

G R A C E SOUND OF

... it is good for the heart to be strengthened by grace ... Hebrews 13:9

Issue 134 February 2007

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Studies in Galatians—Part Three

John G. Reisinger

I remember hearing a story about Donald Barnhouse’s approach to problem solving. He and one of his elders were having difficulties and decided to have lunch and discuss the problem. Barnhouse began the discussion by saying, “Let’s first list the things that we agree upon.” He proceeded to list many areas where they were of the same mind. Before long, lunch was over and the two men had only talked about how much they agreed. The unresolved problem worsened. The elder asked Barnhouse to go to lunch again. Barnhouse again said, “Now remember all the things upon which we agree,” and he started to list them. The elder stopped him and said, “No, no,

we did that the last time. Let’s start with where we disagree!”

Paul opens his letter to the Galatians with an implicit reference to a key point of his disagreement with them: the question of his authority. In our last issue, we noticed that Paul protects the gospel message on two fronts. First, he establishes his authority as an apostle sent from Christ. Then, he validates the content of his message by pointing out that he received it directly from Christ. We noted that the implications of Paul’s defense extend into contemporary issues of authority raised by both the Roman Catholic and the

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DO THE WILL OF MY FATHER WHO IS IN HEAVEN

—BE TRANSFORMED BY TRUSTING JESUS¹

John Piper

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Whoever does the will of God, he is my brother and sister and mother.—Mark 3:35

Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and keep it!—Luke 11:28

Not everyone who says to me, “Lord, Lord,” will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.—Matt. 7:21

We saw in the previous chapter that the rich man who was seeking eternal life “lacked one thing.” If he “would be perfect,” he needed Jesus (Matt. 19:21). Jesus is the path to perfection. But *how* is he the path to perfection? The last chapter answered: by being the basis of our perfection before God as we trust him. Now we turn to another answer, which is also true: Jesus, by his presence and power

within us, transforms us so that we really begin to love like he does and move toward perfection.

Some Measure of Real, Lived-out Obedience Is Required

The answer of the last chapter by itself does not account fully for Jesus speaking the way he does about doing

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Landmark Baptist understanding of who may commission and start local churches.

We saw that Paul continues his greeting by mentioning the concept of justification, a second area of disagreement. He introduces the topic here; later he explains that to demand any additional criteria to Christ's work on our behalf is to compromise the truth of the gospel. In this article, we will complete our examination of Paul's greeting (verses 1-4) and begin to explore his main point (verses 6-10).

1. *Paul, an apostle – sent not from men nor by man, but by Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised him from the dead –*
2. *and all the brothers with me, To the churches in Galatia:*
3. *Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ,*
4. *who gave himself for our sins to rescue us from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father,*
5. *to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen. (Gal 1:1-5 NIV)*

As I mentioned in our last article, the very first sentence is loaded with a cannon ball. Paul often introduces himself as "Paul, an apostle, by the will of God" but here he adds an expansion that is unique to this epistle. He uses two different prepositions, "neither FROM men nor BY men," to demonstrate that neither the source of his apostleship nor the message that he preached came to him from or by any authority other than the risen Lord himself. Notice the entire short but powerful introduction.

The false teachers were claiming that Paul did not have the essential qualifications laid down in Acts 1:15-

26 to be a true apostle. There are some who believe the apostles were wrong in choosing a successor to Judas. They feel Paul was God's choice and the action in Acts 1 was premature and without sanction from God. Whether that is right or wrong, the criteria for apostleship was that the person had been personally called and taught by the Lord himself and had been an eyewitness of the resurrection. Paul defends his apostleship to prove that he is a true apostle and not an imposter as the Judaizers claimed. He proves he was personally called, taught, and commissioned by Christ himself, "I am a true apostle, not an imposter as these false teachers claim. I was called personally by the risen Lord while on the road to Damascus. I spent three years in seclusion being taught by the Holy Spirit sent from the enthroned Lord."

Paul's claim of being a "sent one," or apostle, means that he is more than just a representative sent out by the mother church at Jerusalem. He is one of that small group known specifically as the "Apostles of Christ." In 1 Corinthians 9:1, he asks, "Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen Jesus our Lord?" Likewise, in 1 Corinthians 15:7-9, Paul insists that Christ had appeared to him just as he had to the other apostles. *Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles, and last of all he appeared to me also, as to one abnormally born. For I am the least of the apostles and do not even deserve to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.* Paul indeed had the credentials to claim apostleship.

The importance of these claims by Paul is vital in an ongoing argument about the authority of the church and its leadership. The Landmark Baptists reject the belief that there is such a thing as a universal/invisible church. They not only teach that the only church in the New Testament is the lo-

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Sickness Not Unto Death

Studies on the Resurrection of Lazarus—Part 4

Philip W. McMillan, M.D.

JOHN 11:4

After Mary and Martha sent to the Lord the message: “Lord, behold, he whom you love is sick,” we have the words of Christ to his disciples concerning that news. “When Jesus heard that, he said, this sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God may be glorified through it.”

First I want to look at the phrase—*this sickness is not unto death.*

I want you to notice that Christ did not say that Lazarus would not die. No, he said the sickness was not unto death; its purpose was not death in itself as the penalty of sin, to remove Lazarus from the earth forever.

