

GALATIANS

1:1 *What is the underlying lesson in what Paul says here?*

This teaches that no group of men, nor any individual, passes on the ministry gifts Christ gave to the church (CP Eph 4:7-16). Nobody can be ordained an apostle – or any other of these offices – based solely on desire, burden, vision, administrative ability, business acumen, the call of God some may feel they have on their life, or even bible college training. Ministry offices are divine appointments (CP Ac 13:1-4). This is the biblical pattern for being raised up to high office in the New Testament church. We learn from this that men must first prove their faithfulness to God in lesser areas of ministry before God promotes them to leadership positions in the church (CP Mt 25:14-23). Although Paul was a chosen vessel of God, he was not sent out as an apostle until after he had proved his faithfulness in other areas of ministry first (CP Ac 9:1-30; 11:25-30). See also comments on Ac 11:27, 13:1-4, 20:17; Ro 11:13; Eph 4:11-12; 1Ti 2:8-15, 3:1-7 and 1Pe 5:1-3 and author's study *the Church* in his book **Advanced Studies in the Christian Faith (Volume 1)**.

1:2 *(A) Who were the Galatians to whom Paul addressed this letter?*

Galatia was a Roman province which Paul evangelized on his first apostolic mission journey. This letter is addressed to the churches he founded there (CP Ac 13:1-4, 13-14, 42-49). One of Galatia's major cities was Lystra, where Paul miraculously survived a near-death stoning (CP 14:19-22). Many in the church believe that Paul did die; that God raised him up as the disciples "stood around him" (CP 2Cor 1:8-10). It was his grotesque appearance after the stoning that Paul referred to as his "infirmity of the flesh" in Ga 4:13-14 (CP 4:13-14). It was also in the Galatian churches that the first elders in scripture were appointed (CP Ac 14:21-23). See also author's study *Paul the Apostle – a Chosen Vessel unto God* in his book **Advanced Studies in the Christian Faith (Volume 2)**.

(B) What was the purpose of the letter?

(CP V6-9). The Galatians who had begun their Christian walk by faith, were now attempting to complete the walk by works. They were deserting the simple gospel of salvation by grace, by which they were saved, for a legalistic substitute gospel of salvation by works (CP 3:1-5; 4:9-11; 5:7-9). Paul feared for the Galatians because the only way anyone can be justified before God is by faith in Jesus and the redemption He has purchased for them with His blood. This is called the doctrine of justification by faith (CP Ro 3:20-26 with 4:25 - 5:2 and Ga 2:16). The Galatians had turned from faith in the finished work of Christ alone, and were now caught up in all the rites and ceremonies of the old covenant trying to justify themselves before God without Jesus. This is what happened to the Jews. They also rejected Christ, so God rejected them. And this is what will happen to all who try to justify themselves before God without Jesus (CP Ro 9:30-33). Trying to justify oneself by works is taking away from the gospel of grace, which

results in bringing down a curse upon oneself (CP Rev 22:18-19).

1:11-12 *When did Paul receive the gospel revelation from Jesus?*

Paul received the revelation of the gospel from Jesus when he was taken up to heaven soon after he was saved (CP V15-17 with 2Cor 12:1-7). See also author's study *Paul the Apostle – a Chosen Vessel unto God* in his book **Advanced Studies in the Christian Faith (Volume 2)**.

1:15-17 *(A) What does Paul mean that God separated him from his mother's womb and called him by his grace – is this not teaching that Paul was predestined to salvation?*

No! This simply means that Paul was set apart by God, like every believer in Christ is while still in the womb, for service unto him (CP Eph 2:10). This is the calling of every New Testament Christian. We are all called to be ministers of the gospel of Jesus Christ. See also comments on Jn 15:16 and author's study *Paul the Apostle – a Chosen Vessel unto God* in his book **Advanced Studies in the Christian Faith (Volume 2)**.

(B) What does Paul mean that he did not confer with flesh and blood after he was saved?

Conferred means consulted with. Paul did not seek instruction or clarification from Ananias or any of the other disciples in Damascus concerning the revelation he had received of Jesus when he got saved on the Damascus road (CP Ac 9:3-6, 10-20). Neither did Paul go up to Jerusalem to consult with any of the apostles there. He stayed in Damascus for a short time after his conversion and then went into Arabia, obviously alone, to learn from God direct. Scriptures do not teach how long Paul was in Arabia, but it was not until three years after he was saved that he went up to Jerusalem to see Peter (CP Ga 1:18-19 with Ac 9:26-30). What Paul is stressing in Ga 1:16-17 is his complete apostolic independence of the Jerusalem apostles. Even when he went back to Jerusalem again fourteen years later, Paul was still most careful to maintain his independence of the apostles there. His fellowship with them was on terms of equality. He was not indebted to them for anything (CP Ga 2:1-10 with Ac 15:1-29). See also comments on Ac 9:23-28 and author's study *Paul the apostle – a Chosen Vessel unto God* in his book **Advanced Studies in the Christian Faith (Volume 2)**.

2:1-9 *What was the gospel that Paul preached which he communicated privately to the leaders of the Jerusalem church in V2?*

The gospel Paul communicated privately to James, Peter and John etc. in the Jerusalem church was the same gospel Peter and the other preached to the Jews – the gospel of grace. This passage does not teach, as many in the church believe, that there were two different gospels at that time – one for the Jews and

one for the Gentiles. It simply means that God had delegated to Paul the responsibility of taking the gospel of grace to the Gentiles, and to Peter, the responsibility of taking it to the Jews. (CP Ac 15:1-12). This proved Paul's equality with the apostles at Jerusalem; that he was recognized by them in his apostolic authority. Paul's fear that those in authority in the Jerusalem church might thwart his past and present efforts to establish a church free of all old covenant ceremonial rituals was groundless. The apostles together with the elders and the entire Jerusalem church agreed with his gospel completely and prohibited the Jewish Christians from trying to impose the law of Moses upon the Gentiles (CP Galatians 2:2 with Ac 15:22-31). Paul's meeting with the apostles in the Jerusalem church was a milestone in Christianity. It resolved the doctrine of salvation by grace through faith alone. Until the question of Gentile circumcision was settled here, many Jewish Christians believed that Gentile converts had to be circumcised like them and keep the Law of Moses, as well as believe in Jesus to be saved (CP Ac 15:1-2). See also comments on Ac 15:1-29, and author's study *Paul the Apostle – a Chosen Vessel unto God* in his book **Advanced Studies in the Christian Faith (Volume 2)**.

2:11-17 *Why did Paul oppose Peter publicly?*

Because what Peter did was clearly wrong (CP V11). Until the Judaizers – the legalistic Jews from the church in Jerusalem came to Antioch, Peter openly fellowshiped with the Gentile Christians. But as soon as the Judaizers came he stopped for fear of what they might do. The Jewish Christians also stopped and it threatened to split the church, turning Jewish and Gentile Christians against each other. Barnabas even got involved too (CP V12-13). What Peter did was such a contradiction of the fundamental truth of the gospel of grace, and so hypocritical, that Paul had to publicly rebuke him (CP V14). Why it was so hypocritical on Peter's part is because it was Peter whom God used to settle the issue of Jews and Gentiles fellowshiping in the first place (CP Ac 10:28-35 and 11:1-18). By withdrawing from fellowship with the Gentiles, Peter was obeying the letter of the law he knew had been set aside by God, and was ignoring its significance – that it was a temporary measure for the time of the Old Testament dispensation, to be cancelled at the cross of Christ. Peter knew as well as Paul that no one can be justified before God except by faith alone in Christ, yet he added works to the gospel of grace just to please men – the Judaizers from the Jerusalem church (CP Ga 2:15-21). See also author's study *the Old Covenant – Fulfilled in Christ and Completely Abolished* in his book **Advanced Studies in the Christian Faith (Volume 1)**.

