. The meaning is that all people and all things pertaining to them (thoughts, words, actions) are shown by Scripture to be sinful in God's sight. Among the things Scripture shows to be sinful is a sinner's attempting to justify himself by keeping God's Law. The only ones who are truly justified in the sight of God are those who by faith receive Christ, the supreme promise of God. Scripture makes clear that salvation is the gift of God not to those who behave in accordance with the Law, but to those who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Tuesday, July 20th – Galatians 3: 23-25

In vv.23-25, Paul deals with the relative functions of the Law and of faith. The apostle draws out these relative functions by means of an illustration. There was a time when the Law served a custodial function, acting as a tutor to guide children. When faith came to the children, they arrived at their maturity and were no longer in need of their tutor. In the providence of God, the Law was given to teach the covenant people who lived before the coming of Christ to look for Christ. The true and right perspective for believers to have on the Law is that it never was given by God for His people to obey, but rather it was given to teach them how deeply and unceasingly they disobey God's holy Law, so that they by faith would be led to look for Christ crucified as the object of their faith.

Wednesday, July 21st – Galatians 3: 23

Paul speaks of a critical time before literally *the faith* came. What the apostle means by this reference to the coming of *the faith* may be gathered from what he has previously said in vv.16,17,19. From those verses, we learn that the Law, coming 430 years after Abraham believed God's promises and was thereby justified, served a purpose in relation to the transgressions of God's people until Christ, the seed of Abraham, came. Therefore, when Paul speaks of the coming of *the faith*, he means the coming of Christ, the object of saving faith. Before the coming of Christ, Abraham and all of his spiritual descendants had subjective or personal faith. But their faith was based on the promises and was informed and nurtured through the ceremonial law (that foreshadowed Christ's atoning work) and the moral law (that portrayed the holy character and righteous actions of Christ to come). Once Christ came, and forever thereafter, believers have faith in a Savior no longer promised but provided, and there is no longer a need for the Law to point and prod people to a promised Redeemer.

Thursday, July 22nd – Galatians 3: 22, 23

In these verses, Paul writes of both the Law and the whole Word of God having confined the people of God. The Scripture in general and the Law in particular kept all of God's people, from the time of Moses to the coming of Christ, in custody, guarding them from the conceit that they were not transgressors and keeping them focused on the promised seed to come. The Scripture locked God's people in the prison of conviction and the Law guarded them from escape to anything other than Christ, who was the promised key of their liberation from conviction of sin.

Friday, July 23rd – Galatians 3: 24, 25

All of Scripture, and the Law in particular, shut God's people up to no other hope but Christ. In vv.24,25, Paul adds that the Law was not only a prison guard but also an instructing guide to children. As a pedagogue, the Law served the people of God until they arrived at their maturity. From v.19, as well as from vv.24,25, we learn that the

maturity of the covenant people arrived with the coming of Christ. The Law's purpose was not to train the people of God to obey it, but rather to teach the people to embrace Christ and to correct them when they fixed their hope on anything other than Christ. When Christ came, all of the promises of God were fulfilled in Him, and thus, when the people of God possessed the substance of salvation by faith, they were freed from the tutoring of the Law. This does not mean that Christians are free to sin (Rom. 5:2-6:2), but it does mean that the one who possesses Christ by faith possesses justification in Him and a new life with a new heart that inclines him to love the Lord and to obey His Law as a fruit, not as the root, of that love.

Saturday, July 24th – Galatians 3: 25-27

The Law never was a means of salvation for God's people, but there was a period prior to the coming of Christ when the Law served as an instrument to point people to the Savior. Now that the Savior has come, the Law no longer serves that purpose. Since the time of Christ's coming, the people of God have been freed from their tutor. In vv.26, Paul gives us the first of two reasons why Christians are not under the Law as a tutor. Both reasons have to do with who believers have become in Christ. The first reason Paul gives informs us that all who have faith in the person and work of Christ are children of God (Jn. 1:12,13). As children of God, we are not in the bondage of conviction of sin, guilt, and corruption. We are adopted, beloved members of the Father's household and family, with the Spirit of God bearing witness with our regenerated spirits that we are not criminals but children (Rom. 8:15,16; Gal. 4:6). Nor are we regarded by the Father as sinful children, but rather as those who are perfectly just in His sight. The second reason Paul declares in v.27. We have been baptized in Christ, and therefore have put off our sinful defilement and have donned Christ's person and work. Accordingly, we are accepted by God in His beloved Son, who perfectly fulfilled God's holy Law and whose perfect human righteousness is imputed to us. The Law does not clean us but the blood of the Savior does, so that we who are in Christ are forever regarded by God as those who have never violated His Law.

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Sunday, July 25th – Galatians 3: 26, 27

In v.26, Paul gives the first of two reasons why the people of God are no longer under the Law as a tutor. It has to do with their maturity as grown sons of God. This introduces the theme of the Lord's adoption of His people that will be developed further in Chapter 4. Adoption has to do with the familial dimension of the relationship believers have with God. They are not simply subjects and servants of the King of heaven, but are also beloved children. We who are in that loving relationship with our God need no law to point us to our Father because our faith unites us to His only-begotten Son and His Spirit testifies that we are beloved children

of God (Rom. 8:15,16). The Moral Law still reveals to us the holy character of our Father, but the new hearts we have as children of God fill us with desire while the indwelling Holy Spirit fills us with power to desire and to do the good, right, and loving things that our Father would have us to do, and to become one day as perfect as is our Father in heaven (Matt. 5:48).

Monday, July 26th – Galatians 3: 26, 27

We are sons of God through our faith in God's only-begotten Son (Jn. 1:12,13). What *we have done* as the children of God is to be baptized into Christ and to clothe ourselves in Christ's righteousness. By baptism we are cleansed of our sins, and by our putting on Christ we don His righteousness. By our baptism we are also initiated into the family of God, with the voice of the Father that at the baptism of Jesus declared, *this is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased* (Matt. 4:16,17) resonating in our baptism.

Tuesday, July 27th – Galatians 3: 26-28

Through our faith in Christ we have become the adopted sons of God and have been taken into the family of God. We were clothed in the filthy rags of our own sins and sinful self-righteousness, but when we were brought into the family of God we were cleansed by the blood of Christ shed at His death. We also have been clothed in the righteousness of Christ that He attained through His perfect human life. We who believe in Christ bear the family likeness of Christ, while the natural distinctions that we had prior to our adoption pale into insignificance for all who are in Christ. Whatever different nationalities, races, social and economic classes, ages, and even sexes exist among the members of Christ's Church, all in the Church are one in Christ and are members of the one family of God. As such, each one possesses all that the family of God owns, especially the Father's undivided, infinite, and unchangeable love (Eph. 1:4-6).

Wednesday, July 28th – Galatians 3: 28, 29

All who have faith in Christ find that their natural distinctions from others increasingly fade, while the loving bond with their brethren in Christ grows, deepens, and transcends all of their natural differences. It is not only this fraternal solidarity that we share as believers in Christ. Paul adds in v.29 that saving faith in Christ engrafts believers into the line of the descendants of Abraham. As such, believers share in God's promise to Abraham, that He would be the God of His people, protecting and providing for them, and to be the reward of His people, conferring upon them perfected and perpetual blessedness in holy, loving communion with Him (Jn. 17:20-26), while beautifying and empowering them to reign with Christ in glory (Rev. 21:2-7; 22:1-5).

Thursday, July 29th – Galatians 4: 1-3

With these verses, Paul returns to give further consideration to the time when the people of God were under the Law as a tutor to lead them to Christ. In Galatians 3:23-25, the apostle wrote of the Law serving as their tutor. Now in these opening verses of Chapter 4, Paul considers the matter from the perspective of the covenant people themselves during the era of their spiritual minority. As he did in Galatians 3:15, so here Paul employs an illustration to clarify the point he is about to make regarding the spiritual offspring of Abraham who are heirs according to God's promise. The illustration is that of a child whose father has designated him the heir of his entire estate. Such an heir, throughout his minority, resembles a slave of the father's great estate more than the sole proprietor of it. But when the minor attains his adulthood, all things, including the heir's previous resemblance to a slave, radically change. We do well to judge current provisions in light of ultimate truths that God has revealed to us.

Friday, July 30th – Galatians 4: 1-3

The features of Paul's illustration are as follows: 1) sons who are minors, though they are designated to possess all, can appear for a time like slaves, who possess nothing; 2) such sons are for a time and for good, wise, and necessary reasons, under custodial care and training; and 3) the provision of the inheritance and the time of its being conferred are determined by the goodness, wisdom, and love of the father, not by the deeds or desire of the son. In this arrangement, the arrival of the fullness of time changes all appearances and ends all provisional and promissory facets of the arrangement in favor of the son's possession of the inheritance and, by his training and maturity, a competence effectively to possess it. Although Paul applies this illustration to the corporate maturity of the covenant people at the first coming of Christ, we may draw comforting and sustaining truth from this illustration as it applies to our working out our salvation as we with hope and patiently await the second coming of Christ. Things for us will not always be as they now appear (Rom. 8:18-30).

Saturday, July 31st – Galatians 4: 3-5

In these verses, Paul begins to draw out the spiritual application of the illustration he gave in vv.1,2. When he writes *while we were children*, he means the covenant people of God prior to the coming of Christ. The Old Testament Church was held in bondage under *the elemental things of the world*. These elemental things refer to primary and provisional principals of theology, namely, the Law (cf. v.5, *under the Law*), in particular the ceremonial Law that regulated Israel's religious life through holy days, festival seasons, years of jubilee, and all of the elaborate materials of the ceremonial and animals of sacrificial system (cf. Gal. 4:10). These were provisional gifts from God, employing things of this world of time and a creation subjected to futility to foreshadow Christ and the eternal glory of His kingdom. In the fullness of

time, God sent Christ. Then the spiritual minority of the Church of God ended and its adult enjoyment of the inheritance of God in Christ was begun, though the best remains yet to be.

Sunday, August 1st – Galatians 4: 4, 5

The decisive time at which the Church reached her theological and spiritual maturity was determined by God. It arrived with His having sent His Son into the world. Christ's coming cannot be overemphasized in its monumental character and with respect to the magnitude of its effects. By His coming, the shadows of preparation ceased and the substance of the provision of salvation arrived. All of time and eternity can rightly be understood only in the light and love of this magnificent gift of God and demonstration of His love.

Monday, August 2nd – Galatians 4: 4, 5

God *sent forth* His Son. The verb has the meaning of an act done in a point of time (not a process). The act was one of God sending with an authoritative message (ἐξαπέστειλεν), in this case a message of reconciling peace between God and man accomplished by the perfect life and atoning death of His Son. Of all that God has given to humanity in His creation, and by His sustaining, and governing of the world, nothing remotely approximates the magnitude and significance of this Son whom He has sent into the world.

Tuesday, August 3rd – Galatians 4: 4, 5

What God sent into the world that forever changed the world and the lives of all of His people in it was *His Son, born of a woman*. By these words, Paul reminds us that our Savior was very God of very God (*His Son*) and fully and truly Man (*born of a woman*). This unique God/Man is like no other being. He was sent by God to do a work of unique magnitude, difficulty, and cost. Christ was sent to accomplish what no man could do and what even God Himself could not do, namely, reconcile Himself with a sinful people. For this work, God had to become Man, so that as Man He could live a perfect human life, and by His death pay the penalty for His people's sins. As the God/Man, the infinitude of His divinity provides abundant adequacy for His atoning death and perfect righteousness to cover all of His people in every age of the world's history.

Wednesday, August 4th – Galatians 4: 4, 5

The Son of God was sent by His Father into the world not as a divine sovereign, but as a humble human servant. He who gave the Law as an expression of His morally perfect, holy, and righteous character, came into the world as one born under the Law. During the course of His human life in this world, the Son of God consciously, faithfully, perfectly, and perpetually obeyed every aspect of the Law of God. He humbled Himself infinitely to do this

(Phil 2:4), and although He was the Son of God, He learned in His humanity obedience throughout the afflictive course of His life on earth (Heb. 5:7-9).

Thursday, August 5th – Galatians 4: 4, 5

The way that Christ, the second Adam, was born and lived under the Law of God was far different from the way the first Adam was under the Law. The first Adam was not born but was created by God as an upright adult man living in Paradise, and being tested by a single and simple prohibition from God that forbade him from eating the fruit of a single tree. The second Adam was born an infant in poverty and extreme humiliation. He grew up and lived in a world filled with sinners and groaning under the curse of God. His life was a perpetual stream of suffering, culminating in His voluntarily submitting Himself to hang on the cursed tree of the cross (Phil. 2:8). Although He was personally sinless, the Son of God was born and lived under the Law as the supreme sin-bearer, enduring the full curse and wrath of God that was justly due to all of His people for all of their sins. His time was unique; His person was unique; His work was unique in its infinite and exquisite afflictions and, especially, in the infinite and unchanging love by which the Father sent His Son and the Son came into the world to be the only Man ever to fulfill God's Law.

Friday, August 6th – Galatians 4: 4, 5

The Son of God became the only perfectly righteous Man ever to live. In His divinity He was not under the Law, but was the One who had given the Law. In His humanity, He not only obeyed the Law perfectly, but He also suffered the full measure of divine wrath against all the sins of His people, as though He were the sinner of all sinners (2 Cor. 5:21). He did this to redeem sinners so that they might be received by God as His own beloved adopted sons. It is therefore unnecessary that we put ourselves under the Law that the Son of God has perfectly fulfilled for us, at infinite cost to Himself, and to the perfect satisfaction of the Father. It is also ungrateful of us to spurn this perfect gift of God's loving provision, by our feeble attempts to provide our own righteousness.

Saturday, August 7th – Galatians 4: 5, 6

The redeeming work accomplished by the Son of God did more than deliver us from the guilt, corruption, misery, and all other fearful consequences of our sins. As wonderful and true as such deliverance is it constitutes only the negative dimension of our redemption. The positive dimension is that the divine intention and blessed result of the infinitely costly work of the Son of God has been the adoption of those in Christ as sons of God. In v.3, Paul referred to the people of God as *children*, whereas in vv.5,6 the covenant people are referred to as *sons*. This change of designation indicates the growth of minor children into adults. Our Lord has loved and delighted in His children, but His eternal design and highest delight is His enjoyment of holy,

loving, and perpetual communion with those who are mature and perfected in Christ. (Col. 1:28, 29).

Sunday, August 8th – Galatians 4: 6

This verse reveals to us one of the greatest privileges and sweetest delights of our redemption by Christ. Our adoption changes our status with God from sinners to sons, and opens to us the wonderful world of pleasure that is ours as we grow in loving intimacy with our God. Our Lord does not merely designate us sons, but He transforms us into the holy likeness of His Son. He has done this by sending the Holy Spirit to sanctify us in the truth, to form in us the fruit of His grace (Gal. 5:22,23), and to assure us that we are indeed sons of God with familiar and intimate access to our Father, as indicated by our designating God as *Abba*, our beloved Daddy.

Monday, August 9th – Galatians 4: 7

The manifold and infinitely costly redeeming work that Christ has accomplished, and the blessed effects of that work in the lives of those to whom the Holy Spirit has applied it are not tentative or contingent upon anything—certainly not upon something as imperfect and impossible as our feeble attempts to obey God’s Law. Paul emphasizes the perfection, power, and permanence of God’s saving grace when he tells us that we are infinitely and irrevocably removed from our bondage to our sin and even to the shadows of God’s Law. We are no longer slaves, but we are sons in Christ, and this fact carries with it the marvelous consequence of our being heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ. Our inheritance is God Himself and all that He is and has. It is a glorious inheritance, beyond anything we can imagine and incomparably greater than all of our sufferings (Rom. 8:16-18). This inheritance is ours only and entirely through God’s mercy, and not through our meriting.