While we are thinking about the Lord’s word in relation to one man, we need to think about God’s purpose in death for the race of man.

We often talk about death and eternal death as the penalty that the law demands for the trespass of man. We also speak of God’s holiness and justice standing or falling on the fact of his upholding that handwriting of death he wrote when he weighed mankind in his balances and found them wanting.

But is death, either physical or eternal, an end in itself as a penalty

for sin?

We can begin to answer that question by considering Genesis 3:15. These are the words of God to the serpent at the time mankind sinned in Adam: “I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.”

This verse shows quite clearly that death’s end or purpose was not merely a penalty and a punishment, but also a beginning. In mankind’s fall into death, two distinct races arose from the ashes of ruin. Enemies forever, they can never be reconciled. One race is described in Scripture as ‘those who rest on the law and make their boast in God,’ Romans 2:17. They are presented as turning again to the weak and beggarly elements and desiring to be in bondage to them, Galatians 4:9. Satan used the law to deceive Eve and every willful son of Adam since Eden seeks to pave his way to hell with good deeds, but Christ said of them: “You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you will do.” John 8:44. That is the seed of Satan, spoken of in Genesis 3:15, Satan the deceiver and all whom he deceives. Law is always the blinders Satan uses “lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them.” ‘He blinds

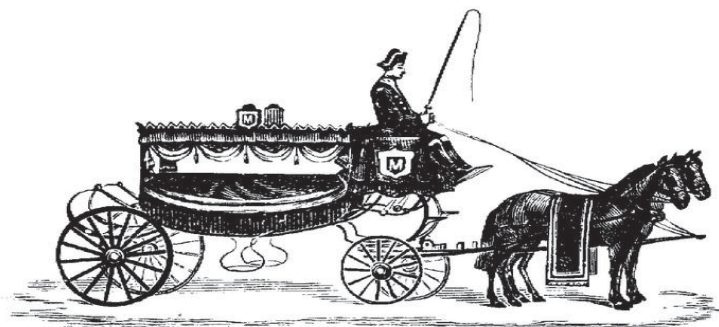
their minds to it,’ Galatians 4:4.

The seed of the woman of course is the Christ of God, and all who are born of

him. ‘Christ has redeemed them from the curse of the law (both penalty and service) for he was cursed on the tree for their sins,’ Galatians 3:13. No longer do they serve Satan and the flesh. “That is, those who are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God; but the children of the promise are counted as the seed,” Romans 9:8. “For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are the sons of God,” Romans 8:14. ‘Not of those who draw back to perdition, they are of those who believe to the saving of the soul,’ Hebrews 10:39.

Oh the wonder of the works of God, that in death he would bring forth eternal life through the Seed. “That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, concerning the word of life—the life was manifested, and we have seen and bear witness, and declare to you that eternal life which was with the Father and was manifested to us” (1 John 1:1, 2). In Eden God said: “This sickness is not unto death.”

The second phrase in John 11:4 begins with a word I have grown to love when applied to God, the word *but*. If there is anything sadder on earth than a funeral, what it is escapes me. Here, in Death’s cold hands is one who is reduced to the inanimate substances which make up the flesh. A sentient being, made in the image of God, able to love and be loved, sometimes transported in wonder, sometimes in a gloom of despair, lies still as clay before our eyes. Only embalming chemicals allow the living to be near him. “I said in my heart, concern-



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cal/visible church, they also insist that only a local church has the authority to establish another local church. That means that a church must be able to trace its history from one church to another back to John the Baptist. This is “link succession.”

Contemporary Reformed Baptists adopted part of the Landmark view. They rejected link succession, but insisted that only a local church could start another local church. Some Reformed Baptists have backed off this view, but to my knowledge, none has openly repudiated this view. What we must see is that the Landmark view of authority (and its variations) is Baptist Roman Catholicism. Since the Reformation, Rome has been insisting that the church existed before apostolic authority existed. The apostles were churchmen and therefore under the authority of the church. The church produced and gave us the Scriptures and it was the church’s authority that authenticated which books should be in the canon. It follows that the same church that gave us the Bible has the authority to add to Scripture. What the church adds is just as authoritative as that which was written by the first apostles in the Scripture. A present day papal bull has the same authority as does the Epistle to the Romans. The Landmark Baptists do not claim to have authority to add to Scripture, but, like Rome, they claim to be the official and only God-ordained organization to interpret and apply the Scriptures.

As I noted previously, if Paul was given any kind of authority from a human source, or was under any kind of human authority in his apostolic ministry, then his whole claim for legitimate apostleship in Galatians 1:1 is illegitimate. If a local church, or a denomination, or a mission agency, or a seminary, or any other human organization, including the “college of apostles” either called Paul or taught

Paul, then the Judaizers were correct and the Galatians did not need to accept Paul as an apostle of Christ. Nothing less than the priesthood of all believers and the single authority of the Scriptures over the individual’s conscience are at stake. Paul sees the message of the Judaizers as robbing the Christian of his or her freedom and bringing believers into the very bondage from which Christ, in his vicarious death, delivered us (Gal. 2:4, 5 and 5:1).