In publicly resisting Peter, Paul showed that his apostolic office gave him the right to stand against any wrong conduct in the church and demonstrated his independence as an apostle. But we also learn from this that Christians must always remain in communion with each other regardless of sectarian affiliation (CP Lu 9:49-50). See also comments on Mk 9:38-41 and author's study *How Christians are to Love One*

Another in his book **Foundational Truths of the Christian Faith**.

2:18-21 *What fundamental truth is Paul teaching here?*

The fundamental truth Paul is teaching here is that no Christian ever has to work to become righteous. Their faith in the finished work of Christ alone has made them righteous before God (CP Ro 3:20-26 with 2 Cor 5:21 and Eph 2:8-9). Ga 2:18 teaches that if believers try to add works to grace to save themselves, they are sinning. That is what Peter and Barnabas and the Jewish Christians in Antioch did in our previous study (CP Ga 2:11-17). Once they accept Christ as saviour believers are dead to the law and only follow after the things of God revealed in Christ, who was the fulfilment of the law (CP Ro 5:20-21; 10:4; Ga 3:19-28). A Christian's life is no longer centred on self, but on Christ. Being crucified with Christ means dying to self and allowing the resurrection power of Christ to indwell us (CP Ro 6:1-14; 7:6). The life we now live is a result of trusting in Christ alone who died for us. We do not nullify God's grace by self-efforts to attain righteousness, because if we think we can add works to grace for our salvation as Peter and the others did at Antioch, then Christ died needlessly (CP Ro 4:4-5 and 11:6 with Ga 2:20-21). See also comments on Ac 15:1-29; Ro 1:16-17, 3:24-26 (A) and (B); Ga 2:1-9 and Eph 2:8-10.

3:5 *Who is Paul referring to here as he that ministers the Spirit and works miracles among the Galatians?*

There are some in the church who believe that Paul is referring to himself here as working miracles among the Galatians by the presence and the power of the Holy Spirit in him, and not by the works of the law, when he first came to Galatia to establish these very churches to which he is now writing. However, that is not correct. The Greek construction of the verse clearly teaches that he who ministered the Spirit and worked miracles among them is the same person – God. The word *ministereth* is from the Greek word **epichoregeo**, which means to supply abundantly or bountifully – only God can minister spiritual provision like this (CP Col 2:19; 2Pe 1:10-11). The word *miracles* is from **dunamis** (CP 1Cor 12:10; 2Cor 12:12). Here we see the reference is to the Holy Spirit conferring miracle working powers upon Paul and others in the New Testament church. What Paul is really asking the Galatians in effect in 3:5 is, does God, who gives you the Spirit and works miracles among you do so because you obey the law, or because you have faith in the gospel message you heard (CP Ro 10:17).

We also learn from Paul's question in Ga 3:5 that he was referring to the Galatians being baptized in the Spirit, because the point he made was that the miracles wrought among them attested to the empowering of the Holy Spirit, proving that they were saved by grace, not works (CP V11).

3:8 *What does it mean that the scripture foreseeing that God would justify the*

heathen by faith preached the gospel to Abraham?

Paul is using a figure of speech here, personifying the scriptures. It conveys the thought that whatever God foresees is expressed in scripture (CP Lu 4:21; Jn 7:38-42; 19:37; Ro 9:17; 10:11; Ga 4:30; 2 Ti 3:16). The scripture Paul was referring to in Ga 3:8 is Gen 12:3 (CP Gen 12:1-3 with 18:18 and 28:14). The gospel that God proclaimed to Abraham in effect was that someday a Saviour – Jesus Christ – would arise out of Abraham's offspring through whom by faith, all the nations of the earth would be saved. Abraham rejoiced, looking forward to that day (CP Jn 8:56). God credited Abraham's faith to believe in Him implicitly to fulfil His promises as righteousness on the basis of Christ's future sacrifice of Himself for Abraham's sin (CP Ro 4:1-5, 16-17; Ga 3:5-6, 9).

We learn from these scriptures that the only means of salvation is by faith – hearing God's word and believing it – whether under the old covenant or the new (CP Ro 10:17). God had a plan of salvation which He made known to everyone who ever lived in Old Testament times (CP Ro 10:18 with 1:18-20). It was predicted by all the Old Testament prophets and while it was independent of the law, it was revealed in all the rites and ceremonies of the law (CP Jn 5:46 and 1Pe 1:10 with Ro 3:21-22). The entire sacrificial system of the Old Testament pointed to the future supreme sacrifice of Jesus. All those who took part in the sacrificial offerings in the Old Testament actually saw demonstrated continually before their eyes the atoning death of their Saviour. They "heard" over and over the word of God – the gospel of the coming Saviour (CP He 9:1-15; 10:5-10). Even Abel who lived hundreds of years before the law made a sacrificial offering to God, proving he knew of the future redeemer (CP Gen 4:1-4). Abel could only have known about a future redeemer from his father, Adam (CP Gen 3:14-15). Abel heard the gospel of a coming Saviour and believed it, and got saved (CP He 11:4; 12:24; 1Jn 3:12). Hearing the gospel and believing it is the only way anyone can be saved (CP Ro 10:8-17). See also comments on Ro 3:24-26 (A & B), 3:27, 4:1-5, 4:3, 4:9-10, 4:13, 4:18-22 and 4:23-25.

3:13 (A) *Where is it written" cursed is everyone that hangeth on a tree"?*

De 21 (CP De 21:22-23)

(B) *What is the curse of the law from which Christ died to redeem us?*

The curse of the law from which Christ died to redeem us was that which the law pronounced upon those who did not perfectly obey its commands (CP V10 with Pr 3:33; Dan 9:11 and Mal 2:2 with De 28:15-68). There are 54 verses relating to the curse in De 28:15-68 and everything listed in them is what Christ died to redeem us from: poverty, sickness and spiritual death etc. This proves there is bodily healing in the atonement (CP Isa 53:4-5). We see here that Christ not only became a sin offering on the cross so that we could be forgiven our sins, but that he also bore our sicknesses and our pains, so that we could be healed

of them. *Griefs* and *sorrows* in V4 means sicknesses and pains. *Griefs* is from a Hebrew word which means malady, so it should have been translated sickness here too as it is everywhere else in the Old Testament (CP De 7:15; 28:59, 61; 1Ki 17:17; 2Ki 1:2; 8:29; 13:14; 2Chr 16:12; 21:15, 18-19; Job 30:18; Psa 38:7; 41:1-3; Ecc 5:17; 6:2; Isa 38:9, 12).

In Mt 8:17 the *griefs* and *sorrows* of Isa 53:4 are correctly translated as infirmities and sicknesses (CP Mt 8:16-17). Here we have infirmities as the consequence of sickness, as well as sickness itself. Matthew asserts here that Isaiah's prophecy was being fulfilled in the healings Jesus rendered to the sick*that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet Isaiah saying, Himself took our infirmities and bore our sicknesses.* This is not teaching that Jesus completely fulfilled Isaiah's prophecy before the cross and therefore there is no bodily healing in the atonement as so many in the church believe. It teaches simply that by healing the sick during His earthly ministry Jesus was demonstrating that bodily healing is an integral part of the atonement. Sadly though, there are a great many Christians today who do not recognize this truth and cannot obtain their healing as a result. They do not believe that Jesus' healings in His earthly ministry simply foreshadowed the healing in His atoning death (CP 1Pe 2:24).