Tuesday, August 10th – Galatians 4: 8, 9

Paul has taught that believers during the period prior to the coming of Christ were as children, held in bondage to types and shadows that pointed to Christ (Gal. 3:22,23; 4:1,2). As children, they appeared to be little different from slaves. However, in vv.8,9, Paul reminds the predominately Gentile members of the Galatian churches that prior to their conversion to Christ they had actually been slaves. They had been without Christ and so without hope in the world. They had not known God as He had revealed Himself in Scripture, and therefore they had been slaves to false gods, and, behind them, to Satan and his demons (1 Cor. 10:2). Now they had come to know God, and to know that He had first known them and lovingly predestined them to adoption as His sons through Christ (Eph. 1:4,5). That knowledge was inconsistent with their drift away from Paul, away from the gracious gospel, and away from Christ. Our knowing and loving the truth of God in Christ sets us free. Anything else leads us into bondage.

Wednesday, August 11th – Galatians 4: 8-10

Without knowledge of God, people are enslaved to their sinful passions (Eph. 2:1-3). Believers have knowledge of God and have tasted and seen that He is good and that He liberates them from all that would enslave and degrade them. It may seem incredible that believers could drift from their loving and liberating God, but they can and do. The drift is not always back into vile sin, but can take the form of refined, religious sin. In the case of the Galatians, they were drifting into the rituals of the ceremonial Law (v.10). Those ceremonial rituals were gracious provisions of the Lord in the time of types and shadows, but could only become instruments of spiritual pride and superstitious ignorance if they were preferred over the substance of salvation that had come in Christ.

Thursday, August 12th – Galatians 4: 10, 11

Paul had lovingly labored with the Galatians to lead them to faith in Christ. Their drift from Christ may not have alarmed them, but it did fill the apostle with a dread that he had labored futilely rather than fruitfully with them. The passage Jeremiah 2:9-17 shows why any believer should dread his drift away from Christ.

Friday, August 13th – Galatians 4: 12

Paul may have dreaded that he had labored in vain over the Galatians, but he did not despair over them so as to cease laboring for their good. Therefore, he appeals for them to return to him and to Christ their Savior, and to turn away from the bewitching Judaizers and their legalism. Once again, he urges them as *brethren* whom he loved. His urging is that they would become once again as he remained and as they once had been. He urged them to be Christians, not Gentiles separated from Jews and God by a sense of their need to obey the Law for their acceptance. The apostle begged them to return to an appreciation of and gratitude for the saving grace of God and the perfection of their Savior and His saving work for them. We all do well to be as Paul revealed himself to be in Philippians 3:7-11, in which he treasured Christ as the one thing necessary.

Saturday, August 14th – Galatians 4: 12

In support of Paul's appeal to his wandering brethren to become as he was in his devotion to Christ, the apostle declared that he issued his urging not from any bitter personal anger he had toward them for an offense they had committed against him. Paul assures the Galatians that he speaks the truth in love. Painful words spoken in love that, ... *does not seek its own, is not provoked, does not take into account a wrong suffered...*(1 Cor. 13:5) will prove to be persuasive words, while words spoken from a wounded heart and an angry mouth will only make those hearing them defensive.

Sunday, August 15th – Galatians 4: 12-14

After Paul declares his pure and loving motive, he proceeds to remind the Galatians of how warmly they had received him when he first came to them. We gather from what Paul writes in vv.13,14 that his initial appearance to them was not impressive. He came to them with a bodily illness. Some suggest that Paul, having landed in Perga just after his first missionary labors in Cyprus, hastened from the sea level of Perga to the higher altitude of Pisidian Antioch in Galatia (Acts 13:13ff). Paul possibly suffered from malaria and sought higher altitudes for his healing. If so, he preached at Pisidian Antioch as a weak and fevered man. Such bodily weakness could have tempted the Galatians to reject a supposed salvation offered by a man who himself could not be saved from sickness. However, the Galatians resisted the temptation to reject the gospel that is the power of God unto salvation, simply because the man declaring it was sick. Instead, they welcomed the gospel and the apostle who preached it as an angel and as Christ Himself. Therefore, Paul appeals to them to return to the initial penetrating discernment they had initially shown, and to the joy of their salvation.

Monday, August 16th – Galatians 4: 14

God loves to put the treasure of His Word into earthen vessels—even into broken earthen vessels (2 Cor. 4:7-10). We may be tempted to think that our health and wealth serve to commend our gospel witness. However, whenever a man is hedged about by blessing he can easily and glibly speak well of God (Job 1:9-11). But when a believing soul praises and gratefully serves the Lord within a fiery furnace or dark dungeon, people are more inclined to inquire into the marvel of a bush that burns in but is not consumed by the flames of adversity.

Tuesday, August 17th – Galatians 4: 15

Paul has urged the Galatians to become as he was in his grateful devotion to Christ. In this verse, he encourages them to return to what they had been when they first trusted Christ for their salvation. In their current state, they were neither possessors nor providers of blessing. When they rejoiced in Christ alone and His saving grace, they were loving and generously serving. Even if they had forgotten the blessedness of their sacrificial loving, Paul had not, and he bears witness to what they had lost. When we lose sight of Christ's love for us, we stop enjoying the sweet blessedness of lovingly serving others.

Wednesday, August 18th – Galatians 4: 15

Notice how Paul defines blessedness in terms of believers serving to bring blessing to others. Only in the world of Christ's grace would people regard as blessedness their plucking out their eyes and giving them to another if it would help him. But in that kingdom, when we do serve in love, we find ourselves truly blessed because such serving is the sweet fruit issuing from the root of Christ's having entirely given Himself to save us.

Thursday, August 19th – Galatians 4: 16

The Galatians had not only forsaken their blessedness. They had also changed their disposition toward Paul. They who had once loved the apostle were tempted to regard him as an enemy because he had turned the light of truth lovingly upon their bewitched state and had shown their new legalistic teachers to be accursed. When we grow in the grace and knowledge of Christ, we grow in our love for the truth and in our gratitude for the faithful wounds of our true friends in Christ.

Friday, August 20th – Galatians 4: 17, 18

Not only were the Galatians counting their friends as their enemies, they were also counting the Judaizers, who were enemies of their souls, as friends. Paul, therefore, unmasks the evil motives of these newly found friends. Paul had come to the Galatians to set them free in Christ. The Judaizers had come to enslave them, to shut them out of the blessedness of their salvation, and to addict them to rituals that had no power to save them. These new friends were feeding their own pride by their success at enslaving those who had tasted and known the Lord to be gracious and luring them to forsake Him and to spurn His grace.

Saturday, August 21st – Galatians 4: 17, 18

Paul had sought the Galatians commendably, in order to give to them the gospel of salvation. That salvation the Galatians should have been working out whether Paul were present with them or absent from them because God was at work in them (Phil. 2:12,13). The Judaizers sought the Galatians to drag them into the realm of shadows of the Law wherein they were excluded from the substance of salvation. The Judaizers were parasites, feeding off of the spiritual life God had given to the Galatians through Paul's ministry. They came to the Galatians with vile, not virtuous and loving motives. It is a sobering warning to us to see how believers can be lured from Christ by such exploitative scoundrels.

Sunday, August 22nd – Galatians 4: 18

Paul demands a choice with this verse. With loving motives and in the light of truth he has drawn out the essential difference between his gospel and the earlier fruit in the lives of the Galatians on the one hand, and his opponents, their enslaving error, their misrepresentation of the grace, person and work of Christ, and the loss of blessedness their teaching had brought to the Galatians on the other hand. Now, like Elijah on Mt. Carmel, who told the Jews to serve Baal or the Lord, Paul tells the Galatians to choose him or the Judaizers. When the shadow of a beloved one is all we have, we treasure the shadow as indicating the near approach of the beloved. When the beloved is at hand, we cannot cling to both the shadow and the substance of that one, but must choose one or the other.

Monday, August 23rd – Galatians 4: 19, 20

Although the Galatians had drifted from Paul and had at least been tempted to regard him as their enemy, the apostle could not cease regarding the believers in the churches of Galatia as anything less than his brethren and beloved children in Christ. Paul reveals in these verses the truth of his heart's determination to continue laboring lovingly to restore their faith in Christ and the fruit of true blessing that issues from such faith. He does this through the strong and sobering words he uses in this letter with intention not to drive them away but to grow in loving intimacy with them together in Christ. This is the highest loving intention.

Tuesday, August 24th – Galatians 4: 19, 20

The spiritual drifting of his beloved children from Christ has caused the apostle and their father in the faith great pain and perplexity. However, pain and perplexity cannot and will not stop Paul laboring for the blessing of his beloved spiritual children, because such pain and perplexity cannot extinguish the love the apostle has for those children. Thanks be to God that His love with which He loves His people and that He imparts to them can bear all things (1 Cor. 13:7).

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Wednesday, August 25th – Galatians 4: 21

With the question he poses in v.21, Paul continues his loving labors with his spiritual children by his considering their perplexing plight from yet another perspective. Thus far, the apostle has dealt with the covenant of grace God made with Abraham (Gal. 3:15-18), with the place and divine purpose of the Law (Gal. 3:19-22), with the coming of faith and the regeneration of believers as sons of God who had been baptized into Christ (Gal. 3:23-29), with adoption and believers' maturing from children, who in certain aspects resembled slaves, into sons who had entered into their inheritance (Gal. 4:1-7). He has spoken to the Galatians as ones who had come to know and be known by God (Gal. 4:8-11), as brethren who had become estranged from him (Gal. 4:12-18), and as his beloved children with whom he continued to labor until Christ was formed in them (Gal. 4:19,20). Now the apostle poses a question that cuts to the motivation and understanding of the Galatians. Their motivation and hence the personal responsibility they bore for their plight was that they wanted to be *under* law more than *in* Christ or to have Christ formed *in* them. Paul questions whether they have understood the full implications of their wanting to be under law. By the very nature of God's Law, one can be under it or in Christ. We live either in union with Christ and depend upon His righteousness alone, or in an endeavor to establish our own righteousness under God's Law. We cannot do both.

Thursday, August 26th – Galatians 4: 21-23

Paul uses the term *law* in two senses in v.21. First he speaks of the Galatians

wanting to be under *law*, then he inquires into whether they listen to *the Law*. When he speaks of the Galatians wanting to be under *law* (without a definite article), he refers to their motive to obey external regulations as slaves obey their masters, usually with mere outward conformity and only when their masters are watching (Eph. 6:5,6). But when Paul speaks of *the Law* (using the definite article), he refers to the Law of God as contained in Scripture. When he refers to the Law of God he does not intend only the ceremonial law, but rather the entire Pentateuch of Moses, including the Moral Law as well as the covenant of grace, both of which were given to God's people before Moses gave them the Law from Mt. Sinai. The illustration Paul begins to draw in vv.22,23 comes from a time and place in history that preceded the giving of the Moral or ceremonial law. His scriptural illustration deals not with principles of law but with people in conditions of slavery and freedom. The point the apostle will develop from this illustration has to do with the radical difference between slavery and freedom that result from differing orders of being as represented in the two sons of Abraham. Legalists may claim relation to Abraham, but their spiritual bondage to attempted self-righteousness indicates their affinity with the son born of the bondswoman. Our freedom in Christ from the Law's demands and condemnation indicates our affinity with the son born of the free woman.

Friday, August 27th – Galatians 4: 21-23

There is law and there is the Law. There is the law, or governing principle and dominating power, of sin and death (Rom. 7:21-8:2). Men naturally attempt to distract themselves from this law by their trying to cover their shame and guilt with the rags of self-righteousness. That is the pattern and law we inherited from Adam. But there is also the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus (Rom. 8:2). That is the law and it is the only law that the Law of God from beginning (Gen. 3:15) to end (Rev. 21:7; 22:1-5) commends and conveys to us.

Saturday, August 28th – Galatians 4: 22, 23

Paul has in this letter previously considered Abraham as the father of faith and the recipient of the covenant of grace and the promises of God (Gal. 3:6,7,15-18). Now he considers the two primary descendants of Abraham, specifically in their origins and resulting conditions of life. He does this in order clearly to distinguish between those who want to be under the slavery of law-keeping from those who rejoice in the freedom of their sonship through Christ. One of the surest ways we can tell whether we are standing in the truth of God is by our considering whether or not we are truly free (Jn. 8:32).

Sunday, August 29th – Galatians 4: 22, 23

The critical differences between the two sons of Abraham were their mothers and the principles that led to their conceptions. The mother of the first-born son of Abraham was a slave. The principle that led to her conception of Ishmael was

Abraham's failure of faith and reliance upon his own carnal thinking and acting. The mother of Abraham's younger son was a free woman, and the principle that led to her conception of Isaac was Abraham's faith in the promise of God (Rom. 4:18-21). Therefore, these two women and their two sons are fitting representatives of those who are slaves under the law of sin and death, and those who rejoice in the freedom and life and love of God in Christ. Ishmael represents the fruit of faith plus works of the flesh, since Abraham understood and accepted God's promise of a son, but then tried to produce that son through his own carnal reasoning and working. Isaac represents the fruit of faith in God alone.

Monday, August 30th – Galatians 4: 24, 25

The apostle here teaches us that the historical characters in Abraham's household portray in their persons and actions significant matters beyond themselves. The providence of God ordained and governed these persons and their actions, sinlessly using even their sin, as well as their faith, to express facets of salvation that the apostle draws out for us in these verses. There are more significant things contained in the lives of the Lord's people than those people (or we) could realize apart from the divinely inspired interpretation of God's Word.

Tuesday, August 31st – Galatians 4: 24, 25

Paul reveals to us that the two mothers of Abraham's two sons represent two covenants or contracts whereby men might seek their justification before God. By the one covenant, people perceive God's Moral Law given through Moses at Mount Sinai, and endeavor to justify themselves through their own obedience to that Law. Such a covenant proves invariably to be a mother bearing children who are slaves, not legitimate sons and heirs. Ishmael was a slave, because his mother Hagar was a slave. Like ever begets like, and those who want to be under the Law—even the Law of God—are bound ever to be and to breed slaves, not to God but to the dominion, guilt, corruption, and misery of their own sin.

Wednesday, September 1st – Galatians 4: 24, 25

In v.25, Paul draws out the contemporary application of the slavish half of this allegory. He teaches us that Hagar, the slave and mother of slaves, represents Mount Sinai, which is south of the Promised Land in the Arabian Desert. Hagar, when she was by God's directive cast out of Abraham's house, settled in the desert of Beersheba (Gen. 21:14) while Ishmael went even further from the Promised Land, settling in Paran on the Sinai Peninsula (Gen. 21:21). It was in that region of the Arabian Desert that God revealed His Law to Moses, and thereby identified His Law with the slave woman and her slave son rather than with the milk, honey, and freedom His sons would enjoy in the Promised Land. As God never gave His promise of a son to Abraham to prompt the patriarch to produce that son by his own carnal devices, so

God never gave His holy Law to His people, to prompt them to justify themselves by their obedience to that Law.

Thursday, September 2nd – Galatians 4: 24, 25

Paul goes on in v.25 to associate Mount Sinai in Arabia with the Jerusalem of his day. In his doing this, he judges by the bitter fruit of their bondage the capital city representing the Jewish nation, with the vast majority of the Jews persisting in their rejection of the Messiah. Furthermore, the state of Jerusalem had changed over the centuries from what it had been in the days of David and Solomon. God had given His Law at Sinai not to keep His people at Sinai but to give them a tutor to point them to Christ in the Promised Land to which Moses was leading them. Despite this divine intention, Jews throughout Israel's history got stuck in carnal law-keeping as though they dwelt at Mt. Sinai. They were slaves and lived with those true believers, such as David and Solomon, who looked to the coming Savior for their justification. Such believers were sons who only resembled slaves during the period of their spiritual minority that preceded the coming of Christ (Gal. 4:1-5). At the coming of Christ, it was revealed that only a remnant of the Jews were looking by faith for the Savior, while the vast majority were committed to self-righteousness. The Judaizers were leading the Galatians out of their liberty and into the bondage of slavery by their distorting the Law of God beyond the intention of the God of the Law.