We have already observed that Paul defends his authority by appealing to the source of that authority. We should also point out that in verses 1 and 2, Paul identifies both the Father and the Son as that source. He was *sent* (the word *apostle* means “a sent one”) *not from men nor by man, but by Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised him from the dead.* This is one of the clearest New Testament texts that teaches the deity of Christ. Here, Paul declares (1) that he was not called or commissioned by *men*, but (2), instead was called by Jesus Christ and God the Father. What is the conclusion? If Christ is a mere man, then Paul’s statement is nonsense. If Jesus is not God, then he is a man, and Paul has destroyed the basis of his apostolic authority.

In verse 3, Paul uses both the Greek greeting, *grace*, and the Hebrew greeting, *peace*. When used together, they constitute the New Covenant Christian greeting. Grace is the source of every blessing a Christian enjoys; peace is the crown jewel of all those blessings. To have peace with God through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ is to become a king with Christ and an heir of all that Christ secured as our

substitute.

The moment Paul mentions the name of Christ, he (1) offers a short doxology of praise for such a Savior as our Lord, and (2) gives a short summary of the gospel of sovereign grace as it concerns Christ. However, his words of praise are not merely an emotional outburst. In verse 4, just as in verse 1, Paul carefully chooses his words and aims them at the Judaizers, *He gave himself for our sins to rescue us from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father.*

The first thing to notice is that Paul’s declaration of the gospel contains nothing about circumcision or the law of Moses. The essence of the gospel is the cross-work of Christ. “He gave himself,” means he gave himself up to death on the cross. We must recognize the direction of this giving: he gave himself up *to* God the Father. When he died, Christ offered himself as a sacrifice to the Father. Our Lord’s sacrifice is first of all God-ward before it is us-ward. Christ first satisfies the character of God (Eph. 5:2), before God sets him forth as a Savior for sinners. “For our sins,”

means that the death of Christ is vicarious. He died “for OUR sins,” because he had no sin. Death comes as the wages of sin; since Christ had no sin of his own, and yet he died anyway, he must have been bearing someone else’s sin. Otherwise, he could not have died. He died the

death that we deserve:

He paid a debt he did not owe/
I owed a debt I could not pay.¹

In verse 4, Paul also points out that one of the goals of Christ’s redemp-

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¹ Anonymous, “He Paid a Debt.”



Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

We serve an awesome God. He is most awesome in that his glory and majesty rely on nothing in us. His power does not increase with our notice of it. His strength is not magnified in the few times we acknowledge him as having done something “great.” His holiness is not lessened by our wickedness. His praise goes on and on—adored by all the mighty angels of heaven and the “great cloud of witnesses”—no matter what trifles of foolish vanity may dull our minds. Much of the time, we are deaf and blind to the glory and wonder of God.

Add to this our adversary—pushing us from God, distracting us with hollow pleasures and empty chasing the wind. We must consider anew how “we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds,” and encourage “one another all the more” as we “see the Day approaching.” Spiritual battle and struggle should be our expected course as long as we are in this life and pulled by the jealous Holy Spirit toward activity in the faith.

Consider Martin Luther’s words—written when he was in the solitude of seclusion of Wartburg. He spent ten months of that time translating the New Testament. What a lofty transcendence of our low and muddled lives he must have experienced! At one point, however, he said this:

“I sit here at ease—hardened and unfeeling. Alas, praying little, grieving little for the Church of God, burning rather in the fierce fires of my untamed flesh. I should be alive in the spirit, instead I am afire in the flesh with lust, laziness, sleepiness. It is perhaps that you have all ceased praying for me that God has turned away from me. For the past 8 days I have written nothing, nor prayed, nor studied I really cannot stand it any longer. Pray for me, for in my seclusion here, I am submerged in

sins. For more than a week I have been thrown back and forth in death and hell. My whole body feels beaten. My limbs are still trembling. I almost lost Christ completely—driven about in the waves and storms of despair and blasphemy against God. But because of the intercession of the faithful, God began to have mercy on me, and tore my soul from the depths of hell.”¹

How about you? Have you despaired—thinking your struggles too ungodly to acknowledge? Have you made a truce with the adversary—promising not to attempt anything for God but what is comfortable, respectable, and harmless in exchange for the peaceful comfort of wandering from the battle? Have you ceased praying for me? Have your prayers (as mine too often are) become light and sterile—lacking any sweat and blood? Are they as unlike Daniel’s as mine are? Then take this hour and pray. Ask with me for God to break our hearts for him—to soften the stony coldness of our patterned days—to bring new sensitivity, zeal, boldness, and freshness of love.