Peter affirms here that Jesus bore the punishment for our sins on the cross so that as our souls are saved, our bodies are healed. Peter is attesting to this as being an established fact accomplished by Jesus' stripes. The word *borne* in Isa 53:4 means to lift, bear, carry away, erase, take away. The idea is that of one person taking the burden of another and placing it on himself. If Christ bore our sicknesses then they were taken away in the same sense as sins are taken away, or borne (CP V11 with He 9:28 and 1Jn 3:5). One can be rid of sickness as well as sin on the same basis of prayer and faith in the atonement. We must believe in the provision of bodily healing in the atonement to experience the benefits. All we have to do is believe what the scriptures teach and claim our healing by faith (CP Jn 19:28-30). When Jesus said "it is finished," just before he died here, he signified that the complete redemptive plan of God which included bodily healing, was fulfilled in His death (CP Mt 9:1-8). Here we see that bodily healing and forgiveness of sins go hand in hand. They are mutually exclusive benefits in Christ's atoning death. This is irrefutable proof of bodily healing in the atonement. Christ's atoning death was not only for Christians to be contemporaneously forgiven and healed in bible times, but throughout every dispensation since then too, until He comes again. This is the ongoing ministry of the church (CP Mk 16:18; Jas 5:14-16). See also comments on Mt 8:16-17, 9:1-8 and 1Pe 2:24 and author's study *Healing* in his book **Foundational Truths of the Christian Faith**.

3:15-18 *What do we learn from what Paul says here?*

Here Paul is using the analogy of the covenant God made with Abraham and a legal agreement made between humans to show that once the parties to it ratify an agreement it stands forever – it cannot be

annulled or voided. What Paul is teaching here is that the blessings God promised Abraham stand forever too. They were not affected by the law in any way (CP Ge 12:7). The purpose of the law was to keep a sinful people in the way of salvation until the seed of Abraham – Christ – came to inherit the promise and distribute the blessings to all who receive Him by faith as Saviour (CP Ga 3:6-16, 19-29). Everyone in Christ, regardless of nationality or sex, is the seed of Abraham and heir of the promise, and every blessing is still valid for today (CP 2Cor 1:19-20). This includes healing for our bodies as well as forgiveness of sins. (See also comments on Mt 21:17-22; Mk 16:17-18; Jn 14:12-14, 15:7; 2Cor 1:19-20 and 1Jn 5:14-15).

3:20 *What is the teaching underlying what Paul says here?*

In V19 we see that the law was promulgated by angels through the instrumentality of a mediator – Moses (CP V19). A mediator is a go-between - one who helps to restore the relationship between two parties, or as in Moses' case, ratify a covenant. However, in V20 we see that the promise of grace God made to Abraham was not in the nature of a contract between two parties and therefore no mediator is required. God acts alone when He promises salvation by grace to whoever will receive it by faith (CP Ge 22:15-18). This proves that grace is superior to the law. Paul is very careful to point out though that the law was not against the promise. It did not negate God's will for us. It was just not able to impart life to us (CP Ga 3:21). The purpose of the law, as we saw in our study on V15-18, was to keep a sinful people in the way of salvation until Christ came to inherit the promise and distribute the blessings to all who receive Him by faith (CP V22-29). See also comments on Ga 3:15-18.

3:28 *What does Paul mean here that there is neither male nor female in Christ?*

Paul is speaking in spiritual terms here. There will always be distinctions between the races, social classes, and the sexes in the natural realm, but not in the spiritual realm. Men and women are one in Christ and equal in rights and privileges regarding gospel benefits. There is no longer any gulf between Jews and Gentiles, masters and slaves, and male and female. All are one in unity, in rights, and in privileges, and comprise one body, of which Christ is the head (CP Jn 10:16; 17:11, 20-23; Ro 3:22; 10:12; 12:5; 1Cor 11:7-12; 12:12-14; Eph 1:22-23; 2:11-22; Col 3:11). The only difference between Christians is their function within the body of Christ (CP Ro 12:4, 6-8; 1Cor 12:7-11; 28-31; 2Cor 10:13; Eph 4:11; 1Ti 2:12-15; 1Pe 4:10).

Some Christians use Paul's teaching in Ga 3:28 that there is neither male nor female, for all are one in Christ Jesus, to justify the ordination of women to public ministry in the church. They do not understand that Paul is simply teaching here that no one is preferred above another as a child of God. God accepts Jews and Gentiles alike, slaves and free men alike, and males and females alike into His family, through faith in Christ (CP 1Cor 11:11-12). It has nothing whatsoever to do with their function in the

church (CP V22-29). There is no mandate in scripture for women to be ordained to public ministry in the New Testament church. In fact Paul prohibits women holding leadership positions over men in the church, and he does so on the basis of God's original order of creation, and in the circumstances of the fall of man (CP 1Ti 2:8-15). For a more detailed study on women and God's order for the church see comments on Ro 16:1-2, 1Cor 14:34-35, 1Ti 2:8-15, 3:1-7, 3:8-13, and author's studies *The Church and Women and God's Order for the New Testament Church* in his book **Advanced Studies in the Christian Faith (Volume 1)**.

3:29 *How are we to understand this?*

This sums up Paul's teaching in chapter 3 that believers are justified by faith, not by the works of the law (CP V1-5). As Abraham was justified by faith in God, so too believers are justified by faith in Christ, and are blessed, like Abraham (CP V6-9). The law could not save – it only condemned, but Jesus rescued all who want to be saved, by His atoning blood. He became a curse, in fulfillment of scripture, that all who accept Him by faith are redeemed from the curse (CP V10-14). God covenanted for Gentiles to be justified by faith before the law came down, therefore the law cannot void the covenant and make its promises to Abraham ineffective (CP V15-18). The purpose of the law was to keep sinful man in the way of salvation until Abraham's seed – Christ – came (CP V19-23). The law pointed to Christ as the supreme sacrifice who would justify all who came to Him by faith, whether they be Jews, Gentiles, slaves, free men, males or females. They would all become children of God through Christ – the heirs of Abraham, and the inheritors of God's covenanted promise (CP V24-29). See also comments on Ro 4:13, 4:24-25, Ga 3:13, 3:15-18 and 3:28.

4:1-7 *How are we to understand this passage?*

Here Paul is contrasting believers' lives before they were saved – as children and servants – with their lives after they were saved – as adult sons and heirs of God (CP Ga 3:24-26). Before salvation, sinful men are like children – spiritually and intellectually immature. They are in bondage to the elements, or spiritual forces, of the world. In God's appointed time He sent Jesus to redeem fallen man and bring Him into sonship. Once repentant sinners become sons of God, God sends forth the Holy Spirit into their hearts, and they are no longer slaves to sin, but heirs of God through Christ (CP Ro 8:12-17). *Abba Father* means "Father, my Father" (CP Mk 14:36). *Abba* is a sign of unreasoning trust, and the two words together expresses love and intelligent confidence in God. Ga 4:4 also proves the pre-existent Deity of Jesus (CP 4:4).

4:9 *What were the weak and beggarly elements Paul refers to here?*

The weak and beggarly elements Paul refers to here were the mass of lifeless ordinances that made up the now defunct ritualistic and ceremonial Old Testament Jewish law (CP Lev 23:1-44; 25:1-55). These

ordinances had no power to rescue men from eternal damnation, and they brought no rich endowment of spiritual blessings. The Galatians were allowing the legalistic Judaizers to influence them to observe the Jewish religious calendar instead of holding fast to the freedom from the law that was theirs to enjoy simply by grace through faith in the finished work of Christ (CP Ga 3:1-3 with 4:17). The Galatians were observing days, months, times and years which the law only required the Old Testament Jews to observe (CP V10 with V21). While Paul is rebuking the Galatian Christians in V10, this is for our admonition also. It is a warning to the contemporary church not to allow itself to be caught up in sabbath keeping or to have regard for any ritualistic ceremony or feast or festival that has no warrant in scripture for New Testament Christians. (See also comments on Mt 27:50; Mk 7:1-8, 16:1; Jn 19:31; Ac 12:4; Ro 14:1-9; Col 2:16-23).

4:13-16 *What was Paul's infirmity of his flesh and his temptation which he refers to here?*

Many Christians in the contemporary church believe that Paul's infirmity of the flesh to which he refers here was a chronic illness, but that is not correct. It was his physical appearance after his near-death stoning which happened in Lystra soon after he and Barnabas took the gospel to Galatia on his first apostolic mission journey (CP Ac 13:1-3; 14:1-20). The expression *my temptation which was in my flesh* (in Ga 4:14) referred to Paul's test of faith – the stoning – which he had just endured. His physical appearance was repulsive yet the Galatians did not despise nor reject him, but received him as they would Jesus himself. The stoning Paul received was one of "the marks of the Lord Jesus" he bore in his body (CP Ga 6:17 with 2Cor 11:23-27 and 2Ti 3:10-11).