Friday, September 3rd – Galatians 4: 24, 25

John Calvin remarks on these verses: *As in the house of Abraham there were two mothers, so are there also in the Church of God. Doctrine is the mother by whom God begets us (cf. Rom. 10:14,15). It is twofold, legal and evangelical. The legal bears children to bondage...(Commentary on Galatians pp.85,86).* God's Word can be taught and/or perceived in such a way that some hearers of the teaching can conclude that salvation results from faith in Christ and their own works of the Law. The result is duty not delight, slavery not sonship; the motivation is guilt not gratitude, and the focus is law not grace.

Saturday, September 4th – Galatians 4: 25

Our choices form our character. Over the centuries, the Jews chose to save themselves by their works of the Law, rather than to be convicted by the Law and pointed to Christ. Those choices confirmed them in the character not of sons of God but rather of slaves. They boasted that they were Abraham's sons, that they were circumcised, that they had God's Law, and that they revered Moses, while failing to recall that Moses wrote of Christ (Jn. 5:46,47), pre-figured Christ (Dt. 18:15,18), and that the Law pointed to Christ's holy character and righteous actions. Ishmael was circumcised and yet remained a slave. By our choices, we grow in the glorious freedom of the sons of God, or sinking deeper into slavery.

Sunday, September 5th – Galatians 4: 25-27

Because the majority of Jews at the coming of Christ rejected the Savior whom God had for centuries promised in His Law and through His prophets, they showed themselves to be neither free children of God nor of Abraham but rather spiritual, if not physical, descendants of Hagar and Ishmael. Therefore Paul connects them, due to their bondage to the Law, to the fruitless desert of Arabia and the slavery of Hagar. But although the majority of the Jews, as represented by their capital city of Jerusalem, rejected their own Messiah (Jn. 1:11) and remained in the bondage of their sin and guilt, God had His true children in the remnant of the faithful Jews, such as Paul, and in the gathering into the Church of many Gentiles. This redeemed company received their new life and corporate constitution from the saving grace of the God of heaven. They were (and are) citizens of heaven and bound for heaven as their glorious inheritance. Paul refers to them as being born from the *Jerusalem above*, and characterizes them as being free. Read about this fruitful mother in Isaiah 54:1-8 (from which Paul quotes in v.27), and about her glorious character in Revelation 21:1-22:5.

Monday, September 6th – Galatians 4: 25-27

The literal city of Jerusalem, and the nation of which she was the capital city, failed to live up to her name. The name, *Jerusalem*, means *city of peace*. That peace refers to sinners' reconciliation to God in Christ. It came from God's gracious promises, as typified by literal Jerusalem being in the Promised Land, and not from the sinners trying to keep the Law, that was received in the Arabian Desert. Jesus wept over the Jerusalem of the legalistic Jews (Mt. 23:37,38), and by 70 A.D. the city and the Jewish nation ceased to be. Meanwhile, through the apostolic propagation of the gospel, believing Jews and Gentiles were becoming living stones in the spiritual commonwealth of the Church on earth that grows and serves by grace and enjoys peace with God through faith (Eph. 2:19-22). The fullest realization of this spiritual Jerusalem will be in heaven's glory, where even now her members have their citizenship (Phil. 3:20,21).

Tuesday, September 7th – Galatians 4: 26, 27

The Jerusalem above is the city of peace made by the saving grace of the God of heaven. It is not the result of proud sinners seeking to keep the Law of God here on earth. It is by God's grace, not by man's attempts to keep God's Law, that believers are born and nurtured by the love of the Lord and His people in the Church, the heavenly Jerusalem. Paul implies here that the Galatians had ungratefully turned from the love and nurture of the Church of Christ, their true mother, and from brethren such as the apostle, and from the freedom they had in the love of the Lord and His people, to submit themselves to a bondswoman and the inevitable bondage that comes from her.

**Wednesday, September 8th – Galatians 4: 26,
27**

The citation of Isaiah 54:1 in v.27 alludes to the historical relationship between Hagar and Sarah. They were the two mothers of Abraham's two sons. Hagar, for a time, rejoiced in her son, the fruit of her union with Abraham, whom the patriarch treated as his only begotten son. Ishmael, for a time, was practically the sole heir of Abraham. Sarah, for a time, was practically deserted by her husband, who devoted himself to Hagar's son. Yet, while Hagar seemed superior for a season, it was Sarah, the freewoman, who by the promise and power of God bore Isaac, the true son of promise and sole heir of Abraham. Since Isaac was the son of Abraham's faith and possessed the faith of his father, he and his spiritual descendants have prevailed in every way over Ishmael. Law-keeping may appear a more immediate way of salvation, but it is only those who rely upon the promise and provision of God who prevail over all things, even the just wrath of the Lord.

Thursday, September 9th – Galatians 4: 26-28

Members of the Jerusalem from above are not only citizens of heaven, but they also are beloved members of the family of God. All who are in Christ have God as their father and the Church as their mother (v.26). They also are loving brethren (v.28). On the other hand, slaves have no relation to anyone except other slaves. The more one endeavors to keep the Law as the basis for his standing before God, the more alienated he becomes from God and His beloved children. Such a slave to Law neither perceives God's love nor loves the Lord, but only resents Him as an imposing master.

Friday, September 10th – Galatians 4: 28, 29

Believers are, like Isaac, children of promise and beloved members of the family of God. However, their blessedness in the family of the Lord arouses foes against them. As Ishmael mocked Isaac (Gen. 21:9) with a spirit that, in due course, would have matured from childish mocking to deadly persecution, so those who are in the bondage of their slavery to the demands of Law resent and persecute the beloved sons of promise who revel in the liberty of divine love. However religious those bound to the Law may appear, they are of the flesh, as Ishmael was the product not of Abraham's faith, but rather of his carnal reasoning. Those who are of the flesh invariably set their minds on the things of the flesh (Rom. 8:5) and persecute those who are of the Spirit of God because they resent the life and love and peace that the children of God's grace enjoy (Rom. 8:6).

Saturday, September 11th – Galatians 4: 30

In this verse, Paul speaks of the way God would have His children deal with their persecuting foes. Those foes are to be radically rejected along with the slavish works righteousness that spawned them. Paul draws this way of dealing with legalists from

Scripture to which the Galatians, who wanted to be under law, were not listening (v.21). The only right way to understand what the Law of God truly directs us to do is not by our listening to legalists but rather by our hearing and heeding the whole counsel of God as contained in Scripture.

Sunday, September 12th – Galatians 4: 30

Paul takes this verse from Genesis 21:8-12. The words were spoken by Sarah and they initially distressed Abraham. No doubt, Sarah's words seemed harsh and extreme to the patriarch. However, God owned those words as His words in Genesis 21:12, and told Abraham to obey them, for the issue was not one of domestic toleration but of Ishmael's threatening the inheritance of God's promise and provision of salvation. The Word of God throughout calls for believers to separate not only from their sins but also from legal demands and legalistic demanders and to cleave to the saving grace of God in Christ alone.

Monday, September 13th – Galatians 4: 30

Even if a slavish legalist could share or possess entirely the inheritance of God's grace and the infinite treasures of His love, he would regard grace as a curse and the love of God as a vast burden of demands. In this, the legalist is like the one talent man in the parable, who regarded his master as hard and rapacious (Mt. 25:24-30). God Himself will in the final day drive such legalists into the outer darkness of perdition.

Tuesday, September 14th – Galatians 4: 31

Yet again, the apostle corrects his wayward readers with words of truth, love, and appealing comfort. The truth from which the Galatians had been diverted was that they were not children of the bondwoman, they were not products of the Law, but they were children of the liberating grace and promise of God. They were also brethren bound together with each other and with Paul as brethren in the family of God and their nourishment was the truth and love of the Lord. There is nothing loving or liberating in one's endeavor to keep the Law but there is everything loving and liberating in one's accepting God's grace in Christ.

Wednesday, September 15th – Galatians 4: 4: 31

With v. 31, Paul sums up his current appeal to the Galatians. That appeal began in Galatians 4:26 and concludes with the reiterated indicative of who and what believers are. Negatively, they are not products of their own keeping of God's Law. Positively, they are children regenerated by God's loving grace (Eph. 1:4,5), and not slaves in bondage to God's Law.

Thursday, September 16th – Galatians 4: 31 - 5:1

If believers are the children of God's freely bestowed love, it follows that the Lord's purpose in adopting them as His children is to free them from their natural bondage to

their sin and guilty shame in consequence of their violation of God's Law, and to free them from their dread of the just God whose Law they have violated. Christ bore all the penalty of our sin and freed us from our manifold bondage. He did so to lift us into the glorious freedom of His love (Jn. 17:22-26).

Friday, September 17th – Galatians 4: 4: 31 - 5:1

If we who are in Christ are children of the free woman, and if it was the intention of God to set us free and the result of Christ's redeeming work to set us free, then we live counter to our new natures and divinely appointed destinies if we live in subjection to a yoke of slavery. In essence, the way we are designed and directed and empowered to live in Christ is not by our being motivated by a fearful or duteous attitude of trying to do what is right. Instead, we are to live in loving gratitude to the God who has first loved us and in loving service to others, knowing that even our failures to love God and man perfectly will be perceived and dealt with lovingly by our God and not rigorously by His justice alone.

Saturday, September 18th – Galatians 4: 5: 1

There is a categorical difference between our being under the Law (Gal. 4:21) and our being in Christ (Gal. 3:27-29). Therefore, to the blessed indicative statement that it was for freedom that Christ set us free, Paul adds the imperative that we should positively stand in that freedom and negatively refuse to be subject to a yoke of bondage. Christ has set us free, not to ensnare us in a maze of legal, unfulfilled, and unfulfillable demands. The gospel is about supply, not demands. It tells of God's perfect supply of His saving grace prompted by His holy love. It is an absolute necessity and delightful privilege that we should stand in such grace and love.

Sunday, September 19th – Galatians 4: 5: 2

The Galatians had been drawn out of their standing in the freedom of God's grace and love. They had fallen into the legalistic alternative to grace. Hence, Paul begins in this verse to unfold the serious and bitter consequences of legalism. He puts the matter starkly when he says that if the Galatians were to submit to receive circumcision, Christ would be of no benefit to them. What could possibly be so wrong with circumcision that it would nullify the great and precious benefits of Christ? Great losses can be suffered by those who take seemingly small yet faithless steps.

Monday, September 20th – Galatians 5: 2

Why is Paul so insistently against circumcision? Does it touch the vitals of the faith? Did not God Himself give it to His people? The Lord did give it to His people as a sign and seal of the covenant of grace (Gen. 17:10,11). But its nature was essentially promissory and provisional. It pointed to Christ who, from the vantage point of the Old Testament saints, was yet to come. The fact that Christ has come and

has accomplished redemption renders the shadows of the ceremonial law to be not only unnecessary but also impediments to our drawing benefit from Christ. We may *study* the shadowy portions of God's Word with profit but we *submit* to those shadows in practice at painful cost.

Tuesday, September 21st – Galatians 5: 2, 3

Any insistence that circumcision was still obligatory for the Galatians and any degree of concession to such insistence was a virtual declaration that Christ was not enough to save sinners. It was a declaration that God's supply was insufficient to fulfill divine demand. Man would then be obliged to make up for the lack. Against such practical assertions, Paul argues that if Christ is not everything then He is nothing. Christ claimed to be everything—the one thing necessary—and He declared the perfection and completion of His justifying work with His words from the cross: *It is finished*. If Christ is not of all benefit to us, He is of no benefit (v.2); if Christ is not our perfect righteousness, then we are obliged to accomplish our own righteousness (v.3).

Wednesday, September 22nd – Galatians 5: 2, 3

Paul bases the grim consequences listed in these verses on a condition that was at the time of his writing potential, not actual. *If* the Galatians were to receive circumcision, then the consequences would follow. However, even then the apostle's words, strong as they are, speak of what would be an inconsistency between profession and performance rather than an actual set of consequences. The sense is as though Paul were saying: *If you receive circumcision, You would be living as though Christ were of no benefit and as though you were under obligation to fulfill the Law*. The apostle is not so much threatening his beloved brethren as he is teaching them and appealing to them to live in blessed consistency with their faith in Christ.

Thursday, September 23rd – Galatians 5: 4

We are either united to Christ or severed from Him. We are either justified in the Lord or with feeble futility trying to justify ourselves. We are either standing by God's grace or lying prostrated with guilt under His convicting Law. If we are in Christ, we have all of His benefits by God's grace. If we are in Christ but shift our reliance from Him alone to any other thing, even be that thing as good as God's holy Law, we live inconsistently with our profession and deprive ourselves of the blessed benefits of Christ while spurning the wonderful grace of God. It is a shame and disgrace that we who have Christ should ever live as though we do not possess Him and in Him every spiritual blessing.

Friday, September 24th – Galatians 5: 2-4

Paul emphasizes in v.2, that it is he, the spiritual father of these Galatians and the apostle of Christ, who states the stark realities of the conditions and consequences

contained in these verses. In v.3, he solemnly testifies to the truth of what he writes, and he maintains the applicability of that truth to every soul who professes Christ in every age of the Church. In v.4, he states the matter most strongly. If any of us would have ourselves justified by our works of the Law, it could only indicate that we have severed ourselves from Christ, by whom alone we stand in glorious freedom (v.1), and that we have fallen from God's grace by which we are united to Christ and stand in Him. These strong truths are written not so that we might speculate over whether we can lose our salvation, but rather so that we might examine ourselves to see if we are in the faith (2 Cor. 13:5). If our examination reveals that we are polluting our faith with reliance on anything but Christ, we should treat the polluting thing as the deadly poison that it is and run the race that is set before us, fixing our aim on Jesus alone (Heb. 12:1,2).

September 2010

Saturday, September 25th – Galatians 5: 5, 6

In strong and sobering words, Paul has admonished and appealed to the Galatians to stand in the freedom they have received in Christ and to resist any urging that they pollute their faith by relying on anything other than Christ alone. Now in vv.5,6, the apostle states in clear and positive terms the true character and essence of the Christian life. Believers live not by their futile efforts to fulfill God's Law, but through the energizing and comforting Spirit of God who indwells them and writes God's Law on their hearts, so that with sincere and inward delight they desire to will and to do God's holy pleasure (Phil. 2:12,13). Those who not only *act* but truly *are* of God's Holy Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit, and consequently enjoy life and peace through the Christ whom the Spirit glorifies (Jn. 16:14; Rom. 8:5,6).

Sunday, September 26th – Galatians 5: 5: 5, 6

Believers live through the enlightening and empowering agency of God's Holy Spirit. The sole instrument that the Spirit gives to the redeemed to apprehend God through Christ is faith. It is by faith alone in the perfect person and work of Christ that God's people are accounted righteous by God. Their faith justifies them in God's sight because by it they renounce the filthy rags not only of their vilest sins but also of their refined sins of imperfect and impure attempts to obey God's Law. By their faith they also receive and rest in the perfect righteousness of Christ imputed by God to them.

Monday, September 27th – Galatians 5: 5, 6

Believers are not workers of their own righteousness but are instead those who *are waiting for the hope of righteousness*. By this, Paul means that those in Christ currently possess Christ's righteousness that has been *imputed* to them, and through the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit they are progressively having that

righteousness *imparted* to them. Throughout the process of sanctification they live in sure and certain hope that what God began in them with imputation will be in glory completed when they are personally, perfectly, and perpetually confirmed in righteousness.