We need to die anew to self. I have met only one man whom the director of New Tribes Mission in the Philippines described as “a man who has really died to himself.” I don’t recall his name, or even much what he looked like (though he was tall, and was ministering in the largely Muslim southern island)—but I will never forget how interested he seemed in me when I stopped by the NTM guesthouse unannounced. His demeanor was entirely pleasant and relaxed. He seemed to be waiting on God to know what this

1 E. G. Rupp and Benjamin Drewery, eds., *Martin Luther: Documents of Modern History*, (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1970), 72-73.

unexpected conversation might bring, and how God might use him to turn it into something useful and beneficial for eternity. Often I feel much more like Luther in his struggle—alive to self (and self is so dead). Won’t you pray for me? And not only for me, but for all of the body: that they would be strengthened by Christ. “If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing” (John 15:5 NIV). Here are some requests:

- My friend Aric and I are in an evangelism class—pray for souls, and pray for us to be able to memorize more of Romans. So many people are spiritually lost.
- I have been spending some time working in Newark running drug trials—pray for open doors there, and for a dear older black sister (Ingrid) who is planning to memorize passages in Romans with us.
- Pray for laborers to mentor in evangelism with Bob Loeffert in Pittsburgh, and for his ministry on the streets, in Bible studies, and teaching in churches—challenging them for the lost (contact at 412-441-3436).
- Pray for me as I write and study the Bible, that God would give me insight and wisdom in rightly dividing his Word (see our website of current topics and links at: www.reasoning-bygrace.org).
- Please remember me before God; ask that he would give me perseverance and understanding

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tive work was to *deliver us from this present evil world*. This is far different from much current preaching that has a theological emphasis almost entirely on deliverance from a future hell.

Paul's gospel delivers us not just from a future hell, but also from this present evil world. Note again the emphasis on deliverance and freedom. From what does the gospel free Christians? What does Paul mean by *this present evil age*? Usually, when Paul writes about our being set free, he has the curse of the Mosaic law in mind, but that referent is not broad enough to fit this context.

John Piper, in a sermon on this passage, comments on the meaning of "this present evil world."

What does it mean to be delivered from the present evil age? Jesus prayed for us in John 17:15, "Father don't take them out of the world, but keep them from evil." The present age is an evil age because sin has such a grip on our lives and on the institutions of our society, and because Satan is allowed so much power. In fact, in 2 Corinthians 4:4 Paul says, "The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ" (cf. Luke 4:6).

But for those who trust Christ, a liberation has begun to take place. Colossians 1:13 says, "God has delivered us from the dominion of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son."

The reason we are no longer enslaved to the fear and guilt and anger and pessimism and selfishness and greed and pride of the present evil age is that "we have tasted the powers of the *age to come*" (Hebrews 6:5), or as Jesus said, "the kingdom of God has come upon you" (Luke 11:20). "If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has passed away, behold, the new has come" (2 Corinthians 5:17). The new age, with new powers and new ways, has broken into this evil age to deliver us from the present evil age.²

Paul probably intends for his readers to think of the entire system of this world as opposed to the will and purpose of God. The child of God needs constant deliverance from the world's false goals: its futile status symbols, its animal lusts, its philosophy of life, its fantasies, and above all, its smile of approval and acceptance. This last problem is one of the most difficult for Christians to overcome. I have known great Christians who, by grace, conquered criticism and all temptations of the flesh, but succumbed to the smile of the world. Sometimes, we fail badly and suffer defeat in our Christian walk. We must remember that it is God's revealed will that we ultimately prevail. Paul writes in Romans 8:37 that God's ordained purpose is that we will be more than conquerors. Our security and ultimate glorification is *according to the will of our God and Father*. It was not an accident that you became a Christian. God's sovereign election purposed your salvation. It was not your free will that brought you this far in your Christian life. God's sanctifying will keeps you by his grace. That same sovereign will has purposed to conform you to the image of Christ in spite of all the powers and purposes of the world, the flesh, and the devil. That is why Paul does not compliment Christians for either their salvation or their sanctification.

In verse 5, he praises the one and only being responsible for every blessing – *to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen*. Paul's words here remind us of another facet of the freedom the gospel brings: we are free from the pride that would ensnare us if any part of our salvation were accomplished through our own efforts, and free from the despair that would engulf us if we were responsible for

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Letters

Sound of Grace:

My wife and I hope this small contribution will help. We try to send monthly because we believe the work you are doing is greatly needed. We pray daily for revival in the churches and their need to embrace the doctrines of grace in their declaration of the gospel of our Lord.

WS

Dear John,
Though we are miles apart, we are together in a love of God's Sovereign Grace.

Thank you for your great efforts on His behalf.

Your friend,
SM

Keep up the good work.

RP

12/15/06

Dear John and All,
Thank you for holding strong. Continuing to pray and uphold you.

Merry Christmas. God's blessing in the new year.

AK

Gentlemen:

Enclosed please find a check for continuing my subscription to "Sound of Grace."

May the Lord continue His blessings upon you and yours, as well as your ministry.

In His grace,

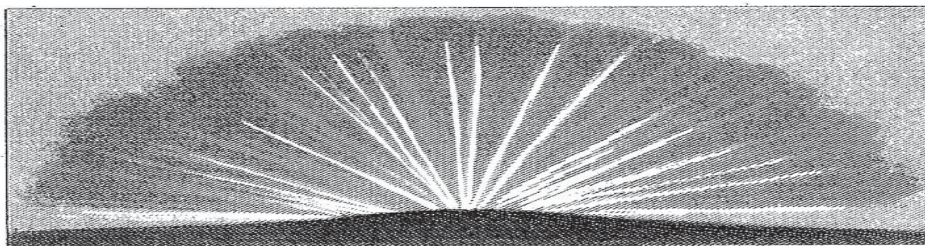
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² John Piper, "Sermon on Galatians 1:1-5," January 23, 1983. Accessed on December 26, 2006 through <http://www>.