Some in the church use Ga 4:15 to prove that Paul had an eye disease that made him hideous to look upon. But what Paul is simply saying in effect is that despite how repulsive he looked when he first witnessed to the Galatians they were so sympathetic to his suffering that they would have plucked their eyes out and given them to him if they could have done so. (This is no more sinister than saying that they would have given their right arm or leg to help him too, if they could have done so.) Paul then goes on to wonder in V 16 if their affections have changed toward him because he always told them the truth (CP V15-16). See also comments on 2Cor 12:7.

4:21-31 *What do we understand from what Paul says here?*

Paul was perplexed by the behaviour of the Galatians (CP V20). The Galatians were bent on holding to the letter of the law, yet they did not understand its real significance. It could not save anyone – it only pointed to the Saviour, Jesus, whom the Galatians were now rejecting (CP Jn 5:39-40 with Ro 1:16-17; 3:20-28; 9:31-33 and Ga 2:16). To enable the Galatians to better understand the law and its purpose, Paul uses the two sons of Abraham as an analogy to distinguish between law and grace (CP Ga 4:21-23). Ishmael, the son of the bondmaid Hagar, symbolizes

the law, and Isaac, the son of the freewoman Sarah, symbolizes grace, or the promise of God. The history of Ishmael and Isaac illustrates the conflict between law and grace (CP V28-31). Law and grace cannot co-exist. As Ishmael had to give place to Isaac, so law has given place to grace (CP 2Cor 3:6-15; Ga 3:19-25; 5:1-5; He 7:11-28; 9:1-22; 10:1-18).

Paul also uses earthly Jerusalem, and "Jerusalem which is above", to compare law and grace (CP Ga 4:24-26). Earthly Jerusalem is an example of the bondage in which those people live who reject grace and look to the law for their justification, whereas "Jerusalem which is above" – *the city of the living God; the heavenly Jerusalem* – is an example of the promise of God – salvation by grace through faith – being appropriated by all those who accept Christ as their Saviour. (See also author's studies *The Old Covenant – Fulfilled in Christ and Completely Abolished* and *The Old Testament Day of Atonement and God's Plan of Salvation* in his book **Advanced Studies in the Christian Faith (Volume 1)**. *Jerusalem which is above* is also called *New Jerusalem* in scripture. It will be the future habitation of all the redeemed of God, from Abel to the very last soul saved in the Great Tribulation (CP He 11:1-16; 12:18-24; Rev 21:2, 9-10, 24-27). We also learn in Rev 21:2, 9-10 that New Jerusalem is the bride of Christ. For a more detailed study on this subject see comments on Ro 7:4, 2Cor 11:2, Eph 2:15-16(B), 4:13, 5:25-32, Rev 19:7-9 and Rev 21:2 and author's study *The Bride of Christ* in his book **Advanced Studies in the Christian Faith (Volume 1)**).

5:1-8 *What do we learn from what Paul says here?*

In V1 here Paul is warning the Galatian Christians against turning away from God's grace in Christ and bringing themselves again under bondage to the law (CP Ac 15:24; Ga 3:10-15). In Ga 5:2-6 Paul teaches that every man who is circumcised in obedience to the Old Testament law is obligated to obey the law in its entirety. They are no longer partakers of God's grace. This teaches that once-saved Christians can forfeit their salvation, because Paul is not referring here to those who had been circumcised in the past, but only to those who were going to be circumcised as a necessity for justification under the law. Christ is not concerned whether one is circumcised or not. Neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything with Christ. He is only concerned with one's faith that works itself out by love (CP 1Cor 7:18-19; Ga 6:15-16; Col 2:8-12; 3:11-14). *Faith which worketh by love* means that faith in Christ expresses itself in self-sacrificing love for others (CP Jn 13:2-17, 34-35; 15:12-17; Ro 5:5; 12:9-10, 15-16; 15:1-3; 1Cor 13:1-7; Ga 5:13-15, 22-26; 6:2; Eph 5:1-2; Php 2:1-5; Col 3:12-14; 1Th 3:12-13; 4:9; He 13:1; Jas 2:14-26; 1Pe 1:22; 2:17; 3:8; 4:8; 2Pe 1:5-9; 1Jn 2:3-5, 9-11; 3:14-19; 4:7-21; 5:1-3; 2Jn 5-6). Most Christians love each other with a mutual, friendly love which is called out of their hearts because they find pleasure in each other's fellowship. But as the foregoing scriptures clearly teach, God calls us to increase that love to an unconditional, self-sacrificial love – the same love wherewith He loves us – for that is the only love that will ensure our place in His

eternal kingdom. (See also comments on Jn 13:34-35, Ro 13:8, 1Cor 12:31, Ga 5:13, 1Th 3:12, 1Jn 2:7, 3:15, 3:16-18, 3:19-22, 4:7-21, Rev 3:7-13 and author's studies *How Christians are to Love One Another* in his book **Foundational Truths of the Christian Faith** and *Christian – Beware of Failing God's Grace and Forfeiting your Salvation* in his book **Advanced Studies in the Christian Faith (Volume 2)**).

5:9 *What is the "leaven" Paul refers to here?*

The *leaven* Paul refers to here symbolizes the harmful effects of the false doctrines of the legalistic Judaizers. Paul called it a "persuasion" because it exerted a powerful and moving influence on the Galatians, hindering them from obeying the truth of God (CP V6-8). *Leaven* in the New Testament is symbolic of any evil influence in the church which, if allowed to remain, can corrupt the whole body of believers (CP 1Cor 5:1-8). See also comments on Mt 13:33, 1Cor 5:6-8.

5:11 *What does Paul mean by what he says here?*

Paul is setting the record straight once and for all here by pointing out to the Galatians that if he agreed with the practice of circumcision as a necessary prerequisite to salvation as the legalistic Judaizers were apparently saying he did, then the Jews would stop persecuting him. The fact that he was still being persecuted proved that he did not agree (CP 1Cor 15:30; 2Cor 11:26). *Then is the offence of the cross ceased* means that if Paul did agree with the practice of circumcision as a necessary prerequisite to salvation, then the cross of Christ would no longer be offensive to the Jews (CP Ro 9:33; 1Cor 1:23; Ga 6:14-15). The offensiveness of the cross to the Jews lay in the teaching that whoever believes in Christ's atoning death on the cross are not subject to the old covenant law. The cross set aside the entire mosaic law, alienating the Jews, because it offered salvation by grace through faith alone without having to do the works of the law (CP Ro 8:1-4 with Ro 3:20-28; Ga 2:16; Eph 2:8-9). See also author's study *The Old Covenant – Fulfilled in Christ and Completely Abolished* in his book **Advanced Studies in the Christian Faith (Volume 1)**.

5:13 *What do we understand by what Paul says here?*

Being called into liberty means that Christians have been set free from the dictates of the Mosaic Law which keeps its adherents under bondage because no one can meet the demands the law makes. But Christians cannot use this liberty as a licence to sin (CP Ro 6:1-2; 1Cor 8:9; 9:19; Ga 5:1; 1Pe 2:16). Christians are to use their liberty to lovingly serve one another (CP Ga 5:14-15 with Ro 13:8-10; 14:1-15 and 1Cor 13:1-7). Instead of living under the Law of Moses Christians now live under the law of love. The law of love is not a set of written commandments though, it is an ethical and spiritual dynamic produced in the heart of Christians by the Holy Spirit (CP Ro 5:5). For a more detailed study on how Christians are

to love one another see comments on Jn 13:34-35; Ro 13:8; 1Cor 12:31; Ga 5:1-8, 1Th 3:12; 1Jn 3:7, 3:15, 3:16-18, 3:19-22, 4:7-21; Rev 4:7-13. and author's study *How Christians are to Love One Another* in his book **Foundational Truths of the Christian Faith**.