Tuesday, September 28th – Galatians 5: 5, 6

Paul graciously and lovingly includes the currently erring Galatians with himself in the company of those who through the Spirit, by faith, are waiting for the hope of righteousness. The apostle does not distance himself from the Galatians by writing that *he* lived through the Spirit by faith. He instead writes inclusively, saying that *we* so live together through the Spirit by faith. The faults and failures of the Galatians certainly grieved the apostle but his grief was not without a persevering love that would not let his children in the faith go, but instead labored to recall them to their true selves in Christ.

Wednesday, September 29th – Galatians 5: 6

In v.6, Paul reiterates that the reason circumcision had been rendered insignificant was that it was but a shadow that pointed to Christ, the substance of salvation. Circumcision could add nothing to Christ, but if any insisted on its necessity, they were perverting circumcision and obscuring the perfection of Christ and the sufficiency of His saving work. Christ is the one thing necessary, not circumcision or any other provisional feature of the Law.

Thursday, September 30th – Galatians 5: 6

In comparison with Christ, the substance of salvation, the symbols and tokens that foreshadowed His coming are nothing. Christ, the glorious substance of our salvation, is not applied to us by physical rites. We by faith in the Savior, not in the signs that point to Him, are vitally and intimately united to Him. The fruit of such holy and intimate communion is love, not mere feeble attempts at legal obedience. Faith works in us to open the eyes of our hearts to apprehend God's saving love in Christ for us. Faith roots and grounds us in His saving love (Eph. 3:17,18), and because we know that we are loved by God in Christ, we love our brethren (Jn. 4:7-21). No mere religious rite can begin to compare with the reality and sweet satisfaction of such love.

Friday, October 1st – Galatians 5: 6

The prepositions in Scripture are very significant. In this verse, Paul speaks of those *in* Christ. Previously, he spoke of those wanting to be *under* the law (Gal. 4:21). The preposition, *in*, conveys the notion of vital intimacy with the living and loving Son of God who was anointed by God to accomplish our salvation. The preposition, *under*, expresses a compelled subjection to a dominating master. In the former case, we delight in holy and loving familiarity with the living and loving God; in the latter case, we dwell in the realm of dutiful performance under a dominating

set of regulations. In the former, faith works through love, while in the latter fear drives us vainly to attempt legal obedience.

Saturday, October 2nd – Galatians 5: 7, 8

In vv. 7-12, Paul turns from the Galatians to those who had bewitched them. He appears to single out one leading character in vv.7,9,10, but then in v.12 he consigns all who cooperated with that character to a punishment they well deserved because of their having troubled the Galatians who were beloved spiritual children of Paul's and blood-bought, adopted children of God. From Paul's example we learn how faithful and loving pastors should correct wandering sheep of the flock while condemning the wolves who might attack the flock under their care.

Sunday, October 3rd – Galatians 5: 7, 8

Paul commends the Galatians for their initial faithfulness to Christ and progress in the faith. However, as has been made very clear from this letter, the Galatians had come to need correction more than commendation. What had changed? Christ had not become less desirable and necessary for their salvation, nor had they, of their own accord, deserted Him. An enemy had come upon them and drawn them from their first love. Part of our loving God with all of our hearts is our maintaining a vigilant watch against devils and wicked men. It is the God whom we love who exposes Satan's wiles and tells us to resist him firm in our faith (1 Pet. 5:8,9).

Monday, October 4th – Galatians 5: 8

Paul reminds the Galatians that their recently adopted legalism did not come to them from the God who had called them from death to life, from guilt to justification, from bondage to liberty, and from misery to joy. The better we know the whole counsel of God contained in Scripture the better we know the one true and living God and His Son, Jesus Christ. The better we know God in Christ, the more readily and accurately we can test the spirits to know if they are from God and to reject them if they are not.

Tuesday, October 5th – Galatians 5: 9, 10

From the language Paul uses in vv.7-10, we learn that the Galatians had not been infiltrated and plagued by a host of heretics, but instead that their enemies were few but deadly. The image of leaven in miniscule quantity affecting a whole batch of dough reminds us of the way that a small but determined minority can sway a large group. In fact, Paul's language is even more pointed. The pronoun, *who*, in v.7 is singular, and in v.10 Paul refers to *the one* who had been disturbing the Galatians. As God often uses a single man of His choosing blessedly to guide, protect, and provide for His people (think of Joseph, Moses, David, etc.), so Satan can ape our Lord by using a single dupe of his choosing to work his cursed designs upon the Lord's people. Think of Haman and Herod. Although we need not fear great hosts of the

wicked arrayed against us (Ps. 27:3), neither should we ignore a singular adversary who defies our God and His truth and deceives His people.

Wednesday, October 6th – Galatians 5: 10

In this verse, Paul makes a critical distinction between the Galatians and the one who was disturbing them. The apostle's children in the faith were vitally *in the Lord*. Paul was therefore confident that He who had begun a good work in them would bring it to completion at the day of Christ's glorious perfecting of His people (Phil. 1:6). At the same time, Paul was confident that the one disturbing his brethren in the Lord would bear just judgment from Christ on the day when the wicked will be cast into the lake of fire prepared for the devil and his angels (Mt. 25:41). We, too, can be confident that all that is of Christ in us and all who are in the Lord in the Church will stand in the final day, while all else will be burned away from the beloved Bride of Christ (1 Cor. 3:10-15).

Thursday, October 7th – Galatians 5: 11

At this point, Paul interjects a note regarding how adamantly he himself had determined to press on from the shadows of circumcision to the substance of Christ. The apostle had been and continued to be persecuted by the Jews because of his insistence that the shedding of Christ's blood on the cross terminated the need for God's people, as represented by the sons of Israel, to shed their own blood in the rite of circumcision that pointed to the reality of the Lord's atoning sacrifice. The sinfulness of sin is such that sinners who refuse God's saving provision of salvation not only decline the divine offer but also seek to destroy anyone declaring that offer.

Friday, October 8th – Galatians 5:

12

In v.10, Paul wrote of a single satanic anti-apostle who was anti-Christ and anti-Christian. Here in v.12, we learn that this individual had influenced others and engaged them in his nefarious disturbance of the peace and purity of the believers in Galatia. This ringleader wielded a sword containing a cutting edge of error that was honed to the fine sharpness of the single issue of circumcision. But behind that sharp edge was the bulk of a blade, consisting of a number of people caught in a world of error and bondage that they were seeking to foist upon those who stood in the liberty of Christ. The apostle expresses his holy hatred for this company of evildoers, and further expresses his imprecatory desire that they would fall on their own sword that they had been wielding for the disturbance of the Body of Christ. With this expression, Paul reveals the essential truth that circumcision after the cross was no longer a meaningful sacrament but a meaningless mutilation.

Saturday, October 9th – Galatians 5: 13

A new section of this letter begins with this verse. From v.13 onward, Paul contrasts the radically different fruits that issue from the roots of legalism and grace. The apostle reminds his brethren in Christ that they had been effectually called by God from death to life and that their new life in Christ was one of freedom. Here he is not vainly repeating what he had written in v.1, but he is more fully defining the character of the liberty that believers in Christ have. We who are in Christ have been freed from the demands of the Law and especially from the penalty of our having violated the holy Law of God in countless ways. But our freedom is not absolute, allowing us to do anything, including our sinning against God and man. We were set free from the Law of God by the love of God, and it follows from this that we have freedom not to indulge ourselves but rather to embrace others in loving service that we render to them. The legalist remains self-absorbed while the children of God's saving grace are set free by God's love to turn their energies and attentions lovingly to others.

Sunday, October 10th – Galatians 5: 13, 14

All that means anything in the Christian life is faith working through love (Gal. 5:6). Nothing else we do, however formally correct it might be, is acceptable to God or edifying to man unless it issues from faith working through love. The legalist who tries and fails to keep the whole Law (Gal. 5:3) is motivated by duteous self-regard. The believer, who by his faith is united to Christ, serves God and man lovingly and from a sincere and grateful heart upon which the Law of God is written. With increasing naturalness (of the new nature) the believer fulfills the whole Law when he loves the Lord and his neighbor, not when he focuses upon the Law and seeks in his own strength to fulfill it.

Monday, October 11th – Galatians 5: 13, 14

The freedom to which God has called us in Christ is paradoxically a liberation into the most complete bondage. We are called, directed, and empowered by God to serve one another in the body of Christ. The Greek literally says that we are to *serve as slaves* to our brethren in Christ. What makes such bondage sweetly blessed is that the love of Christ forming within us as part of the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22) prompts us voluntarily to enslave ourselves to our brethren. Accordingly, we are not bound by external law but we bind ourselves to our brethren with a delightful affection that is sweeter than honey and stronger than death. No law could accomplish such an enduring and blessedly binding tie.

Tuesday, October 12th – Galatians 5: 13, 14

The essence of the Law of God is love. The Moral Law commands us to love God entirely and to love our neighbor as ourselves. The ceremonial law betokens the loving salvation of the Lord, while the civil laws of Israel present the equity and order that love brings to the civil realm. Those who aim at the particulars of Law and seek

duteously to obey them fail to fulfill those particulars and so violate the whole Law (Jas. 2:10,11). Those who have by faith accepted the love of God in Christ possess divine love within them—the very essence of God’s holy Law. Therefore they, by their loving of God and man, fulfill the whole Law in its essence and in all of its particulars. Even the imperfections of their love are covered by Christ’s perfect righteousness lovingly conveyed to them by the Lord and received by them through faith.

Wednesday, October 13th – Galatians 5: 15

In this verse, Paul writes of the alternative to the sweet fruit of believers working out their faith in love. Whereas the fruit of faith lovingly builds up others, the bitter result of duteous Law-keeping is a tearing down of others. This occurs because all who are fixed upon anything other than the grace of God in Christ concentrate their censorious attention upon the speck in others’ eyes rather than upon the log in their own eyes. Those fixed upon Law find themselves to be condemned and they become increasingly condemning of others. Those who love graciously help others in need, and minister such merciful help from the fountain of Christ’s grace from which they drink. Those fixed on Law are oriented toward severe demands from which they divert themselves by their demanding and condemning concentration upon the moral failures of others.

Thursday, October 14th – Galatians 5: 13-15

The sweet fruit in the lives of those who have been called by God’s grace and freed from the Law’s demands is that they lovingly serve and blessedly build up others. The bitter fruit in the lives of those who refuse or neglect God’s grace is that they do not lovingly build up others but rather, like beasts of prey they bite others and often use God’s holy Law as the tool of their destructive trade. It should be easy for us to perceive and practice the godly way of dealing with people, and to recognize and refuse the way of dealing with others that is of the devil who ever seeks to devour others.

Friday, October 15th – Galatians 5: 16-18

The apostle has informed his readers that those in Christ are freed from embittering legalism (Gal. 5:1), but that they are also freed from presumptuous license (Gal. 5:13). How is our freedom from these sinfully perverted extremes achieved and maintained? Paul answers in these verses, telling us that it is by the work of the Holy Spirit and our walking according to His working that we avoid sinful extremes. The Holy Spirit alone guides the believer into the truth that sets and keeps him free (Jn. 8:32; 16:13-14), while the spirit of the regenerated believer loves the truth and its power to free him from all except his delightful devotion to love the Lord and to love his neighbor.

Saturday, October 16th – Galatians 5: 16

Paul commends to his readers a continued walk by (or in) the Spirit by which they would not carry out the desire of the flesh. Some question whether the apostle here refers to the believer's walking according to the holy and loving desires of his new nature in opposition to the remnants of his old sinful flesh, or whether Paul is telling his readers to walk by the enabling agency of God's Holy Spirit. Our understanding of this question is greatly helped by a careful reading of Romans 8:1-17. From that passage we learn that the Christian pilgrimage consists of both the objective guidance of God's Holy Spirit and the believer's subjective submission to and delight in the leading of the Spirit (cf. especially Rom. 8:16). Salvation reconciles us to God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit so that we grow in our constant dependence upon and communion with the Father, through the Son, and by the Holy Spirit. Salvation also regenerates our sinful souls, so that we have died to sin and live unto God in sincere and loving trust and obedience (Rom. 6:3-11). Therefore, Paul is calling us to walk by the promptings of our new nature in loving communion with and by the enabling power and liberating guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Sunday, October 17th – Galatians 5: 16

In contradiction to the mutually consuming action of v.15 Paul declares that his readers should walk by the Spirit. The verb, *walk*, indicates a life of progress and blessed production, in contrast with the sinful and self-destructive action pictured in v.15. Our calling by God to freedom in Christ sets us in a course that we pursue by the Lord's direction and enabling power and for the Lord's glory and for the good of others.

Monday, October 18th – Galatians 5: 16, 17

Paul directs believers to walk by the Spirit. This does not mean that we live by pietistic feelings, or mere intellectual apprehensions, or excited frenzies in public worship. What it does mean we can understand by the way Paul puts this directive in opposition to our living by the desire of the flesh. The term, *flesh*, refers to our old sinful nature that was dead to any higher consideration than our own selfish, superficial, and immediate gratification. The desire of the flesh is a desire for self-sovereignty and for the feeding of base appetites. When we walk by the Spirit, our souls hunger and thirst for righteousness and for the living God of righteousness who is Spirit and truth (Jn. 4:24). We live and serve by the principles of His Word and by the power of His Spirit. We are guided upward by the Spirit to God and His glory and to Christ whose grace continues to come upon us by His heavenly intercessions for us (Col. 3:1-4).

Tuesday, October 19th – Galatians 5: 17

As Paul writes in Romans 8:4-8, there is an irreconcilable hostility between the flesh

and the Spirit of God indwelling the spirits of those whom He has regenerated. The natural man is of the flesh while the spiritual man is of the Spirit. Accordingly, the natural man pursues carnal things and hates the things of the Spirit, regarding them as foolish and fearfully considering them to be threatening to his happiness. The Spiritual man has tasted and seen the goodness of the Lord and the spiritual delights of His blessings. Accordingly, the spiritual man does not love the things of the flesh (1 Jn. 2:15-17), but hates and mortifies them because they can so easily entangle him in degrading passions and pursuits, while clouding his communion with the Lord who loves him and whom he truly loves. In this world, we must ever be on guard against the remnants of our carnal sinful natures, laying aside those remnants lest they assert grim power over us.

Wednesday, October 20th – Galatians 5: 17, 18

Paul describes in v.17 a ceaseless struggle that all those determining to lead a godly life in Christ must endure. He writes of this struggle most fully in Romans 7. Yet, here in v.18, the apostle declares to us the comforting truth that the struggle is neither an equal nor an uncertain one. Christians are not under the Law as an external and condemning power in their lives. When they are led by the Holy Spirit who inspired the writing of the Law and who indwells them, He writes the Law on their hearts so that with sincerity, gratitude, and loving delight they will and do God's good pleasure (Ezek. 36:26,27; Phil. 2:12,13).

Thursday, October 21st – Galatians 5: 19-21

In vv.19-23, Paul presents a further contrast between the practical behavior of those who are of the flesh and those who are of the Spirit. The contrast is stark and absolute with no points of similarity existing between the actions of those of the flesh and those of the Spirit. That is what makes the difference between the two so evident. Jesus tells us that by men's fruits we shall know them. Such judgment of fruits is not difficult because we need not fathom motives, thoughts, and intentions, but rather simply observe the quality of men's actions to know whether they are bitter or sweet, of the flesh or of the Spirit.