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ing the condition of the sons of men, God tests them, that they may see that they themselves are like animals. For what happens to the sons of men also happens to animals; one thing befalls them: as one dies, so dies the other. Surely, they all have one breath; man has no advantage over animals, for all is vanity. All go to one place: all are from the dust, and all return to dust. Who knows that the breath of man ascends upward and the breath of the beast descends downward to the earth?" Ecclesiastes 3:18-21.

How glad I am for the lesson in Christ's words: "This sickness is not unto death," but! oh the hope I see in that word. In Ephesians 2:1-3 we see the coffin and the still form, lying in a death more real than the grave. Listen: "And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience. Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest." If mankind only understood, how they would be wracked with sorrow by the scene.



Now, however, bleak as this polar prospect is in its eternal night, the sun rising from on high bursts in and light floods and darkness flees away.

Just two words transport us from hell to heaven; *But God*. Mark the *buts* well when seemingly hopeless cases are presented and then Scripture says—*But God!* "But God, being rich

in mercy, because of his great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up with him, and seated us with him in the heavenly places, in Christ Jesus, in order that in the ages to come he might show the surpassing riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, that no one should boast," Ephesians 2:4-9. Aren't you glad in your soul that in Christ he chose you to live and not die? When you witness to the lost give them hope—give them the *but God's*.

But for the glory of God, our second phrase in Jesus' words about Lazarus' sickness, is the bedrock of our hopes to find life in death.

Scripture tells us in Genesis 1:27 that "God created man in his own image." To distinguish him from all other creatures that he made, God made man like Himself; he was a living, thinking, feeling being without sin, and so, man was a reflection of God's glory, and that is why all the beasts of the field feared man and he could rule over them. Yet when man sinned, this revelation of God's glory in his

creature was ruined. Why didn't God just destroy us and never show us his goodness and forbearance and long suffering which lead to repentance? Romans 4:2.

In Isaiah's words to Israel we see the answer: "because I knew that you would deal very treacherously; and you have been called a rebel from birth. For the sake of My name I delay

My wrath, and for My praise I restrain it for you, in order not to cut you off. Behold, I have refined you, but not as silver; I have tested you in the furnace of affliction. For My own sake, I will act; for how can My name be profaned? And My glory I will not give to another," Isaiah 48:8-11.

When God acts for his own glory, you may be sure the action will glorify him. He created man in his image, for his glory and to glorify him, and fall into sin or not, yet he will glorify Himself.

That is why the awful sickness of sin was not unto death, could not end there as its purpose. Sin must be put away and God must have his glory from his creature. What a sure foundation for our salvation.

The third phrase in Christ's words in John 11:4 is the second reason that Lazarus' illness could not be unto death: It occurred "that the Son of God might be glorified by it." When Lazarus came forth from that tomb long ago, the people wondered. Some believed on Christ and some did not. But all saw the wonder of God creating glorious life in the tomb of death.

So it is in man's death in sin. Not only is the Father jealous of his own glory, but he is jealous of the glory of his Son, for both glories are one. By him God made our world, Hebrews 1:2. He laid the foundation of the earth, the heavens are the works of his hands, Hebrews 1:10. He is king of Zion's holy mountain, the ends of the earth are his possession. It is to him we must do homage or we will perish in the way, Psalm 2. In the Glorious One who came down from heaven we see the Glorious One in eternity's temple.

Isaiah saw him when Uzziah died. "He sat on a throne, lofty and exalted. The train of the royal robe filled the temple. Seraphim's hid their faces

Piper—Cont. from page 1

the will of God. Jesus says that doing the will of God really is necessary for our final entrance into the kingdom of heaven. “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven” (Matt. 7:21). He says that on the day of judgment he really will reject people because they are “workers of lawlessness.” “Then will I declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness’” (Matt. 7:23). He says people will “go away into eternal punishment” because they really failed to love their fellow believers: “As you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me” (Matt. 25:45-46).

There is no doubt that Jesus saw some measure of real, lived-out obedience to the will of God as necessary for final salvation. “Whoever does the will of God, he is my brother and

sister and mother” (Mark 3:35). So the second historic answer to the question, how is Jesus the path to perfection? has been that he enables us to change. He transforms us so that we really begin to love like he does and thus move toward perfection that we finally obtain in heaven.

I say it that way because Jesus does not give us any indication that we can be perfected in this present age. He teaches us to pray the Lord’s Prayer, and he puts right beside the petition “Give us this day our daily bread,” the petition “Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors” (Matt. 6:11-12). In other words, just as we pray daily for bread, we should pray daily for forgiveness. Therefore, Jesus does not anticipate a time in this age when we will not need daily forgiveness.

That is why I say Jesus transforms us so that we really *begin* to love like he does so that we move *toward*

perfection that we *finally obtain in heaven*. But though our lived-out perfection only comes in heaven, Jesus really does transform us now, and this transformation is really necessary for final salvation. But the *way* our new behavior is necessary is different from the way trusting Jesus for our perfection is necessary. Trusting Jesus connects us with him. Then, because of Jesus’ work alone, God counts us righteous, even before our behavior is transformed. The tax collector who cried out, “God, be merciful to me, a sinner!” (Luke 18:13) would not dare point to any righteous behavior in himself as the basis of his justification. He looked away from what he was and pled for mercy. God declared him righteous before his behavior changed. Therefore, trusting Jesus is necessary in order to be connected to Jesus who is the foundation of our justification. But new, transformed behavior is nec-

Piper—Cont. on page 13

Absolute Predestination

Jerome Zanchius, 1516-1590

Without a due sense of predestination, we shall lack the surest and the most powerful inducement to patience, resignation and dependence on God under every spiritual and temporal affliction. How sweet must the following considerations be to a distressed believer!