5:16 *What does it mean to walk in the Spirit?*

Walking in the spirit is not a mystical exercise in which one falls into some kind of a trance as some think. It simply means walking in conformity with God's word. If we order our manner of life according to God's word we are yielded to the Holy Spirit and will not yield to fleshly desires (CP Mk 7:14-16 with Ro 8:5-14; Eph 4:20-32; Col 3:1-11).

5:17 *Does this mean that Christians can never overcome the flesh as some believe?*

No! That is not correct, as scriptures clearly teach (CP V16,18,24-25; with Ro 6:1-14, 19; 13:13-14; 1Cor 4:16; 11:1; 2Cor 7:1; Eph 4:21-24; 6:11-18; Php 3:17-18; Col 2:6-7; 3:1-11; He 12:1). Ga 5:17 is one of the most misunderstood scriptures in Christendom. It is used to teach how Christians are victims of the flesh and helpless to live right, but as is plainly evident in scripture that is not correct. Of course V17 does describe anyone who is walking in the flesh, but not a Christian under grace walking in the spirit (CP Ro 6:18-22; 7:24-25; 8:1-14; 2Cor 10:3-5; 1Jn 3:8-10; 5:1-4, 18). See also comments on all Ro 6 questions, also Ro 3:9, 5:12-14, 7:4, 7:7-23, 8:1-2, 8:3-4; Ga 5:17; Jas 4:5 and 1 Jn 3:6-9 and author's studies *Romans 6 – a Study on God's Empowering of Believers through Jesus Christ to Overcome Sin* in his book **Advanced Studies in the Christian Faith (Volume 1)**, *The Power of God in Christians to Overcome the Devil, The Doctrine of Grace and Regeneration and Sanctification Defined* in his book **Advanced Studies in the Christian Faith (Volume 2)**, and *What being Born Again Means* in his book **Foundational Truths of the Christian Faith**.

5:19-21 *How are these works of the flesh actually defined?*

Adultery is defined as the act of unfaithfulness in marriage when one of the marriage partners engages in sexual intercourse with a person of the opposite sex other than the marriage partner. Adultery violates the marriage union and brings disgrace upon those involved, which will always be with them. It can never be wiped away (CP Pr 6:27-35). Adultery of course can be forgiven and the offenders restored to grace (CP 1Jn 1:9). *Fornication* refers to any kind of sexual immorality including illicit sexual activity between unmarried persons, adultery, homosexuality, incest, prostitution etc. (CP Mk 7:21-22; Ro 1:29; 1Cor 5:1; 6:9-10, 13-18; 7:2; 2Cor 12:21; Eph 5:3; Col 3:5; 1Th 4:3-7; Jude 7; Rev 9:21). If an unmarried man has sex with a married woman he would be guilty of fornication while she would be committing adultery. Fornication is the only ground for divorce sanctioned by Jesus (CP Mt 5:31-32). *Uncleanness* here means any moral uncleanness including sodomy, homosexuality, lesbianism,

pederasty, bestiality, and all other forms of sexual perversion (CP Ro 1:24-32; 6:19; 2Cor 12:21; Eph 4:19; 5:3; Col 3:5; 1Th 4:7). *Lasciviousness* is shameless immorality, licentiousness, wantonness, lustfulness, lewdness, sexual excess, insatiable desire for pleasure, debauchery and perversion in general (CP Mk 7:21-22; Ro 13:13; 2Cor 12:21; Eph 4:19; 1Pe 4:3; 2Pe 2:7, 18; Jude 4). Lasciviousness is the involvement in that which incites sex sins and lust. That is why Christians must take no pleasure in anything that is sexually explicit, including pornography and such like.

Idolatry is giving pre-eminence to anything other than God. In the Old Testament it referred to the worship of graven images, but for New Testament Christians it could be a person, one's business or job, wealth, power, social status, sport, hobby, even a Christian's ministry etc. Covetousness is idolatry in the New Testament (CP Eph 5:5; Col 3:5). Covetousness expresses the inordinate desire to make something other than God central in life (CP Lu 12:15-34 with Mt 6:19-21, 24 and Lu 16:13-15). Idolatry manifests itself in many forms, but whatever form it takes it involves the worship of demons (CP 1Cor 10:14-22). Anyone involved in any form of idolatry is communing with demons, and that is what Paul is warning Christians against here. While New Testament Christians would not worship an idol made out of wood or stone, if they give pre-eminence to anything other than God they are worshipping the demons behind idolatry. Christians must constantly be on guard against making something other than God central in life because God is totally opposed to idolatry and will not let it go unpunished (CP 1Cor 10:22 with De 32:16-17, 21; Jer 25:5-6; 1 Cor 6:9-10; 1Jn 5:21; Rev 21:7-8; 22:15).

Witchcraft is the practice of sorcery, black magic and spiritism. It revolves around the occult and drugs, and involves casting spells, the use of incantations, and the invocation of spirits, which in reality are demons (CP 1Sam 28:7-19). This was not the spirit of Samuel the witch of Endor invoked here, but a demon - a familiar spirit - impersonating Samuel in appearance, knowledge, and prophetically (CP 1Chr 10:13-14). Witchcraft is strictly forbidden in scripture. Yet many Christians today participate in seances. They do not see seances as serious witchcraft, but lighthearted fun. But that is not correct. Seances are serious witchcraft because those who participate in them are communing with demons and God will not tolerate it (CP Lev 19:31; 20:6; De 18:9-14 with 1Cor 10:21-22; Rev 21:7-8; 22:15). *Hatred* is bitter dislike or enmity, illwill, intense hostility toward someone; the tendency to hold grudges or be angry at someone. Those who harbour such tendencies will forfeit their place in God's eternal kingdom (CP 1Jn 2:9-11; 4:7-9, 11-12, 16-21).

Variance means causing strife (CP Ro 13:13; 1Cor 3:3; Php 1:15; 1Ti 6:3-4); contention (CP 1Cor 1:11-14; Tit 3:9); debate (CP 2Cor 12:20). It does not mean disputing for truth (CP 1Th 5:21; Jude 3). Variance has to do with allowing differences of opinion to lead to animosity. Christians do not have to agree on every issue in the church, but they do have to love one another, and where they do have different

points of view, then they must agree to disagree in love (CP Jn 13:34-35, 15:12-17; 1Cor 13:1-7 with He 12:14-15). *Emulations* are jealousies, envies and uncurbed rivalries in both spiritual and temporal matters. It is an attitude that will not cooperate with others unless it gets its own way (CP Ac 13:45; Ro 13:13; Jas 3:13-18). *Wrath* means a violent motion or passion of the mind; a sudden unrestrained outburst of hostility (CP Col 3:8). *Strife* is used here of those who seek only their own. It represents a motive of self interest (CP Ro 13:13; Php 1:16; 2:3-8; Jas 3:13-16). *Seditions* are factions or divisions in the church (CP Ro 16:17; 1Cor 3:3). *Heresies* in this context are unsound doctrines promoted in the church which are at variance with the pure teachings of scripture (CP 1Cor 11:18-19; 2Pe 2:1).

Envyings are the most base of all degrading and disgraceful passions. They are feelings of ill will and jealousy toward someone else for possessing something which they desire (CP Pr 14:30 with Ac 7:9; 17:5; Ro 1:29; 1Cor 13:4; Ga 5:26; Tit 3:3; 1Pe 2:1). *Murder* is the intentional taking of human life (CP Ex 20:13). The KJV calls it "kill" here, but it should be murder. The verse should read, "thou shalt do no murder". (CP Mt 19:18). God does not prohibit killing in time of war, or as capital punishment sanctioned by governments for serious crimes. These are justifiable, but not murder (CP Gen 9:6; Ro 13:1-5 with Ro 1:29; 1Jn 3:15; Rev 9:21). *Drunkenness* is the excessive use of alcohol whereby one becomes a slave to drink, a drunkard (CP Lu 21:34-35; Ro 13:12-14; 1Th 5:6-8). *Revellings* refer to wild parties and riotous conduct; feasting and drunkenness with impurity and obscenity of the grossest kind; drunken orgies (CP Ro 13:13; 1Pe 4:3).