Friday, October 22nd – Galatians 5: 19-21

Paul uses the word *deeds* to describe the actions of those who are of the flesh. The Greek word can also be translated, *works*. The word is fitting because the natural man is not gratefully and lovingly working out the delightful treasure of the salvation God has given to him. Instead, he is fearfully and vainly working hard to suppress the truth of God's being and goodness while slaving to attain his own security and satisfaction. In v.22, Paul uses a very different word to describe the actions of those who are of the Spirit. That word is *fruit*, and it implies natural growth of something sweet and beneficially nourishing. Sin drives men to hard, killing work; the Spirit gives men life, love, and sweetest satisfaction.

Saturday, October 23rd – Galatians 5: 19-21

Paul lists a number of things in his catalogue of the deeds of the flesh. There are various and more or less significant ways we can consider the arrangement of this list (as we can do with Paul's other carefully composed lists, cf., 2 Cor. 6:4-10). Perhaps the most clear and simple arrangement to observe is that the apostle lists the works of the flesh in four categories of sin: 1) moral sins (v.19); religious sins (v.20a); relational sins (vv.20b, 21a); and sins of personal dissipation (v.21b). His list is not exhaustive, as the phrase, *things like these*, indicates. The whole list speaks of things unclean, boisterous, chaotic, and shameful. How good it is of God to have loved us while we were so unlovely and to have saved us from such wild waste and defiling and destructive misery.

Sunday, October 24th – Galatians 5: 19-21

The first category in this listing of the deeds of the flesh is that of moral sins. There are three representatives of such sins set out in v.19. The first is sexual immorality, which includes adultery and fornication—both being perversions and violations of God's institution of marriage between one man and one woman that serves as the legitimate basis for the propagation and nurture of all human life. The second is impurity, which is a broader term that includes more extreme perversions of human love that is the godly basis for the propagation and nurture of human life. Such perversions would include homosexuality and bestiality—both of which might physically gratify those who practice them, but neither of which is productive of human life. The third moral sin listed is sensuality, which is that diminishing and degrading tendency that leads men to regard physical attraction above godly principle and personal gratification above the deeper, fuller, more lasting and inclusive power of love. Sinful men seek to be more than God. However, they succeed only in becoming less than men and more like beasts when they vaunt themselves above God.

October 2010

The following notes were first published in May/June 1991

Monday, October 25th - Proverbs 14: 25

Even good men can find themselves in trouble, such as when they become targets for the malice of evil plotters (v.22), or the negligence and oppression of the rich (v.20). Accordingly, their lives may be in jeopardy due to contrived appearances. It is then that those confirmed in their cowardice, greed, or laziness—whose motivation is pragmatic rather than principled—will speak according to their wicked natures that twist the truth. Accordingly, they serve to betray the truth and those standing on the truth, which truth may lie hidden beneath appearances. Yet the one who speaks the truth, because he has highest regard for and gratitude toward the One who is the truth

(Jn. 14:6), brings the enlightening power of veracity to clouded situations, liberating the good man from a mendacious thrall.

Tuesday, October 26th - Proverbs 14: 25

The fear of the Lord is not a craven dread of punishment, but rather a holy, reverential attitude that affords highest respect to the Lord and His revealed will. Such holy fear saves us from wandering into snares which not only cause us annoyance, but which also lead to death in manifold forms. Godly fear is a fountain, welling up within us to strengthen and refresh, so that we, and those, such as family members who are dependent upon us, flourish in unmolested security and happiness.

Wednesday, October 27th - Proverbs 14: 28,34,35

A king's glory is enhanced by his having a large number of subjects, diminished by his having few of them. Yet quantity is not the only consideration. For if the people are godless, as were the Jews under good king Josiah, their number only multiplies disgrace. It is righteous quality, as well as great quantity of people, that together exalt a king and his nation. A good king, knowing this, will act to reward his good and wise subjects, while deterring knaves. Such truth applies to any organization, civil or social, but especially to the Church, which the King of kings cultivates in righteous quality and in quantity that no man can number—all to His infinite glory (Rev. 5:11-14; 7:9-17).

Thursday, October 28th - Proverbs 14: 29,30,33

The contents of the heart display themselves through actions. For example, one who is easily angered without due cause (it is possible to be angry without sin, see Eph. 4:26) exhibits a foolish paranoia; whereas a man who understands life's principles, and especially understands something of the ways of his sovereign and gracious Lord, will exhibit such fruit of the Holy Spirit as patience, gentleness, self-control (Gal. 5:22). One having such understanding, however, feels no need to parade it. Instead, he quietly enjoys wisdom itself, unlike the fool, whose heart cannot contain and enjoy anything in itself, but rather spews forth all, even smatterings of wisdom it may pick up, in a pathetic attempt to impress others. Finally, the one whose life is directed by the beneficent dictates of wisdom finds contentment of heart, which in turn contributes to a generally vibrant, healthy body. But the one driven by sinful passions is wasted in heart, soul, strength, and mind. Such hearts are not only described, but the Lord is here prescribing the wise, contented, tranquil heart that He gives to us by His grace.

Friday, October 29th - Proverbs 14: 32

The wicked falls in a crisis, and falls because of the inherent weakness of his wicked character and ways. But such a collapse is not merely consequential; it results from the righteous judgment of God, whom he has offended. Therefore, we read that the

wicked is *thrust* down. But the very worst that can befall the righteous, namely death, serves only to usher him into a glorious refuge, a heavenly mansion which Jesus has gone before to prepare (Jn. 14:2).

Saturday, October 30th - Proverbs 15: 1,2,4,7

These verses tell us how our words can help or hurt others. Hot speech only stirs up the fires of anger; while gentle, considerate words, though seemingly weaker, often smother the flames of wrath (v.1). Wise speech not only declares truth and provides knowledge, but it does so in a way most suited to make such treasures acceptable to others. Foolish hearts publish foolish speech that is contemptible in the sight of others (v.2). A soothing or healing tongue is rooted in a gracious, helping heart. It is like a tree producing manifold fruit that others need and desire. Yet there is a smoothness of speech that counterfeits soothing words and issues from a perverse heart. Such words flatter others only to crush them when they least expect it (v.4). Finally, the wise soul seeks to serve others by spreading the unlimited and priceless resource of knowledge. Fools' hearts can conceive of no such beneficial design. They think that they can ascend only when others are cast down and remain down (v.7).

Sunday, October 31st - Proverbs 15: 3,8,9,11

God is not only omniscient (v.3), He also judges all that He sees according to His holy nature and standard. Nothing is too high, too low, or too obscure to escape His notice (v.11), and He is neutral toward nothing. Especially does the Lord note and judge our religious practice in relation to our lives. Those who put on outward and costly displays of piety as a cover for their wicked character and ways are themselves despised by God, while their religious shows, as well as the perverse course of the rest of their lives, are abominable in His sight. In contrast, the Lord not only accepts and approves of, but He is pleased by the quiet, unostentatious prayers of the upright. Not only do such truly holy exercises please Him, but He loves the person who seeks first His kingdom and righteousness, and whose prayers and godly service flow naturally from that holy quest.

Monday, November 1st - Proverbs 15: 6

Infinitely precious treasure is in the dwelling of the righteous because, however materially humble the house, the infinite and eternal God in Christ is pleased to dwell in the hearts and homes of believers. By our having Him, all other things become a blessed abundance (Phil. 4:11-13). By contrast, whatever comes to the wicked, however abundant and materially valuable, is tainted by the sin of the recipient, and so transformed into trouble.

Tuesday, November 2nd - Proverbs 15: 5,10,12

Legitimate discipline and reproof serve to turn us back from wayward courses that lead to death (v.10). Loving parents seek faithfully to administer such discipline (v.5),

and others made wise by their walk with Christ also sense responsibility lovingly to offer reproof to those in need (v.12). We should love those who so faithfully serve for our good. Only a foolish, wicked scoffer rejects such reproofs. The prudent soul not only has high regard for that reproof which is so beneficial, but also has highest regard for his Father in heaven, whose truth and love and sanctifying power stand above all faithful discipline.

Wednesday, November 3rd - Proverbs 15: 13,15,23,30

These verses show us something of the effects joy and sorrow have upon us. Joy serves as a spring of living water within (v.15b), and spreads outwardly; while sorrow is invasive, and, if left unchecked, will penetrate to the soul and spirit, wounding and destroying us (v.13) and our outlook on all things (v.15a). We learn from v. 30 that joy is not inherent in the human heart, but rather enters it from without, as a seed that takes root and bears blessed and happy fruit. When we behold the light of the good news of Christ, we take in the ultimate source of joy. The grace and truth of the gospel is the most timely and apt message that can ever be received or conveyed (v.23). Let us seek our joy in it, and determine to propagate it so as to bring joy to others.

Thursday, November 4th - Proverbs 15: 14,20,21

Once more the ways of fools in contrast with those of the wise are considered. The wise man recognizes his innate impoverishment and need. Accordingly, he seeks to know the truth and so store his mind with that which enables him to walk in freedom, security, and uprightness. The fool thinks he knows enough—at least as much, if not more, than others. He is not concerned to feed or transform his mind, but rather is interested only with tasting foolish and perverse things, which entertain him and distract him from more serious and necessary fare. The desire, teaching, and example of godly parents should be that their children humbly hunger for the truth, grace, and knowledge of the Lord. The determination of children should be thus to hunger, and so avoid grieving and despising their parents while disgracing themselves through their feeding on folly.

Friday, November 5th - Proverbs 15: 16,17

When we have highest regard for the Lord, the amount of material blessing we have becomes almost immaterial (Phil. 4:11-13). Even when our circumstances are modest, we have in Christ the supreme treasure, and consequently enjoy abiding peace and blessed contentment. Without Christ, even massive riches fail to bring contentment to the soul. Such riches usually bring with them a host of troubles, instead. Fear of the Lord brings such contentment because the God we fear loves us immeasurably. With His love and the love of His people even the simplest meals become feasts of delight, far superior to the pretentious spreads provided by loveless worldlings.

Saturday, November 6th - Proverbs 15: 18,28,29

The condition of a man's heart will determine his disposition and ability with respect to his bringing healing or hurt to a situation. If one is slow to anger, it means that he will show charity and exercise patience until the situation warrants a response of righteous indignation. But then there are short-fused souls who are usually hurt and angry within, and disposed easily to lash out in anger to hurt others. Sin has hurt the hearts of all, yet God's grace in Christ not only imputes righteousness, but also heals and strengthens us. Consequently, the righteous are deliberate and considerate in their speech, answering ever with thoughtful appropriateness. This is in stark contrast to the communications of the wicked, who thoughtlessly and heedlessly spew forth vile and injurious things. Grace is absent from the wicked, because the God of grace is far from them. Yet the gracious words of the godly result in large measure from the fact that they spend much of their time in prayerful communication with the Lord, asking Him to make them increasingly like Himself.

Sunday, November 7th - Proverbs 15: 19,24

Due to the sluggard's own negligence, thorns take root in his life and circumstances which make progress ever more difficult and painful for him. The challenge he fears facing today, or the responsibility he refuses to fulfill, will tomorrow harden into a wounding barb, and will be joined with other neglected opportunities to form an increasingly impenetrable hedge about him.

The upright, due to their trust in the Lord's provision and loving submission to His direction, consistently and successfully face challenges confronting them. Whatever difficulty they have, it results from the upward incline of their way, which leads away from death and condemnation. Yet even such upward paths, when consistently trod, grow into highways. This is so because the faithful grow stronger with each obedient step, and at the same time each step clears snagging thorns from the way.

Monday, November 8th - Proverbs 15: 22,26

We, being finite and fallible, tend to form plans which fail to take into account all likely contingencies. Therefore, we should learn humbly to acknowledge our need to consult with others, and so profit from their viewpoint. Such consultation may cause our plans to change, but they will only change for good and will be more likely to succeed. Others usually do not resent, but rather enjoy being consulted. The Lord Himself certainly commands our consulting with Him (Prov. 3:5,6), and He welcomes the opportunity to purge our purposes from evil, so that our words and deeds are pure in His sight and pleasing to Him and to others in their fruition.

Tuesday, November 9th - Proverbs 15: 25,27

The proud may build large and luxurious houses for their own security and

enjoyment. Such proud ones are inclined not to worry about whether the means they employ in building are legal or ethical. To them the end justifies all means. But God is opposed to such proud souls. He will allow consequential troubles to blast the dwelling founded on ill-gotten gain, and He Himself will justly demolish all that is a fruit of sinful pride. At the same time, He preserves the honest, humble, and needy soul who looks to Him for gracious provision. To such He gives not only houses here, but also the sure promise of mansions hereafter (Jn. 14:2). Furthermore, He gives to the soul utterly dependent upon Him a blessed citizenship among the saints dwelling in grace here and glory hereafter. How poor are the proud, who seek their wealth apart from the Lord—how rich the humble who seek their all in Him!

Wednesday, November 10th - Proverbs 15: 31-33

We desire to build our lives up, but the Lord is more determined to tear them down, burying them in the obscurity of the earth, driving them down deeply until they reach and are surely founded upon the bedrock foundation of Christ (Lk. 6:46-49). Only from that foundation will He allow them to grow into unshakeable strength and enduring honor. The wise see and accept the loving and powerful hand of the heavenly Father behind all words and circumstances that form demolishing reproofs to our pride.

Thursday, November 11th - Proverbs 16: 1-3

Man may propose, but the Lord is the one who actually determines the disposal of all things. It is good and necessary that divine sovereignty decides such things, for man plans and seeks to do what is right in his own eyes, and those eyes are tainted by the deceitful, misleading power of sin. God prohibits good but misguided intentions from ultimately determining matters, promoting instead His own absolutely good purposes. When we consult with the Lord by prayerful and Spirit-guided study and application of His Word, we find that our plans are modified, purified, and actualized to an extent and magnitude beyond and above our thought or intention.

Friday, November 12th - Proverbs 16: 4

All created things act spontaneously according to their natures. Yet while so acting to fulfill their own purposes, they act, individually and in concert, to fulfill the holy purposes of the Lord. God made all things for Himself in this way, for, as Paul says, *from* Him, and *through* Him, and *to* Him are all things (Rom. 11:36). Even sin, of which our holy God could not be the Author, He has sovereignly permitted and sinlessly employs for His glory and our good. We can glimpse this by faith now, but one day it shall be unquestionably clear to all.

Saturday, November 13th - Proverbs 16: 5,18,19

God is opposed to those who are proud not only in overt action but also in attitude. He knows the motivating spirit behind every word and deed. Those who are proud, even if only in attitude, are an abomination to Him. This is so because proud souls seek to be independent of the Lord, and stand on their own merits. The trouble is that the natural man can boast no true merit, only deepest depravity. So we do well honestly to recognize our need for the Lord and His gracious, abundant provision, humbly accepting His salvation in its entirety. We do well also to seek the company of other grateful and humble souls, for the salvation we enjoy together with them is far sweeter and more secure than the greatest successes of the proud, who are destined for just condemnation.

Sunday, November 14th - Proverbs 16: 6,17

Although evil may seem to have a mighty hold in the life of a believer, once he determines to depart from the way of sin he finds the going much easier than he may have anticipated. That is because the Lord not only directs us to forsake sin, but His enabling power engaged by faithful obedience opens a highway through any wilderness. From there it is a matter of remaining on guard so as to prevent lapses into deadly courses. Meanwhile, newly tapped energies engage us in deeds of love and truthfulness, which deeds go a long way toward soothing the soreness our sin has caused in others. Only the fear of the Lord can lift a man out of evil and preserve him in the way of blessed righteousness.

Monday, November 15th - Proverbs 16: 7,9,25,33

Nothing in all of life, not even what appears to be random (v.33), is done apart from the sovereign guidance of the Lord. He directs the steps of people for His holy purposes. Men may plan things against Him and His way (Ps. 2:1-3), but He turns all to His glory. It is better, then, for one humbly to realize this truth, and seek to refer all plans consciously and submissively to our God, the disposer of all. We shall not be disappointed by our doing so, for the Lord sees things better than we do. When He crosses our wills and dashes our plans, it is because He knows for certain that such plans, which may seem fine to us, lead to death. Our heavenly Father preserves us when we confide in Him, and He delights in such trust on our part, committing Himself to defeating our enemies, either by confounding and subduing them, or by transforming them into our friends.