- (1) There most certainly exists an almighty, all-wise and infinitely gracious God.
- (2) He has given me in times past, and is giving me at present (if I had but eyes to see it), many and signal intimations of His love to me—both in a way of providence and grace.
- (3) This love of His is immutable; He never repents of it nor withdraws it.

- (4) Whatever comes to pass in time is the result of His will from everlasting, consequently;
- (5) my afflictions were a part of His original plan, and are all ordered in number, weight and measure.
- (6) The very hairs of my head are (every one) counted by Him, nor can a single hair fall to the ground but in consequence of His determination. Hence:
- (7) my distresses are not the result of chance, accident or a fortuitous combination of circumstances, but
- (8) the providential accomplishment of God’s purpose, and
- (9) designed to answer some wise and gracious ends, nor
- (10) shall my affliction continue a mo-

ment longer than God sees fit.

- (11) He who brought me to it, has promised to support me under it, and to carry me through it.
- (12) All shall, most assuredly, work together for His glory and my good, therefore
- (13) “The cup which my heavenly Father has given me to drink, shall I not drink it?” Yes, I will, in the strength He imparts, even rejoice in tribulation. I will commit myself and the event to Him, whose purpose cannot be overthrown, whose plan cannot be disconcerted; and who, whether I am resigned or not, will still go on to work all things after the counsel of His own will. Ω

Courtesy of Grace Quotes:
<http://www.gracegems.org/>

McMillin—Cont. from page 7

crying Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord of Hosts (Jehovah-Sabaoth). The temple shook at his voice and holy fire filled the temple with smoke. Isaiah confessed that he was ruined. Born of a people of unclean lips, his eyes had seen the King, the Lord of Hosts.’

John saw him in his vision in Revelation and fell at his feet as a dead man.

But the greatest glory ever displayed to this sinful world will be the day when all of sinful mankind sees the Son of Man come in his essential glory, in his dual roles of the Redeemer of the righteous and the judge of the wicked.

Heaven will open up like a scroll, his name is Faithful and True and he will come to judge righteously and make war. Eyes like fire, diadems upon his head, robes dipped in blood, he is The Word of God. Armies follow him, he smites nations and rules with a rod of iron. he treads God’s wine press of wrath and vanquishes all his enemies. In 1 Corinthians 15:26 Paul tells us that the last enemy he will abolish is death.

On that day Paul tells us that Isaiah and all prophecies will be fulfilled: “Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is your victory? O Hades where is your sting? The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ,” 1 Corinthians 15:54-57.

Will you adore him, praise him as he comes in his glory, or call for the mountains and hills to fall and hide you from his face? Seek him now, the Glorious Sovereign Redeemer. Ω

Faber—Cont. from page 5



as I study for my exams and applications—coming in the next few months.

Bob, Aric, and I are planning a weekend of evangelism in Newark in late January. We welcome anyone who would be interested in joining us—but if you cannot join us, please be in the labor of godly prayer for us. I spoke with Bob last night, and he never finishes a phone call without reminding me:

“Do you not say, ‘Four months more and then the harvest’? I tell you, open your eyes and look at the fields! They are ripe for harvest. Even now the reaper draws his wages, even now he harvests the crop for eternal life...”

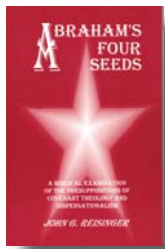
Also, there is a need for someone to compose better gospel tracts—turning men to “the righteousness of God”—rather than the righteousness of their “faith”—i.e., the work of their decision or their own “goodness”—the virtue of their educated choice Chapel Library in Pensacola Florida puts out many quality gospel tracts, but these tracts are written in archaic English: sermons by Spurgeon, Horatius Bonar, John Bunyan, etc.. The content is good, but the style is difficult for the “average” modern dude on the street to read. Bob gives

these out to bouncers at nightclubs, university football players, and every sort of religion-relying or pagan person in Pittsburgh, Philadelphia. These old tracts could use updating in the sense of a modern, yet accurate, rewording. If any English majors or gospel lovers would like to help by editing on a word processor at home, we would be blessed, and God willing, he would use your work to yield the fruit of understanding toward faith. Contact Bob or me to get involved in this. If you would like someone to come and speak on “the wicked heart” or to train brothers and sisters in evangelism at your church, contact us. Bob has been doing this for many years, has given out more tracts (with better quality) than anyone in Pittsburgh has, and is my greatest encouragement in the joy of pointing people to Christ.