There are some in the church who teach that Paul is not referring in Ga 5:19-21 to Christians as the ones involved in these sins, but unbelievers. But that is not correct. Inheriting the kingdom of God is not an option for unbelievers, only believers. Unbelievers will not forfeit the kingdom because they commit these sins, but because they do not believe on Jesus (CP Jn 3:3, 5, 18, 36; 5:24; 6:40, 47; 20:31; Ro 1:16-17). Furthermore, unbelievers cannot distinguish between walking in the spirit or obeying the lusts of the flesh - only believers can, which Paul had just called upon them to do (CP Ga 5:16-18 with Ro 8:1). Paul's warning against the sins of Ga 5:19-21 is directed to believers, not unbelievers, and it is a warning to all Christians in all ages who do such things, as it is throughout scripture (CP 1Cor 5:1-12; 6:18-20; Eph 4:20-33; 5:1-8; Col 3:1-10; 1Th 4:1-7; 5:22; He 12:14-16; 1Pe 2:11). See also comments on Ro 1:18, 1:24-28, 1:29-31; 1Cor 6:9-10 and author's study *Christian - Beware of Failing God's Grace and Forfeiting your Salvation* in his book **Advanced Studies in the Christian Faith (Volume 2)**.

5:22-23 *How is the fruit of the spirit defined?*

The fruit of the spirit are Godly characteristics produced by the Holy Spirit in Christians as they are conformed to the image of Christ. Paul contrasts these characteristics of Christlikeness which Christians should manifest with the "works of the flesh" he warns against in V19-21 (CP V19-21).

These works bring death, whereas the fruit of the spirit bring life.

Love is the deepest possible expression of the personality and of the closeness of personal relations. This is the love that God is Himself, and which believers are enjoined to exhibit to be identified with God (CP Jn 13:34-35; Ro 13:8-10; 1Jn 4:7-21). This love is self-sacrificing, patient, kind; never jealous; never haughty or boastful or proud; never acts unbecomingly or indecently; is not selfseeking; is never rude or discourteous; does not become irritated or angry; does not keep account of wrong done to it; it thinketh no evil and does not rejoice in that which is evil, but only in that which is true (CP 1Cor 13:3-7). This love is produced in the hearts of Christians by the Holy Spirit (CP Ro 5:5). For a more detailed study on how Christians are to love see comments on Jn 13:34-35; Ro 13:8; 1Cor 12:31; Ga 5:1-8, 5:13; 1Th 3:12; 1Jn 3:7, 3:15, 3:16-18, 3:19-22, 4:7-21; Rev 4:7-13.

Joy is the happy state that characterizes the Christian life. It emanates from the Christian's love for God, and the assurance they have that the end of their faith is the salvation of their souls (CP 1Pe 1:8-9). Joy is not to be confused with happiness, which is the outward expression of pleasure, a superficial emotion dependent upon circumstances. Joy is not the result of favourable circumstances; it manifests even under the most extreme conditions (CP Ac 5:40-42; 16:19-33; 2Cor 7:4, 13; 8:1-5; He 12:1-3; Jas 1:2; 1Pe 4:13). God Himself is the ground and object of the believer's joy (CP Neh 8:10; Psa 16:11; 35:9; Isa 61:10; Ro 5:11; 15:13; Php 4:4). *Peace* is the sense of well-being, the spiritual tranquility that comes from God in the midst of the storms of life. It is an abiding confidence Christians have in the knowledge that God will sustain them in all their circumstances (CP Jn 14:27; 16:33; Ro 8:6; 15:13 with Php 4:11-13). It was the peace of God abiding in Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego in the Old Testament that enabled them to willingly be consigned to the fiery furnace (CP Dan 3:4-28), and for Daniel to willingly be cast into the lion's den (CP Dan 6:1-23).

Longsuffering is patient endurance. It speaks of the steadfastness of the soul under provocation; being able to bear long with the frailties and offences of others without anger or thought of revenge (CP 1Cor 13:4-7; 2Cor 6:4-6; Eph 4:1-3; Col 3:12-13; 1Ti 1:16; 2Ti 2:8-10; 3:10; 4:1-2). *Gentleness* is the grace which pervades the whole nature, mellowing in it all that is harsh and cutting. It is a kindly disposition toward others: gentle, soft-spoken, even-tempered, cultured and refined in character and conduct (CP Eph 4:32; Col 3:12-13; 2Ti 2:24-26; Tit 3:1-2). *Goodness* is that which is morally honourable and pleasing to God; the quality of moral worth in Christians who are ruled by and aim to live their lives in accordance with God's will (CP Ro 15:14; Eph 5:9-10). *Faith* (KJV), which should read *faithfulness*, means unswerving loyalty, commitment, trustworthiness and honesty in all aspects of the Christian life. Christians must remain true to their calling in God, no matter what may befall them (CP Mt 25:14-30; Ro 3:3-4; 1Ti 6:11-12; 2Ti 4:7; Tit 2:9-11). *Meekness* is a humble, mild, gentle, forbearing disposition. It is not weakness as many think, but

controlled strength in gentleness and forbearance; restraint coupled with strength and courage. One can be meek, but actively angry at evil (CP Mt 5:5; 11:29 with 21:12; 23:13-33 and Mk 3:5; 1Cor 4:21; Ga 6:1; Col 3:12; 1Ti 6:11; 2Ti 2:24-26; Tit 3:2; Jas 1:21; 1Pe 3:15). *Temperance* is self-control; having mastery over one's desires and passions (CP Pr 23:1-5; 25:16; Ro 13:14; 1Cor 9:24-27; 1Th 5:6-8; Tit 2:1-10; 2Pe 1:5-10). Adding temperance to knowledge in 2Pe 1:6 suggests that what is learnt requires to be put into practice.

Paul's final comment in Ga 5:23 is that there is no spiritual law in force that can condemn Christians whose lives manifest this spiritual fruit (CP V23).

5:24-26 *What does it mean to crucify the flesh with the affections and lusts?*

It means to bring our bodies under subjection to God's will; to not yield to fleshly desires. This can only be done under the empowering of the Holy Spirit (CP V16). One must be completely yielded to the Holy Spirit for this to be accomplished (CP V25 with Ro 8:12-14; 1Cor 9:24-27). Under the spirit's empowering Paul was able to discipline his bodily impulses to such an extent that he no longer yielded to them, lest in so doing he forfeited his place in heaven. To walk in the Spirit means simply to live according to God's word. If we order our manner of life according to God's word, we are walking in the spirit and will not yield to fleshly desires (CP Mk 7:14-16; Ro 8:5-11; Ga 5:17; Eph 4:20-32; Col 3:1-11).

6:2-5 *Do not V2 and V5 here contradict each other?*

No, although at first glance they appear to. In V2 we are exhorted to bear each other's burden, while in V5 we are told that every man shall bear his own burden. There is no contradiction however. These verses are referring to two different burdens. In the Greek construction of this passage the burden in V2 is a spiritual burden: a heavy burdensome weight pressing on the heart as a consequence of sin (CP V1). In V5, the burden is one's own; it is the personal responsibility we each have towards God for the kind of life we live. It refers to life's routine obligations and each believer's ministry calling (CP Ro 14:12 with 1Cor 3:12-15). *Bearing one another's burden* means helping a fallen brother or sister come back to their place in God (CP Ro 15:1). In so doing we fulfil God's law of love for one another (CP Ga 5:14 with Jn 13:34-35; Ro 13:8-10 and Jas 2:8).