Tuesday, November 16th - Proverbs 16: 10,12

Divine sovereignty does not preclude, but rather establishes, human responsibility. Therefore, all men, even those in the highest stations of life, do well to realize their accountability to God. Indeed, the higher one's position in life, the greater is his responsibility to God. Kings, though they may delude themselves into

thinking that they have absolute power, are most accountable to the Lord, since their decisions and policies affect so many of God's people. Hence, rulers do well to submit to the God of righteousness, promoting righteousness in their spheres of responsibility. Then they shall be firmly and blessedly established.

Wednesday, November 17th - Proverbs 16: 13-15

Yesterday's reading reminded us that those in positions of authority are themselves under the authority of God. Today's verses consider how men under those in authority should act. For example, we all know that it is desirable that we please our superiors (v.15). Yet the way to do so is by our speaking and doing true and godly things (v.13). If our superiors are established by righteousness, then we serve them best by our righteous deportment. Godless superiors may initially be enraged by such godly service (it reminds them that they, too, are accountable to God), but godly wisdom enables us to help our superiors see that the Lord's way is ultimately the best way. Read about Daniel (Dan. 1:8-21) and his friends (Dan. 3) in this connection. Godliness is always and in every realm the best policy.

Thursday, November 18th - Proverbs 16: 11

Godliness is the best policy not only in governmental matters, but also in commercial matters. We should maintain honest and fair dealings in economic business, not only because honesty is good policy which ultimately pays lasting dividends, but supremely because we work in all areas of life for the Lord, not for ourselves. He approves and honors only fair dealings.

Friday, November 19th - Proverbs 16: 8,16,20

Wisdom is a power permanently ingrained in the character, enabling those possessing it to act rightly and securely in all circumstances. Money is a possession that can be abused and lost, and can be corrupting if kept. Wisdom has supreme value (v.16). True wisdom leads us to trust in the Lord and His Word. We receive His blessing from such trusting, attentive application of His Word (v.20). We are also personally transformed through our consistent confidence in Him, becoming righteous in our character and in our dealings. Contentment results, for we rejoice more in who we are becoming in Christ than in what we could possibly have apart from Him (v.8).

Saturday, November 20th - Proverbs 16: 21-23

The fool, whose heart contains nothing but folly, and whose actions testify to that fact, is driven only by outward discipline. Wisdom is a river that issues various streams—all beneficial. Hence the wise draws from his own heart the treasures of wisdom, enabling him to speak not simply true words, but sweet and beautiful words as well. The pleasantness of his speech never runs counter to the truth, but represents the genuine garb of the truth, making it persuasively presentable. Nor does the wisdom of

the heart issue trivial, however pleasant, truths. Wise speech leads to life abundant, blessed, eternal, for as it draws from Christ, so it manifests Him as its source and goal.

Sunday, November 21st - Proverbs 16: 24

The truth sometimes wounds before it heals. For instance, when sin in the life is challenged, it may be painful initially, but ultimately such conviction yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness. Although truth alone may penetrate our hearts, when it is pleasantly spoken it penetrates deeper and more quickly. This is so because words conveyed with consideration bespeak love as well as veracity, and we more readily accept love. It is this loving truth that the soul accepts, resulting in deep healing. Let us learn to speak the truth in love (Eph. 4:15), for Jesus is not only truth, but also is love.

Monday, November 22nd - Proverbs 16: 26

Since his fall, man has had to toil for his daily bread. Yet God has so mingled grace with this curse that a man's appetite drives him on to labor for the fruit that the Lord still provides. Appetite points to provision and motivates one to seek that for which he hungers. Accordingly, we should hunger for righteousness (Mt. 5:6), and work for the food which endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man gives us (Jn. 6:27).

Tuesday, November 23rd - Proverbs 16: 27-30

Contrast the beneficent springs issuing from the fountain of a wise heart (vv.21-23) with the polluted and deadly streams coming from the evil heart as that heart is described in these verses. Worthless souls seek evil in others and speak of it in attempts to consume others. Such worthless ones, sensing their own inferiority for which they themselves are responsible, delight in hurting others. If sufficient evil cannot be found, slanders are fabricated and perversely employed to ruin good relationships of which the wicked are envious. The strategy such infernally inferior souls employ may be subtly duplicitous, but its goal is to reduce good people and good relationships, if possible, to greater misery than the worthless, wicked ones endure. We do well to avoid such tearing dogs, and to seek, instead, the fellowship and enabling influence of those who know that they are accepted in the Beloved, drawing their worth from Him, and ministering it to others in love.

Wednesday, November 24th - Proverbs 16: 31,32

With age comes wisdom and honor. Yet it is not the mere passage of time that confers such glories, but rather the consistent redeeming of minutes, hours, days, years in Christ. His grace appropriated over time increasingly yields glorious virtues in us, not least of which are patience, gentleness and self-control, ripe and rich fruits of the Holy Spirit (Gal. 5:22,23).

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Thursday, November 25th – Galatians 5: 19-21

The second category in Paul's listing of the deeds of the flesh is that of religious sins. These are specified in v.20a as idolatry and sorcery. The word, *idolatry*, in a strict sense speaks of a violation of the Second Commandment. It entails people endeavoring to worship the one true God in ways not of His directing but rather of their own devising. In a more general sense, those who are idolatrous devote themselves to things other than God in a worshipping way. So, for example, we speak of a man making an idol of his money. The sin in idolatry is that those practicing it refuse to give to God the worship that is due to Him alone and in the way that He has prescribed in His Word. The word *sorcery* speaks to us of an endeavor to gain knowledge and power apart from God, specifically through occult and demonic means. Idolatry is an attempt to deprive God of His due worship and honor and glory; sorcery is an attempt to overpower God through alliance with His enemy, Satan. Those of the Spirit seek to worship God in loving gratitude because He has saved them from the sin that was killing them. Those of the flesh know that they are in need of some higher power to sustain and enable them, and such power they work hard to attain by their false worship (idolatry) or by their overtly worshipping demons. What help do men think they can receive from the devils who have been justly cast down from heaven by God?

Friday, November 26th – Galatians 5: 19-21

The category of religious sins is followed in v.20b by the third category of interpersonal sins. Whereas the second category of the deeds of the flesh entails the sins of men against God, this third category entails men's sins against one another. There may at first seem to be no harm in a man's practice of idolatry and sorcery, as such activities seem focused on supposed deities and have nothing to do with the weal or woe of other people. Yet a man's spiritual exercises have a causative connection with how he treats other people. Sins against God always beget sins against man. The sin of the first Adam led to Adam's hiding himself from his wife and to his blaming and castigating her before God. Only those who truly worship the God who commands them to love their neighbor do truly love others. All others fear, ignore, despise, hate, and kill their neighbor.

Saturday, November 27th – Galatians 5: 19-21

The first word in the third category of the deeds of the flesh is *enmities*. It speaks of a hateful and hostile attitude that a person has toward others. Paul uses the word in the plural to indicate that this hostile attitude is directed toward multiple targets, namely God and men, and that it is one found in many people. Enmities, alas, are common among those who are of the flesh, whereas peace and loving harmony grow amid those who are in Christ.

Sunday, November 28th – Galatians 5: 19-21

Then word *strife* follows the word *enmities* in the category of interpersonal sins. Out of man's heart flow the issues of life and death. Hearts filled with manifold enmities will prompt men to words and deeds of strife. The idolater Cain had enmity toward Abel and he rose up in action that killed his brother. Those who know and love the Prince of Peace will be peacemakers, and they shall be called loving sons of God rather than murdering sons of Adam (Mt. 5:9).

Monday, November 29th - Galatians 5: 19-21

The third word in this third category is *jealousy*, which like *enmities*, is a sinful attitude that prompts sinful action that is injurious to others. Jealousy is related to zeal, which generally means to have a strong, passionate regard for something. Zeal for the Lord, zeal for righteousness, zeal in promoting the security and welfare of others are all examples of holy zeal. However, in this context the zeal is for self-promotion. Sinful jealousy is the attitude of one's begrudging another's position or possessions. Such jealousy, if not quelled, fosters hatred and enmity, which, as we have seen, leads to strife. Those who are of the flesh are afflicted with manifold loveless and hateful attitudes that result in manifold sinful and criminal actions.

Tuesday, November 30th - Galatians 5: 19-21

The fourth aspect of interpersonal sins listed in this third category of the deeds of the flesh is *outbursts of anger*. Such outbursts may take the form of words or physical assaults. The sinner cannot and will not mortify his enmities and jealousies, and hence he resorts to action that forces his sinful will upon others. The heart and hand of the sinner are set against other men to seize from them, not lovingly to give to them. The heart and hand of the Spirit-filled believer in Christ are lovingly set to serve for the welfare and promotion of others (Phil. 2:1-4).

Wednesday, December 1st - Galatians 5: 19-21

The four aspects of interpersonal sins thus far considered in v.20 pertain to personal animosities. In the remainder of v. 20 and in the beginning of v.21, Paul sets out another grouping of aspects that pertain to more corporate animosities. From individual enmities and jealousies that produce strife and angry outbursts, the apostle goes on to write of *disputes*, *dissensions*, and *factions* that occur among people in social gatherings. The apostle rightly lists *envy* as a key motivation of such party spirit that disturbs and fractures corporate unity. While sin essentially turns each man's heart and hand against his neighbor, it can also prompt sinners to form alliances and confederations against common enemies until the time when such enemies are vanquished. Then sin leads individuals in the prevailing party to turn destructively upon each other. Thankfully, we in Christ dwell in the unity of the Spirit in the bond of lasting and loving peace.

Thursday, December 2nd - Galatians 5: 19-21

The shades of meaning vary subtly between the words, *disputes*, *dissensions*, and *factions*. The word translated *disputes* in the New American Standard Version has the connotation of mercenary motives and indicates one's joining company with others in a fight against another group primarily though not only for personal gain rather than for right principles. *Dissensions* indicate not simply occasional disagreements but rather settled divisions between parties. The word, *factions*, comes from a Greek word from which we get our word, *heresies*. It implies one's chosen and firmly held opinion that is false, according to members of the opposing party. These multiple, hard, deep, and strongly imposed divisions between groups of people are prompted by *envyings*, whereby men do not regard what is true, right, good, and loving to determine their affiliations with others, but instead cast resentful and covetous eyes upon what others have that they desire for themselves. A primary reason that those of the Spirit enjoy peace and unity with others of the Spirit is because they all together possess an infinite treasure that quells any envy some might have toward others (Eph.1:3).

Friday, December 3rd - Galatians 5: 19-21

The final of the four categories of sin that Paul delineates with respect to the deeds of the flesh is that of personal dissipation. This category contains two specifications. They are *drunkenness* and *carousings*, to which the apostle adds other *things like these*. Any form of substance abuse that alters one's perception in a way that provides immediate and transitory euphoria at the price of lasting detriment to one's health can be considered *drunkenness*. When drunkards gather and move about in wanton and boisterous ways, they are not communicating truth and love to others, but are carousing in ways that are obnoxious if not injurious to the persons and property of others. In Ephesians 5:18, Paul contrasts drunken dissipation with one's being filled with the Spirit. Those who are of the flesh feed in every way upon the husks of this world while believers enjoy the holy nourishment of the Spirit of God who directs and empowers them in ways true, wise, useful, and loving.

Saturday, December 4th - Galatians 5: 19-21

Paul concludes his portrayal of the deeds of the flesh with a reminder to his readers that he has already made clear to them that those who practice such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God. By this statement he is being more descriptive than prescriptive. The apostle is not prescribing a way to gain or forfeit salvation, as though one who practiced the vices he has listed could simply decide to practice virtues and so be saved. Such a call for change in attitude and action by one's own doing would contradict all Paul has written to this point in his letter. Instead, the apostle is indicating that the bitter fruits of the sinful attitudes and injurious actions of the natural man result from his being without Christ and His sweet Holy Spirit. Yet,

there is prescription of a sort here. Paul genuinely warns, not unbelievers to repent, but believers to rejoice that they have been liberated from such awful attitudes and actions as are listed in vv.19-21. We who are in Christ are further warned to mortify any remnants of such deeds of the flesh that may spring up in our lives as being absolutely inconsistent with our new lives in Christ. Read Romans 5:20-6:14.

Sunday, December 5th - Galatians 5: 19-21

Paul does not assert in these verses that all natural men manifest all of these deeds in the flesh all of the time and in most full and bitter fruition. Instead, he speaks of the too obvious reality that men without Christ generally and consistently are driven slavishly to serve their father, the devil. Therefore, their ways and works are characterized by deceit and murder, rather than truth and love. Those without Christ do not occasionally do the things of which Paul writes; they practice them regularly and work at them ceaselessly and yet attain nothing desirable. This is in contrast with those who walk by the Spirit (v.16) and are by the Spirit led (v.18) into ways that are increasingly blessed for themselves and blessing toward others.

Monday, December 6th - Galatians 5: 19-21

While believers may occasionally manifest attitudes and actions that resemble the deeds of the flesh, they do so contrary to and to the grief of the Spirit who dwells in them. While the Spirit may patiently endure such contradictions, He eventually brings conviction that issues in repentance. Therefore, true believers never constantly and lastingly practice the deeds of the flesh because their carnal natures have been crucified with Christ and their new natures cannot and will not abide for long in sin's entanglements (1 Jn. 1:6-10; 3:2-10).

Tuesday, December 7th - Galatians 5: 22, 23

We turn with relief from the grim and bitter but needful and edifying detailing of the deeds of the flesh to the sweetly sanctifying consideration of the fruit of the Spirit. At the beginning of v.22, in contrast of greatest magnitude that results from the saving grace of God, we are brought by the blessed word, *but*, out of the world of deceit and death into the world of truth and love. Paul records a similarly stunning change when he writes in Ephesians 2:1-6 that we were dead in our sins *but* God made us alive together with Christ. It is a study of fruitful significance when we consider the blessed divine contradictions to what sinners deserve and expect, resulting in what sinners have been made in Christ. This drastic change is initially expressed in the words *but God*.

Wednesday, December 8th - Galatians 5: 22, 23

In contrast to the deeds or works of the flesh we have the fruit of the Spirit. The former expression speaks to us of laborious, artificial exertions of men prompted by their spiritually dead and impotent flesh and issuing in bitterness and misery. The

latter expression speaks of natural growth that yields manifold and sweetest fruit. The boisterous deeds of the flesh may seem strong and powerfully prevailing, but they are arid and obnoxious. The gentle, quiet, and gradually growing fruit of the Spirit goes sweetly from strength to prevailing strength by the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit of God.

Thursday, December 9th - Galatians 5: 22, 23

Paul writes of the flesh of the natural man producing works, while he writes of the Spirit producing fruit. There is significance to this difference between plural works and singular fruit. The works of the flesh consist of an assortment of fearful and fractured deeds that manifest the sinner's desperate but futile attempts to promote and secure himself. Works speak of labors that are fractured and self-opposing and hence self-defeating. In contrast, the nine aspects that Paul lists in vv. 22,23 are not a fractured assortment but facets of a coherent whole. Believers grow by the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit so that they manifest to increasing degree all of these beautiful facets of this singular character that is the character of Christ.

Friday, December 10th - Galatians 5: 22, 23

The fruit of the Spirit is actually the character of the Savior imparted to all believers. That character is singular but richly faceted. We do well to meditate regularly upon this character and this series of characteristics because it is God's will that we should be formed into this image. When the Lord spoke through Jeremiah, telling His people of His plans to give them a future and a hope, their having this Christ-like character is ultimately what He meant (Jer. 29:11). Accordingly, we should know and strive by God's grace to foster the development of this character in us, even as we mortify all that is contrary to it.