Now to him who is able do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever! Amen. (Eph. 3:20, 21 NIV, emphasis added)

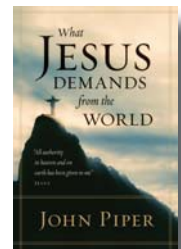
Therefore he is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them. Such a high priest meets our need—one who is holy, blameless, pure, set apart from sinners, exalted above the heavens. (Heb. 7:25, 26 NIV, emphasis added)

Warmly in Christ,
Raymond Faber
210 Hester Road
Bangor, PA 18013-9518
Phone: 610-588-4575;
cell phone: 610-310-8327

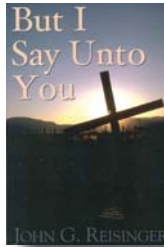


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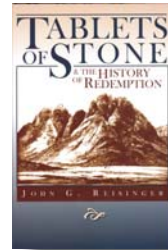


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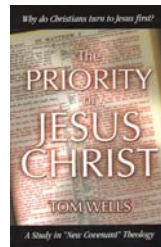
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essary as the *fruit* and *evidence* of this connection with Jesus.

Every Healthy Tree Bears Good

Fruit

We saw in *Demand #7* that being connected with Jesus by faith results in a new life of love. That's the fruit Jesus produces as he works within us: "I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing" (John 15:5). In another place he makes it clear that being a "healthy tree"—that is, being a person who truly believes in him—will bear good fruit: "Every healthy tree bears good fruit, but the diseased tree bears bad fruit" (Matt. 7:17).

The fruit does not make the tree good. The tree makes the fruit good. Good deeds do not attach us to Jesus. They are not the ground of our being declared righteous. Trusting Jesus connects us with Jesus. This connection results in God's declaration that we are perfect, and this same connection releases the power that produces fruit. The reason Jesus can say, "Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire" (Matt. 7:19) is not because the fruit is the basis of our acceptance with God—the tax collector had no fruit to offer—but because the absence of fruit shows we are not connected to Jesus.¹

¹ Though it may cause confusion, it is possible to use the word "justify" to describe how the fruit of good behavior works in the day of judgment. The fruits can "justify" us in the sense of proving that we are believers and belong to Jesus and have a right standing with God in him. That is how I understand Matthew 12:37, "By your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned." It is as though the Judge said, "The evidence is compelling: Your words warrant the judgment that you are a true believer in my Son and have

Therefore, when Jesus demands that we do the will of his Father who is in heaven, he means two things. First, he means, "Believe in me as your only hope for a perfect righteousness that is not your own. This perfection is the foundation of your acceptance with God and your inheritance of eternal life." This is why, when people asked him, "What must we do, to be doing the works of God?" he could simply answer, "This is the work of God, that you *believe* in him whom he has sent" (John 6:28-29). Believing in Jesus is the first and most essential aspect of God's will for us. Second, he means, "This same faith that attaches you to me for justification also attaches you to me the way a branch relies on a vine, and in this way you bear the fruit of love that fulfills the law of God in real, lived-out behavior."

Is God's Will Today Expressed in the Old Testament Law?

Looking back now to the wealthy man who came to Jesus and asked, "Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?" (Mark 10:17), how does the keeping of the law fit into Jesus' answer? Jesus' first answer to the man was, "If you would enter life, keep the commandments" (Matt. 19:17). We have seen that even though commandment-keeping will never provide a righteousness good enough to gain acceptance with God, nevertheless, the effort to do God's will is essential. The question now is, is God's will today expressed in the Old Testament law? A simple yes would be misleading. And a simple no would be misleading. Rather we must say something like: Yes, provided the law

rested your case with him and banked on his righteousness for acceptance in this court." Or: "Your words justify [warrant, validate] the conclusion of this court that you have trusted in the righteousness of Jesus Christ for your justification in this court."

is filtered through the sieve of all the changes brought about by Jesus, who is the goal and fulfillment of the law.

Jesus said, "Everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled" (Luke 24: 44). The Law and the Prophets were all aiming toward Jesus. Not surprisingly, when he came they would be fulfilled and changed. Jesus spoke about this change carefully and respectfully: "Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. For truly, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law until all is accomplished" (Matt. 5:17-18).

Abolition is not Jesus' purpose. Fulfillment is. And when the law is fulfilled in Jesus, its original use changes dramatically. A new era has dawned, and Jesus' followers will relate to the law differently than Israel did. That's why Jesus said, "The Law and the Prophets were until John [the Baptist]; since then the good news of the kingdom of God is preached, and everyone forces his way into it" (Luke 16:16).

How Our Experience of the Law Changes with the Coming of Jesus

Here is a simple sketch of the changes that have happened in our experience of the law since Jesus has come.

First, when Jesus taught that "whatever goes into a person from outside cannot defile him" (Mark 7:18), he virtually nullified the Old Testament ceremonial laws. Mark makes this simple comment, "Thus he declared all foods clean" (Mark 7:19). "On his own authority alone, Jesus set aside the principle of ceremonial purity embodied in much of the Mosaic

Piper—Cont. from page 13

legislation.”² From now on “the sons are free” (Matt. 17:26), and we may eat or not eat according to what love demands.

Second, I mention love as the central criterion of our behavior because this is a second thing Jesus did in regard to changing how we experience the law: He said that it was all summed up in love. “So whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets” (Matt. 7:12). In saying this, Jesus directed us away from a focus on the commandments per se and toward a relationship with himself that bears the law-fulfilling fruit of love (see *Demand #32*).