We are not to condone what the fallen brother or sister has done – *Fault* in Galatians 6:1 refers to a moral failure, a sex sin – but we are also not to browbeat or condemn them. We are not to think of ourselves as morally superior to them, but are to minister to them in a spirit of gentleness, being aware of our own shortcomings, lest we too fall into sin (CP Ac 20:35; Ro 12:3; 2Cor 3:5; Eph 4:2).

6:7-8 *What is Paul defining here?*

Paul is defining the law of sowing and reaping here. Just as surely as everything in nature reproduces after

its kind, harvests being as sure as sowings, so every one of us will reap what we sow in this life and be solely responsible for our destiny in eternity. This is God's law of sowing and reaping and it applies to every aspect of our Christian walk – to the giving of ourselves, our finances and our time to others; our financial support of the ministry; our moral behaviour and our Christian service. V8 clearly teaches that anyone who claims to be born again of the Spirit of God while consciously sowing to the flesh deceives themselves. It is folly for them to think that they will reap eternal life while they sow to things that will eternally damn them (CP [Psa 15:1-5](#); [Pr 22:8](#)).

There is no difference between the Old Testament and New Testament requirements for salvation. They are the same: only those who sow to the kingdom will reap the kingdom benefits (CP [1Cor 6:9-11](#); [Eph 5:5](#)). Paul is talking to two churches here so this is for our admonition too. Anyone who persists in the evils of the wicked faces the same final judgement as the wicked (CP [Hos 8:7](#)). The seed of their wickedness will produce an abundant harvest of punishment. Sinful actions sow seeds that yield evil fruit (CP [Pr 11:18](#)). Those who sow righteousness shall have a sure reward (CP [Psa 126:5-6](#)). These verses are generally used to teach the principle of sowing the gospel and reaping souls for Christ, and although that teaching can be applied, it is not what the verses mean literally. They simply express the great truth of sowing and reaping. The sowing of seeds accompanied by a spirit of brokenness will be abundantly blessed by God in the future. This encourages us to sow to righteousness through deeds of righteous obedience for a rich harvest of God's blessings (CP [Pr 11:30-31](#)). The righteous produce eternal life for sinners by winning them to God. Both the righteous and the wicked will reap what they sow (CP [Eze 18:20-28](#)). These passages clearly teach that once saved does not mean always saved as some teach. We can only be assured of a place in the kingdom if we are sowing to the Spirit at the end of our earthly life (CP [Rev 22:11-12](#)). As we are when we die is how we will be for all eternity. This clearly proves that there will be no chance to improve the life and character of anyone after they die (CP [He 9:27](#)). We need to know these scriptures in order to share them with others who do not know this (CP [Lu 16:19-31](#)).

There is marvellous teaching in this scripture. But first and foremost it does not teach that the rich go to hell and the poor go to heaven. Where we spend eternity is dependent entirely upon our relationship with Jesus, not whether we are rich or poor. What it does teach is that there is no intermediate state as some believe between death and our final destination in eternity called "purgatory". At death the soul and spirit of the righteous go straight to heaven while the soul and spirit of the unrighteous go straight to hell. There is no such place as "purgatory", and neither is there any further opportunity for sinners to repent. The choices we make in our earthly life determine where we will spend eternity (CP [Pr 21:13](#); [22:9](#)).

If we want God to hear our prayers when we are in need then we must also hear and respond in love to the needs of others. God has a special concern for the weak and the helpless. They are very important in His plan of redemption and He blesses those who help them. If we

share God's pity for those in need we can confidently expect Him to deliver us if ever we are in trouble ourselves (CP [Pr 19:17](#)). There is no clearer evidence in scripture than this of how God identifies with the plight of poor people. The help we give them becomes God's own debt to us. We should consider this the greatest privilege in life: to be able to lend to God (CP [Psa 41:1-3](#)). *Poor* here means helpless and powerless, poor in health, weak and gaunt. The blessing promised to the saints here who minister to the needy is the resurrection. That is what "The Lord will preserve him and keep him alive" means in V2 (CP [Psa 112:9](#)). Paul quotes this Psalm to encourage Christian giving (CP [2Cor 9:1-15](#)).

This scripture teaches there are four things we must do in giving: we must give willingly from the heart; we must not give grudgingly; we must not give of compulsion; we must give cheerfully. Believers who give what they can to help those in need will find that the grace of God furnishes a sufficiency for their own needs and even more in order that they may abound in good works for others (CP [Pr 11:24-25](#)).

God blesses those who are generous, whether it be in their finances or the giving of themselves. We are all stewards of God's gifts and we must use them for His cause and for the benefit of those in need. God promises that those who are generous will get back more than they give (CP [Ecc 11:1-6](#)). We must always be willing to be generous and helpful and not withhold from anyone, for nobody knows when they may need help themselves. V3 illustrates the certainty of blessing. Just as surely as nature is unailing, so then whoever helps others in need will themselves be blessed in due course. V6 is a similar teaching to Ga 6:9 (CP [Ga 6:9-10](#)). While ever we keep doing good in spite of the opposition we will encounter, in due course we will reap the fruit of the harvest, and notwithstanding that we are to do good unto all men, we are to be particularly concerned with the well-being of our brothers and sisters in Christ. In the Greek construction of V10 Paul is exhorting the church to not only do good when the opportunity presents itself, but to look for opportunities to do good (CP [Mt 25:31-46](#)). All of our giving has to be as to God our source, for whatever we do we are doing it as unto Jesus. Jesus equates our treatment of those in need with our treatment of Himself: what we do for them we do for Him. Our Christian walk is not only a spiritual walk, it must also serve the material needs of others, especially our brothers and sisters in Christ (CP [Jas 2:13-17](#)). Here we are presented with the real test of our faith. Christians are not justified by works, but because we are justified by faith, we do the works. This proves our Christian consecration to God's service and confirms our love for God and for each other (CP [1Jn 3:16-19](#)). The only faith that saves is that demonstrated by works out of our love for God. This scripture is the exact counterpart of Jn 3:16. This is the acid test of Christianity by which we know whether we are following the example of God's love to others. If we are not willing to give of material things to others in need, we certainly would not lay down our lives for them (CP [2Cor 8:1-15](#)).

2Cor 8-9 contain the most extensive teaching about Christian giving in the New Testament. The principles and promises in these two chapters are a guide for

believers and churches for all time. They teach that we belong to God and what we have is held as a trust for our Lord, that we must make the basic decision within our hearts to serve God and not money (CP Mt 6:24); that our giving is done to help those in need and to advance the Kingdom of God; that our giving should be in proportion to our income (CP 1Cor 16:1-2). It is not important how much we give as we learned from 2Cor 8:12, providing we are eager to give it. We can only give in accordance with what we have. We are not forced to give what we do not have. Giving is seen as proof of our love. It should be done sacrificially and voluntarily. By giving to God we sow not only money but also faith, time and service, thus reaping greater faith and blessing in return (CP 1Ti 6:17-19).

Here church leaders are urged to teach against the selfish use of personal wealth and to persuade wealthy members of their congregations to give liberally to God's work and lay up for themselves treasures in heaven (CP Mt 6:19-24; Lu 12:15; 2Cor 9:5-6; Col 3:5; He 13:5). It is not enough that wealth and material possessions should be acquired simply for our own self-gratification. They must always be made available for the work of God (CP Lu 6:38). God's law of sowing and reaping dictates that blessings will always be returned for generosity. This teaches once more that giving and receiving go together, though we should never give in order to receive. That would be self-centeredness – our giving would be profit-motivated instead of being motivated by love. Receiving is not an entitlement to give but the law of sowing and reaping is a principle of life already established by God and we have no say in the matter. It is an assurance that sets us free to give (CP Ge 8:22). There are a lot of Christians however who expect to receive the kingdom benefits without ever giving into the kingdom. But how can God bless us with all the fullness of His blessings for giving if we do not give in the first place, and how can His kingdom be extended if we do not financially support it? (CP 1Cor 9:1-14). Paul was pointing out to the Corinthian church here that it was their duty to keep him even though he chose to keep himself (CP 2Th 3:7-9). It is the church's responsibility to ensure that those who minister the word live off the word (CP Ga 6:6).