Saturday, December 11th - Galatians 5: 22, 23

Love is the first aspect of the fruit of the Spirit listed by the apostle. The primary position of love indicates its foundational and supreme importance in relation to all other aspects of the fruit of the Spirit. God Himself is love (1 Jn. 4:8), and He has demonstrated His holy and sacrificial love by giving His Son to die for us while we were at our sinful worst (Rom. 5:8). Because God has so sincerely and sacrificially loved us, and because His Son has freely loved us and given Himself for us (Gal. 2:20), the divinely given Ten Commandments tell us to love God and to love our fellow man (Mt. 22: 34-40). What God commands, He also graciously gives by His Holy Spirit, who guides us into the knowledge of what holy love is and enables us to become increasingly loving in all of our thoughts, words, and works. For such love to be in His people Jesus prayed (Jn. 17:26), and died, and sent His Holy Spirit.

Sunday, December 12th - Galatians 5: 22, 23

The flesh produces varied vile and destructive works. The Spirit produces singular

and virtuous fruit. The facets of this holy fruit in no way contradict each other but rather cohere in something that is sweetly nourishing to all who possess it and share it with others. Accordingly, while love is sacrificial it does not beget sorrow but rather joy in those who possess and exercise it. *Joy* is not superficial glee or occasional happiness that depends upon desirable circumstances. Joy is that deep and abiding delight that is inspired by the knowledge that one is loved by and secure in God and that his loving service is pleasing to God and beneficial to man. Thus, Jesus rejoiced in the Holy Spirit precisely because He was loved by His Father and because He lovingly and voluntarily determined to give Himself to save sinners (Lk. 10:21,22). True joy is inextricably tied to the exercise of love, as the connection of joy to love shows us in Luke 10:21-27. That His people should have such joy, which is their strength (Neh. 8:10), Jesus also prayed (Jn. 17:13), and died, and sent His Holy Spirit.

Monday, December 13th - Galatians 5: 22, 23

Peace is the final facet of the first of three trios that form the fruit of the Spirit. Each of these cardinal virtues has its primary reference to God, who is the source and gracious giver of them all. God the Father is love and gives His love to His people. Christ the Son speaks of His joy being made full in His disciples (Jn. 15:11; 16:24). The peace that is the fruit of the Spirit is that quiet assurance and tranquil security that the believer comes to enjoy in every situation, even in sore tribulation (Jn. 14:27). However, this peace is more than the subjective serenity of the soul. It is based upon the objective peace that Christ has wrought between the holy God of heaven and the sinful people of earth who are justified by God's saving grace through faith. It is only *in* Christ that we have peace with God (Jn. 16:33) that vanquishes all of our fears of God's wrath, of men and of devils, and liberates us to love and enjoy God and our neighbor.

Tuesday, December 14th - Galatians 5: 22, 23

Love, joy, and peace fill God and are given to believers by God through His Holy Spirit. Accordingly, these three facets increasingly fill the hearts and souls of those born of God's Spirit. The next three aspects of the fruit of the Spirit issue from these first three and exert a blessed influence upon others. Two of them (*kindness* and *goodness*) are usually gently demonstrative, while the first of the three listed (*patience*) is undemonstrative. The Christian is truly in attitude and action loving, kind and good. He does not feign these virtues as carnal men do, in order to ingratiate themselves with others or to disarm them with a view to exploiting them. The believer is gently virtuous and even undemonstrative when his impatience would unduly alarm or pain others for whom he has loving consideration and determination to seek their highest good.

Wednesday, December 15th - Galatians 5: 22, 23

It may seem strange that such an essentially undemonstrative virtue as patience should follow the cardinal virtues of love, joy, and peace. Should not those filled with such foundational aspects of the sweet fruit of God's Holy Spirit be eager and assertive to press their virtuous exertions on others? Yet, forceful manifestations of love, joy, and even of the peace we have with God can be repellant rather than attractive to those who are strangers to the sweet fruit of the Spirit. With patience, a man listens more than he speaks; seeks to be understanding and sympathetic with others rather than impose even good things upon them; thinks and prays before he acts; resists the impulses of his residual sinfulness to repay provocation with swift punishment. Those who love much can bear much (1 Cor. 13:5,7), and do so to win other sinners into loving relationship with God and themselves in Christ, rather than to prove themselves right and others wrong. It is the loving patience of God and of His Spirit-filled children that leads sinners and wayward saints to true repentance (Rom. 2:4).

Thursday, December 16th - Galatians 5: 22, 23

The patient one may be longsuffering with the contradiction of others, but he does not bear the contradiction with stoic indifference. For the inconsideration and even cruelty he receives he returns kindness. We perceive kindness more in the manner of one's speech and action than in what one says or does. *Kindness* is the lovingly considerate softening of manner in the administration of truth and love. Jesus rebuked sinners such as the woman caught in adultery and busy Martha, the sister of Mary and Lazarus, but He did so in a kind manner that befitted His love for them and his respect for their penitential regard for Him. The truly spiritual person does not speak blunt truth but considers how to clothe his communications in kindness that will better commend the truth.

Friday, December 17th - Galatians 5: 22, 23

With kindness, one endeavors to communicate in a way that will bless others, even those who may curse him. With *goodness* the ministering of blessing is guided by considerations of what is right. There comes a point where kindness is a pearl that must be withheld from those who prove themselves to be swine. Whereas Jesus was kind in His dealings with weak and grieving sinners, He manifested goodness more than kindness when He cast the moneychangers out of the temple and castigated the scribes and Pharisees in Matthew 23. The goodness of the Spirit-filled man will not permit him to allow his kindness to be perverted into an indulgence of wickedness. That would be neither good, nor kind, nor loving. Goodness fills one with a pure and holy love for what is true, honorable, right, pure, lovely, and excellent (Phil. 4:8), while at the same time it fills him with a pure and holy abhorrence of all that is evil (Rom. 12:9).

Saturday, December 18th - Galatians 5: 22, 23

The final trio of aspects of the three sets of aspects of the fruit of the Spirit begins with *faithfulness*. This virtue arises from but is distinct from saving faith. Whereas saving faith is essentially receptive of God's gracious giving, faithfulness is essentially an outworking of that saving faith. Therefore, the faithful person is not only full of receptivity of God's ordinances of grace, he is also faithfully loyal and true to the God of His salvation and to the Lord's ordinances and to His people. The faithful person lives, thinks, feels, and acts in fidelity with his Lord who has revealed His person, work, and will in His Word. The faithful soul will never manifest his love or kindness or any other aspect of the fruit of the Spirit in a way or manner that would be contrary to God's Word. He instead respects the fact that the God who gave him salvation and spiritual graces is the supreme guide of how those graces are to be exercised.

Sunday, December 19th - Galatians 5: 22, 23

If faithfulness has primary reference to how a person relates to God, then *gentleness* has primary reference to how one relates to other people. Of course gentleness has its root in the person and work of God in Christ. But its outworking is summed up by Paul when he writes that those who have received mercy from the Christ who is meek and humble in heart (Mt. 11: 28,29) should, *be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you.* (Eph. 4:32). The imposing Christian is not only a contradiction of his new nature but also of the Spirit's graces and of Christ's person and work and of the Father's tender and saving compassion.

Monday, December 20th - Galatians 5: 22, 23

The final facet of the fruit of the Spirit that Paul here delineates is *self-control*. The previous facet of gentleness pertains to how the Spirit-filled person relates tenderly to others. The aspect of self-control pertains to how one governs himself, in thought, feeling, and action. Sin prompts men to indulge and give fullest expression to their passions. The Spirit gives believers a determination to restrain their passions within boundaries set by the God of wisdom, power, and love. The Spirit gives believers a determination and empowering grace to mortify evil passions and to nourish holy and loving passions. The boundaries set by the Lord do not dampen such holy and loving passions, but deepen and fruitfully guide their expressions. The demoniac called Legion was out of control, but when Jesus set him free from the dominating demons, he was clothed out of respect for men and was in his right mind, wherein he desired and succeeded in governing his impulses and desires for the glory of God and the good of men (Mk. 5:1-20). He even showed his self-control when he restrained his desire to accompany Jesus and, instead, returned to his own city in accordance with His Lord's directive (Mk. 5:18-20).

Tuesday, December 21st - Galatians 5: 22, 23

Paul adds to his list in these verses the words *against such things*. That phrase alerts us to the truth that while the apostle's delineation of the specifics of the fruit of the Spirit is full and accurate, it is not exhaustive. Those who are of the Spirit are able to discern further specifications of the sweet and gracious fruit of the Holy Spirit in their lives and in the lives of their brethren. Those who have tasted the goodness and love of the Lord are able to detect and delight in all aspects and variations of the manifold fruit of the Spirit. There are more transforming treasures at work in the lives of believers than even the Word of God specifies.

Wednesday, December 22nd - Galatians 5: 22-23

Paul rightly tells us that there is no law against the graces of the Holy Spirit indwelling and issuing from the hearts of believers. The sweet and richly faceted fruit of the Spirit is not only heartily approved by God as the handiwork of His saving and transforming grace, but the Spirit's fruit is universally approved by men. The righteous delight in it, and although the wicked may despise and refuse it for themselves, even they prefer to have dealings with those who are loving God and men, than to deal with others who are wicked. The fruit of the Spirit is precious and a potent treasure indeed.

Thursday, December 23rd - Galatians 5: 22, 23

There are some prominent aspects of Christian character that seem omitted from Paul's list. Such things as wisdom, power, and righteousness are not explicitly mentioned, although we may consider them to be implied in the phrase *against such things*. However, we may rightly consider the believer's love of God and men, and the gracious patience, kindness, and gentleness of those who truly do love God and men, to be the highest wisdom, greatest power, and perfect righteousness. What Paul writes in Galatians 5:6,13,14 clearly indicates this.

Friday, December 24th - Galatians 5: 22, 23

The fruit of the Spirit is not forbidden fruit, as was the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil in the Garden of Eden. Those who are of the flesh continue to live in misery and to cause misery to others because they remain determined to be their own gods. The fruit of the Spirit is the absolute opposite of the bitter forbidden fruit upon which those of the flesh continue to feed. The fruit of the Spirit is offered to sinners who dwell in their guilt and misery in the far country, where they feed on the husks that God forbids but which they remain irrationally convinced will make them like God. The fruit of the Spirit is not seized by men but is graciously given by the God of love, and it actually makes sinners, who receive it by faith, to be like God, and to love God and other people as God loves them.

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Saturday, December 25th – Galatians 5: 24

With this verse, Paul summarizes what he has specified regarding the fruit of the Spirit in vv.22,23 in contrast with the works of the flesh in vv.19-21. When the apostle writes that those who are of Christ have crucified the flesh with its unholy passions and unloving desires, he gives us a significant clue as to why the fruit of the Spirit might appear so undemonstrative in contrast with the boisterous works of the flesh. It is because the works of the flesh are directed toward others with selfish passion and imperious zeal to take from them what those who are of the flesh desire and feel that they desperately need and are entitled to have. Such boisterousness manifests the fearful, empty hearts of the wicked, who are filled with desperate determination to fill their empty souls with the things they extort from others. The energies and focus of those who are of the Spirit are more inward, as they mortify their own residual sin while nurturing the graces of their new natures for the glory of God and for the good of others. Their quiet humility and contentment and loving regard for others reveal the substantial and satisfying richness with which their Savior has filled their hearts and souls.

Sunday, December 26th – Galatians 5: 24

Many regard the loud clamor of the flesh as productive work whereby the wicked gain what they desire. But it is the meek who inherit not only the earth but the glory of heaven as well. There is not only a contrast between the works of the flesh and the fruit of the Spirit, there is also conflict between those who are of the flesh and those who are of Christ and are filled with His Spirit. Yet, while the wicked aim their attacks against the righteous, the righteous concentrate their attacks against the remnants of their own flesh. William Still, in his commentary on Galatians has written: *We are astonished at how undemonstrative the most of them [fruit of the Spirit] are....They are not inactive, but all of their considerable energy is directed towards stability in the midst of assault* (p.93). That stability is in believers' union with Christ in His death unto sin and His resurrection life unto God (Rom. 6:5,10,11), and it is a union from which nothing can move them.

Monday, December 27th – Galatians 5: 24

In what sense have those who belong to Christ crucified their flesh? Paul uses the aorist tense when he writes of this crucifying work. That tense conveys the notion of a specific act accomplished in the past. It is a tense distinct from the perfect tense that indicates a process begun in the past but continuing in the present. We must refer to Rom. 6 for a clearer understanding of when and how the crucifying of our flesh took place. There we learn that when we were baptized into Christ we were baptized into His death (Rom. 6:2,3). At the same time, we were raised up to walk in newness of life (Rom. 6:4). Our dying was actually accomplished in Christ's dying and our union by faith to Him in His death, resurrection, and ascension (Rom. 6:5-10). Our

experience of that accomplished death and resurrection being worked out in our lives takes the form of our release from the dominating mastery of sin and our vigilant refusal to let sin reign in our lives (Rom. 6:11-14). Our experience of living out this decisive and irreversible dying, however, is also a process by which we grow into the knowledge and power of who we are in Christ. That is why the Spirit's work of applying to us the virtues of Christ and guiding us into the truth of who Christ is to us and for us and who we are in Him is likened to fruit that takes time to develop into its full maturity.

Tuesday, December 28th – Galatians 5: 24, 25

When Paul writes that those who are of Christ have crucified the flesh, he means that our old, sinful nature has been put to death. The believer can and does wrestle with the dregs and remnants of this sin nature, yet he wrestles with an annoying corpse more than with a living and dominating power as Paul elsewhere indicates when he refers to his own old nature as a body of death (Rom. 7:24). With the death of the old sin nature, the death of its passions and desires also occurred. Passions refer to sinful appetite while desires refer to those promptings that lead to sinful action. The demolition of what was sinful in us occurs through our union to Christ by faith. While we can become entangled with the corpse of sin, we can also lay it aside and run the race set before us by God (Heb. 12:1,2).

Wednesday, December 29th - Galatians 5: 24, 25

In v. 24, the fact of the decisive death of the believer's old sinful nature is stated. In v.25, Paul draws out the practical implication of the believer living as a new creature who is filled with and led by the Holy Spirit. The apostle exhorts us to make progress in our growth in the grace and knowledge of Christ. He puts this in terms of our walking, but he means our walking in a way that is not spatial but spiritual. When Paul speaks of our living by the Spirit, he refers to our being; when he speaks of our walking by the Spirit, he refers to our actions. But while the course of these actions entails our progress, it is not a progression of physical movement so much as it is a matter of our following the narrow way in which the Spirit leads us, which is ever deeper into the love of God in Christ (Eph. 3:17-19).

Thursday, December 30th - Galatians 5: 26 - 6:5

The leading facet of the fruit of the Spirit is love, while all of the other facets involve loving considerations. Love is exercised in personal relationships, and therefore Paul begins to develop in these verses how the fruit of the Spirit is to be exercised in those various relationships we have in the Body of Christ. The apostle first tells us in Gal. 5:26 what ought not to be done in our fraternal relationships. He then speaks more expansively in Gal. 6:1-5 of how we ought to relate to one another in Christ. The Word of God abounds with full and practical instruction as to how we can show our love to one another in the Lord. Our building ourselves up together in love is the

reason why God has given us His Word as well as His apostles, prophets, evangelists, and pastors (Eph. 4:11-16).

Friday, December 31st - Galatians 5: 26

If we live and walk by the Spirit, we ought not become boastful. Here Paul refers to that spirit of pride that is antithetical to the Spirit of God who is opposed to the proud. The word that Paul uses in reference to such pride has the connotation of one's seeking empty glory, or more precisely, seeking accolades from men when there is no reason to warrant such applause. It is really a matter of one's vain pride seeking to extort rather than truly deserve affirmation from others. Such emotional extortion is the opposite of a loving spirit that motivates one who is truly filled with the Spirit and who lovingly and humbly seeks to serve and edifyingly affirm others (Phil. 2:1-4).

Saturday, January 1st - Galatians 5: 26

There is a holy boasting in the Lord that is right and is commended to us in Scripture (Ps. 20:7; 34:2; 44:8; Jer. 9:23,24). This is clearly not the boasting that Paul forbids. He who boasts in the Lord exults in the God of true glory, grace, and love, the One who truly deserves all praise, honor, and glory. This holy boasting does much toward vanquishing the unholy boasting that is forbidden by Christ and His apostle.

Sunday, January 2nd - Galatians 5: 26

People can be proud of and boastful with respect to either their strength or their weakness. The diligent and self-reliant person may boast in his strength, while the afflicted may boast in his victim status. Paul forbids both kinds of boasting when he forbids both challenging and envying within the fellowship of believers. The strong should lovingly, patiently and gently provoke and encourage his brethren to love and good works (Heb. 10:24,25), but he should never with loveless and imposing hardness try to compel his brethren to obey the God who will not break the bruised reed (Is. 42:3). The weak should rejoice in the blessed truth that God's grace is sufficient for them and that the Lord's power is perfected in human weakness (2 Cor. 12:7-10), but they should not envy those who are growing from strength to strength in the Lord who tells the weak as well as the strong to share in the joy of those who make strides in their spiritual growth (Rom. 12:15).

Monday, January 3rd - Galatians 6: 1

Rather than believers being boastfully challenging and envying toward one another, they are taught by Christ's apostle and enabled by the Holy Spirit to be gently and humbly restorative in their attitudes and actions toward one another. Nor are we who have been saved by our gracious God to be gentle only with those who are standing faithfully in Christ. Paul extends our obligation to exercise gentle restoration even to

those who have sinned. Bluntly put, we who are in the Body of Christ ought not to shoot our wounded brethren, but rather serve to heal them.

Tuesday, January 4th - Galatians 6: 1

Once more the apostle addresses his readers tenderly and lovingly as brethren, reminding them not only of the bonds of fraternal love between himself and them but also of the loving bonds that bound them together with each other. Those bonds should not be allowed to break under even the most trying strains. Paul therefore commends a loving regard for any believer who not only is in sin but who is *caught* in it without his having taken initiative to confess it and thus engage some degree of sympathy from his brothers. Furthermore, Paul extends the boundaries of this loving regard to a man in *any* sin, including the worst sin. Think of how Nathan acted lovingly to restore, not harshly to condemn, David who was caught in his heinous and greatly aggravated sin with Bathsheba (2 Sam. 12:1-14).

Wednesday, January 5th - Galatians 6: 1

Paul directs his instruction in this verse to those who are spiritual. By this designation, the apostle does not refer to a class of top tier believers so much as to all of those in the Church who possess in growing measure the sweet and nourishing fruit of the Holy Spirit. Those who are filled with love will neither rejoice in another's sin nor censoriously condemn his brother who may be entangled in sin (1 Cor. 13:4-7). Instead, those who are truly spiritual will go to self-sacrificial lengths to restore a sinning brother or sister to the loving care of the redeeming Lord who has saved them and made them brethren bound together in His love.

Thursday, January 6th - Galatians 6: 1

The spiritual man does not accuse or condemn his sinning brother, but seeks to restore him from the injuries he has brought upon himself by his sin. The Greek word Paul uses for *restore* is one that Mark uses in his Gospel to describe James and John *mending* their nets (Mk. 1:19). The spiritual man is not one who, as the pietistic Levite and priest, passes by the wounded man on Jericho road, but rather he is like the Samaritan who bound up the man's wounds (Lk. 10:25-37). Still less is the spiritual man like the scribes and Pharisees who dragged the woman they caught in adultery before Jesus to be condemned, but rather he is like the apostle Paul who would, if possible, wish himself accursed if it would save his sinning Jewish brethren who refused the salvation of Christ (Jn. 8:3-11; Rom. 9:1-5).

Friday, January 7th - Galatians 6: 1

The spiritual are to restore their sinning brethren not with convicting accusations and harsh admonitions. The restoration of the Holy Spirit through the spiritual ones whom He indwells is not in the wind, earthquake, or fire, but is in the still voice of the Lord's compassion for His erring sheep (1 Ki. 19:9-13). Such a spirit of loving

gentleness and tender regard is most effective in promoting healing in those who have been entangled in and lacerated by their sin. The harsh Pharisee seeks to aggravate and intensify the misery of the sinner; those who serve the Great Physician seek to and succeed in lessening and relieving the pain and grief of sinners by restoring them to their forgiving Savior.

Saturday, January 8th - Galatians 6: 1

The gentle manner in which spiritual ones restore their sinning brother is to issue not only from the love of the spiritual ones for their suffering brother but also from the humility and realistic vigilance that characterize those who are of the Spirit. The spiritual do not minister to sinners restoringly in an attitude of censorious pride. Instead, the spiritual one constantly bears in mind that he, too, is weak and subject to being entangled in sin himself. Paul describes this as the wretchedness of the believer (Rom. 7:24,25). Those vulnerable to sinful falls do well to treat their brethren with the same tender love that they themselves would desire were they to be caught in sin.

Sunday, January 9th - Galatians 6: 1

The instruction for the spiritual man to look to himself when he seeks to restore a brother caught in sin alerts us to the reality that there is more involved in a Christian's sin than his own wounding and restoration. A believer's sin can be an occasion for his brethren to fall into sin. The spiritual brother may be tempted to fall into the kind of sin in which his sinning brother has become entangled; but more often the temptation for the spiritual man is to fall into pride over his own stand and into loveless intolerance for his brother in his sin, thinking that such pride and intolerance are aspects of righteousness when they are really features of sinful and unspiritual lovelessness.

Monday, January 10th - Galatians 6: 1

The phrase, *caught in any trespass*, is also vitally instructive for the spiritual ones who endeavor gently to restore the sinner. The word *caught* speaks of a brother being subject to sinister ambush more than to his being determined and taking initiative to sin. It does not excuse a brother's sin but explains that there is more to it than his own conscious choice. Paul speaks of this as the principle of indwelling sin in Rom. 7:16-24. Our recognition of this sinister reality to which all believers are vulnerable should awaken within the spiritual ones among us a clear understanding of and loving sympathy for the brother who has been ambushed today as a spiritual brother may be tomorrow.

Tuesday, January 11th - Galatians 6: 1

The phrase *lest you too be tempted* is also vitally instructive. It alerts us to the fact that there is a living enemy, a deceitful serpent, a prowling lion seeking to devour all

believers. It is sobering that Paul does not write: *lest you too fall*. The fact that he admonishes us to guard against temptation seems to imply that mere temptation practically guarantees our fall! This sober warning must be balanced by what Paul elsewhere writes about God providing for us the way of escape when we are tempted (1 Cor. 10:13). However, the way of escape from this devouring Satanic tempter is always by our exercise of firm faith in Christ (1 Pet. 5:8,9), and it is Christ who teaches us ever to pray: *lead us not into temptation*.

Wednesday, January 12th - Galatians 6: 1, 2

Our life in the Spirit and our walking by the Spirit include and encompass our being tempted, our slipping, our falling, and our restoring others and being ourselves restored by others. The best way we can live such a life is by our cultivating and practicing a mutual and loving consideration for each other in Christ. The spirit of rigid perfectionism is antithetical to the Spirit of God. This call for mutual consideration extends beyond our dealing with sinning brethren. As v.2 tells us, we are prompted and empowered by God's Spirit to be practically helpful to those in the Body of Christ who are under painful and incapacitating burdens. If we wonder why Almighty God allows such sinning and suffering under burdens to afflict His people, at least part of the answer is that these things stimulate the exercise and lead to the strengthening of our love and our gracious regard for one another in the Body of Christ.

Thursday, January 13th - Galatians 6: 2, 5

It is important that we clearly understand what Paul means by his use of the term *burdens*, especially in view of what the apostle writes in v.5 about each believer bearing his own *load*. The Greek word translated *burdens* speaks of a load that is excessive and crushing to the one who may be under it, while the Greek word translated *load* means something smaller, like a suitcase or backpack that one has responsibility to carry for himself. Paul informs us that we who are in Christ are to be lovingly responsible to help our brethren bear such crushing burdens as bereavements, persecutions, painful afflictions, and overwhelming practical needs. When we see our brethren beaten, broken, and rendered helpless by their sufferings, we are to be prompted by the law of our Savior's sacrificial love to render our prayers, condolences, and what practical help we can bring as sympathetic relief to them in their suffering. Read Jas. 2:14-16 and Luk. 10:5-37 for negative and positive examples of such helping with others' burdens.

Friday, January 14th - Galatians 6: 2, 5

In contrast with our being responsible *to* our brethren suffering under crushing burdens, we are taught in v.5 that the law of Christ does not make us responsible *for* our brethren. For example, we can encourage them in love and good works but we cannot love others for them nor can we do those good works for them

that God has ordained for them to do (Eph. 2:10). Paul writes elsewhere that if a man will not work, he should not eat (2 Thess. 3:10). The Book of Proverbs is full of criticisms of the sluggard and slacker and has no words of commendation for those who refuse to bear their own personal and God-given responsibilities. If we try to take up a brother's slack, we confirm him in his indolence while impoverishing others under true burdens who need our help and do not receive it because it has been misdirected to the slacker. Such attempts to be responsible *for* another's personal responsibilities is loving neither to him nor to others and has no relation to the good, wise, and loving law of Christ.

Saturday, January 15th - Galatians 6: 3, 4

How are we to judge whether a brother is bearing a burden that is crushing him or a load that he should bear for himself? Some burdens and loads are obvious, but others may call for close and careful examination if we are rightly to distinguish them. These verses speak to the matter of how we can rightly assess such close calls. A vital part of such assessment is our maintaining a humble and honest assessment of ourselves. If, for example, we think too highly of ourselves, we will regard others' burdens as personal loads, not because they are such, but rather because we do not want to help them bear their burdens. To the arrogant, all people look small and their burdens negligible, when it is really the hard hearts of the proud that are small and that skew their perspective.

Sunday, January 16th - Galatians 6: 3, 4

With the word *for* in v.3, Paul connects what he says in that verse with what he has just said in vv.1,2. It is the one who thinks he is something that he actually is not who will fail or refuse to restore his sinning brother gently or lovingly to help his burdened brother. The false self-image such a one may have is an exaggeration of some feature of his life. He may think he is not spiritual enough to help restore sinners, or he may think himself too spiritual to help struggling sinners and burdened brethren, lest he be himself tainted or distracted from some imagined great service for the Lord. Such a person is self-deceived, but he deceives no one else, least of all the Lord, who is supremely spiritual and who stooped to save sinners and to bear all of their burdens (1 Pet. 5:7).

Monday, January 17th - Galatians 6: 3, 4

Paul gives the antidote to the poison of self-deceit in v.4. The problem with the self-deceived one is that he bases his self-perception on self-exalting thoughts. In spite of what Prov. 3:5,6 teaches, the self-deceived one relies on his own understanding and is misguided thereby into self-conceit. The antidote to this poison is honest self-examination. In Rom. 12:3, the apostle adds that such examination is to be done in

the sight of God who is never deceived and with whom the believer is in loving communion by faith.

Tuesday, January 18th - Galatians 6: 3, 4

What is to be examined is not motives or intentions that can be devilishly difficult to determine (Jer. 17:9) but rather one's actual accomplishments. The singular word *work* is indicative of one's examining before God the growing corpus of his Christian service. Such honest and humble assessment may and should reveal to the growing believer that he is something, by God's grace, of course (1 Cor. 15:10). Yet it is the one who is truly something spiritual who does not stand aloof from his needy brother but who engages with his sinning and suffering brother with loving, gentle, and effective measures that restore the sinner and relieve the sufferer.

Wednesday, January 19th - Galatians 6: 3, 4

When one honestly examines his own walk in the good works that God has prepared for him (Eph. 2:10), he may rightly boast, but he will do so in the Lord, giving glory to God for His wise providence and enabling power (1 Cor. 15:10). When Paul writes that such a man may boast in regard to himself alone, he does not mean that the Lord is excluded but rather that the truly spiritual man may boast in solid and true and beneficial deeds he has done by God's grace and power and for God's glory and for the good of others. Such a man does not boast of his pretended superiority over his sinning and suffering brethren.

Thursday, January 20th - Galatians 6: 5

The load that each believer is rightly to bear himself is tailor made for each believer by the Lord. Our wise and loving heavenly Father calls and equips us to do things and to endure trials that are designed and orchestrated by Him for our good (Rom. 8:28). We deprive ourselves of great blessing when we try to shift our load onto others; we deprive others of great blessing when we endeavor to take such edifying—not exhausting—loads from them.

Friday, January 21st - Galatians 6: 6

Paul, in this verse, continues to develop the theme of believers walking in the Spirit (Gal. 5:16, 25). The apostle has written of the personal character of those who walk in the Spirit when he described the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22,23). Then Paul wrote of the corporate incarnation of the Spirit of God as believers cultivate mutual love, respect, and responsible and restorative ministry in their fellowship together (Gal. 6:1-5). In this verse, the apostle briefly addresses the privilege and loving responsibility believers have to support and sustain those who are their spiritual leaders. Those who are enlightened and empowered by a faithful ministry of God's Spirit-inspired Word are encouraged to share life's essentials with those who minister the Word. Such

mutual sharing is part of what keeps believers engaged in vital and loving relation to each other by God's wise and loving design.

Saturday, January 22nd - Galatians 6: 6

Paul sets out mutual responsibilities in this verse. There is implied a divine design and sanction to the arrangement. At the time of Paul's writing, the foundation of the New Testament Church was being laid. At this foundational point we find reference to those called and equipped by God *to get their living from the gospel* (1 Cor. 9:14). The office of pastor/teacher is one of divine institution, not one of man's devising (Eph. 4:11,12). Such an institution is not only given by the Lord, but is also to be sustained by the people of the Lord supporting it in the manner prescribed by Christ and His apostles. When we do God's will in God's way mutual blessing results.

Sunday, January 23rd - Galatians 6: 6

There are mutual responsibilities that devolve upon gospel ministers and church members from the Lord. Ministers are to be faithful to teach God's Word with diligence, clarity, and love (2 Tim. 4:1,2). Pastors are not called by God to be good public relations men or masters of a plethora of ceremonies. They are called to nourish and protect and guide the sheep whom Christ has redeemed by His blood, and to do this by their speaking to God in prayer for those sheep and speaking from God through the ministry of His Word to those sheep. Anything in addition to or apart from such prayers and ministering of the Word is neither sanctioned by God nor sanctifying to His people.

Monday, January 24th - Galatians 6: 6

Church members are responsible to hear and heed the ministry of God's Word with faith, diligence, gratitude, and vital personal application. They are also called to share with their pastors. The Greek word translated *share* is the one from which we get our words *fellowship* and *communion*. Even in practical matters, there is to be loving reciprocation in all true ministry. Members are to share with their pastors *all good things*, not just their complaints and problems, but also their spiritual fruit of love, joy, gentleness, kindness, etc. They are also to share of their material sustenance, giving not an impoverishing burden but a due and responsible portion of life's physical essentials to those who share with them the treasures of Christ and His salvation (1 Cor. 9:1-14). Such sharing is good, right, necessary, and mutually blessing because it is blessed by God.