It is the duty of all who are taught the word to help provide material support for those who teach the word. This includes all those who pastor the churches, missionaries, etc (CP 3Jn 5-8). This scripture teaches us that no workers of the word should have to seek help from those they are trying to evangelise. To have to seek help from unbelievers could hinder the gospel and expose the messengers of the gospel to charges of preaching for financial gain. Christians have a duty, and it should be seen as a privilege, to contribute to missionary needs and works. Workers of the word must not be treated like beggars, but received, sent and supported in a manner worthy of God (CP Mt 10:40; Lu 10:3-7; Php 4:10-19; 1Ti 5:17-18; Tit 3:13). Jesus promises that "he that receiveth a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet's reward; and he that receiveth a righteous man in the name of a righteous man shall receive a righteous man's reward." (CP Mt 10:41-42). This teaches us how important it is in God's economy for Christians to receive and support true messengers of the gospel but conversely, we should

not receive and support anyone who does not proclaim God's truth according to the New Testament revelation, or who do not live godly lives according to God's righteous standards. If we support them we will bring ourselves into their condemnation (CP 2Jn 7-11).

It should be noted here that none of the scriptures studied so far concerning the giving of our finances into the work of God are referring to tithes, but to freewill offerings. The New Testament does not stress tithing but rather, as the scriptures so far studied indicate, invites Christians to give generously in response to the needs of others and as an expression of their love for God. A great many Christians believe that tithing is purely an Old Testament concept and does not translate to New Testament giving. They believe that under the new covenant the supreme law of love has been substituted for Old Testament tithing and that New Testament giving is centred entirely around stewardship – the giving of ourselves completely to the work of God, which includes our time, our finances, and our material possessions. They believe that we are to give voluntarily, spontaneously and freely, not from a sense of obligation, nor with an intent to merit God's blessings. God has given wonderfully to us and is deserving of all that we might be moved to give Him. Many of these Christians use the tithe as the minimum standard by which they measure their giving to the Lord, but they do not accept that the tithe is required by scripture. They do not agree that scriptures teach that the tithe Abraham paid to Melchizedec established a precedent for tithing that New Testament Christians must follow. Rather they believe that Abraham's tithe had special symbolic implications related to establishing Christ's eternal priesthood. They believe this is borne out by the writer of Hebrews when he contrasts Christ's eternal priesthood with the temporary Levitical priesthood (CP Ge 14:1-20 with He 6:17-9:17).

Whether or not we agree with that is beside the point here, suffice it to say that at the heart of all giving is the acknowledgment that God is the creator, the owner and the giver of all things, and what we give back to God is only a part of what He has given to us in the first place (CP Ge 1:1; Ex 19:5; 1Chr 29:11-16; Psa 24:1-2:50:10-12; Hag 2:8; Jn 1:1-3; Jas 1:17). Everything we have belongs to the Lord. No one has anything that they had not first received from God (CP De 8:7-18; Job 1:21; Jn 3:27; 1Cor 4:7; 2Pe 1:3). (Concerning Job 1:21 we must remember that Job did not have a complete revelation of God when he said "... and the Lord hath taken away." Job did not know that it was not God but the devil afflicting him. He knew God gave him all he had and so he believed it was God also who took it away. But we know better - we have the book of Job to teach us yet Job's misconception of God has been perpetuated in Christendom ever since. Let us not perpetuate it any further.) To sum up here, our stewardship is a valid test of our relationship with God (CP Mt 25:14-30). This parable of the talents warns us that our place and our service in heaven will depend on the faithfulness of our lives and stewardship here on earth. A talent represents our abilities, time, resources and opportunities to serve God while on earth. These things are considered by God as a trust that we are to administer on His behalf in the wisest possible way. We will all have to give an account of our stewardship

to the Lord in due course and every work we do in the meantime will be brought into judgement (CP Ecc 12:13-14; Mt 5:20; Lu 16:1-2; Ro 14:12; 1Cor 4:1-2). Christian giving should always be characterised by what Paul says in 2Cor 9:7, "Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver." See also comments on Mt 23:23, 2Cor 8:1-7, 9:1-5, 9:6, He 7:1-10. (See also author's studies *Sowing and Reaping* in his book **Foundational Truths of the Christian Faith** and *To Tithe or not to Tithe?* in his book **Advanced Studies in the Christian Faith (Volume 1)**).

6:10 *What is Paul impressing upon New Testament Christians here?*

While Paul is stressing here the importance of Christians extending kindnesses to all who need help whenever the opportunity presents itself, Christians are to be especially responsive to the needs of other Christians (CP Ro 12:10-13; Jas 2:14-16; 1Jn 3:16-18, 4:7-21). See also comments on Ro 12:10-13; Jas 2:14-16; 1Jn 3:16-18 and 4:7-21 and author's studies *How Christians are to Love One Another* in his book **Foundational Truths of the Christian Faith** and *Christians' Obligations to One Another Financially* in his book **Advanced Studies in the Christian Faith (Volume 2)**.

6:11 *What does Paul mean by what he says here?*

This is one of the most hotly debated verses in Christendom. Many who claim there is no bodily healing in the atonement use this verse as one of their proof texts that Paul himself was sick throughout his ministry. They argue that Paul admits here to having to write in large (alphabetical) letters because he suffered from a chronic eye disease which grossly disfigured him and prevented him from seeing properly. They claim that this was Paul's "infirmity of the flesh" he referred to in Ga 4:13-16 – the result of his "thorn in the flesh" in 2Cor 12:7 – but this is not correct as scriptures clearly prove (CP 2Cor 12:1-10

with Ga 4:13-16). We see here that Paul's thorn in the flesh was a demon – *the messenger of Satan* – sent to buffet him; to cause extreme hardships to befall him (CP 2Cor 11:23-27). Paul's infirmity of the flesh in Ga 4:13-16 was his repulsive appearance after his near-death stoning when he and Barnabas first took the gospel to Galatia on their first apostolic mission journey in Ac 13 and 14 (CP Ac 13:1-3; 14:1-20).

Paul's reference to "how large a letter" he had written to the Galatians in Ga 6:11 simply refers to the epistle itself, not to the size of the alphabetical letters he used in the subject matter of the epistle. (See also comments on 2 Cor 12:7 and Ga 4:13-16 and author's study *Paul the Apostle – a Chosen Vessel unto God* in his book **Advanced Studies in the Christian Faith (Volume 2)**).

6:14 *What exactly is the meaning of this?*

This means simply that like Paul, nothing should be as important to believers as the cross of Christ. Because of the cross the world should be dead to them and they to the world. The world should have no more appeal to them or influence over them. The only important thing is that they become new creations in Christ (CP V15 with Ro 6:3-10; 2Cor 5:17; Ga 2:20; Php 3:3, 7-8, 20-21). See also comments on Lu 15:14-15, Jn 15:18-25; Jas 4:1-4; 2Pe 3:1-7; 1Jn 2:15-17 and author's study *Christians, Love not the World* in his book **Advanced Studies in the Christian Faith (Volume 2)**.

6:17 *What are the "marks of the Lord Jesus" Paul bore in his body?*

The *marks of the Lord Jesus* Paul bore in his body were all the things he suffered for the gospel sake. Five times he received thirty-nine lashes, three times he was beaten with rods, once he was stoned and left for dead, 3 time he was shipwrecked (CP 2Cor 11:23-27; 2Ti 3:10-11). See also comments on Ac 13:1-3; 14:1-20; Ga 6:11 and author's study *Paul the Apostle – a Chosen Vessel unto God* in his book **Advanced Studies in the Christian Faith (Volume 2)**.