Third, Jesus told a parable about the owner of a vineyard whose tenants would not give him his produce. He repeatedly sent them servants whom the tenants beat. Finally, he sent his son whom they killed. All this represented God’s relation to Israel as a people. The great majority of them did not render the fruit of worship and obedience, and finally they killed the Son of God (Matt. 21:33-41). Jesus asked his listeners what the owner should do. They said, “He will put those wretches to a miserable death and let out the vineyard to other tenants who will give him the fruits in their seasons” (Matt. 21:41). Jesus applied this correct answer to his Jewish listeners in a cataclysmic way, signifying a huge change in the law.

He said, “Therefore I tell you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you [Israel] and given to a people producing its fruits” (Matt. 21:43). In other words, God is turning his primary redemptive focus from Israel to the Gentile nations (see *Demand #50*). The people of God would no longer be defined by ethnicity or by participation in the theocratic system

² George Ladd, *The Presence of the Future* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1974), 285.

of kings and priests and judges and all the ceremonial and civic laws that held that system together. The people would be defined by faith in Jesus and the fruit of love.

The implications of this change were huge. No longer is it God’s will that his people take vengeance in his name on the wicked, as in the case of the conquest of Canaan (Deut. 9:3-6). No longer do God’s people (the followers of Jesus) govern themselves by putting to death blasphemers (Lev. 24:14) or adulterers (Lev. 20:10) or fornicators (Deut. 22:21) or Sabbath-breakers (Exod. 31:14) or sorceresses (Exod. 22:18) or false witnesses (Deut. 19:16, 19) or those who disobey their parents (Exod. 21:15, 17). Such commands of the law were woven together with the theocratic, civic government of an ethnic people that no longer applies to a people of God with no ethnic or political identity but rather is scattered through all the ethnic and political groups of the world (Matt. 28:19).

Fourth, the entire religious system involving priests and temple and sacrifices reached its goal and end in Jesus. We saw in *Demand #12* that Jesus himself, by his death and resurrection, took the place of the temple and the sacrifices for sin. Therefore, the laws governing how one was reconciled with God through that system are fulfilled and ended with the death and resurrection of Jesus.

Believe on His Son, and Bear the Fruit of Love

I conclude therefore that Jesus’ demand that we do the will of his Father and that we keep the commandments is a demand that we do what Jesus required of the wealthy man who asked how to inherit eternal life. Jesus’ most urgent demand is that we stop treasuring money and start treasuring himself as our only hope of having

A Dear Saint Goes Home

Recently word was received that a dear friend and fellow-laborer in the gospel went home to be with the Lord. Bill Keathley, the founder and long-time president of Gospel Light Foundation for the Blind died on December 20, 2006. Brother Bill leaves behind 24 years of dedicated and fruitful ministry to the blind. He was an ardent Calvinist and loved New Covenant Theology. He put over 150 of John G. Reisinger’s sermons on cassette tapes and CD’s and sent them to blind friends all over the world. He will be greatly missed.

In the providence of God, Shane Jackson, another blind brother, had volunteered to help Bill and his family in their ministry. He is a computer genius, despite his blindness, and is putting Calvinistic books on to computer chips. The US government has pledged to give every blind person a new piece of equipment that will use the chips Shane is developing. It is an exciting prospect.

The Keathley family lives in Loganville, Georgia and Brother Shane lives in Birmingham, Alabama. Shane needs additional support to move nearer the Keathleys. If you, or your church, would like to get involved in a God-honoring ministry to the blind, I know of no one more worthy of your help than Shane and the Keathley family. A one time gift or regular support would help Shane to move to Stone Mountain and help take up the slack created by the death of Brother Bill. All gifts are tax-deductible. You may designate your gift for Shane Jackson if you wish, if not it will go to the general fund.

Send your gifts to:
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our progress in holiness. Every child of God, along with Paul, will say amen to this doxology.

In verses 6-10, the apostle first expresses his amazement at how fickle the Galatians are and then he shows how deeply he detests the heresy of the Judaizers. We need to avoid several dangers as we look at these verses. We must not minimize Paul's condemning to hell the false teachers who were upsetting the church at Galatia. Heresy is spiritual poison masquerading as medicine: this particular heresy (salvation by law-keeping) was a snare and a delusion that prevented those who accepted it from realizing their lost condition before God. Additionally, it implied that the messianic age, with its displacement of the Mosaic law, had not yet dawned. If the messianic age was still future, then Jesus' messianic claims were false, and he deserved to die under the curse of the Mosaic law. Any teacher who implies that Jesus was cursed deserves the same judgment on himself or herself.³ Heresy is dangerous to spiritual health, and we must recognize and label it as such. However, we must not describe every sincere difference of opinion as heresy worthy of the curse of God. On the other hand, we must not misuse charity by putting heresy into the liberty-of-conscience category. We cannot allow Judaizers and their heresy in the church. I will say more about this later. Look with me at the verses under discussion.

6. *I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you by the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel—*

7. *which is really no gospel at all. Evidently some people are throwing you into confusion*

3 F.F. Bruce, *NIGTC: Commentary on Galatians*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), 83-84.

and are trying to pervert the gospel of Christ.

8. *But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let him be eternally condemned!*
9. *As we have already said, so now I say again: If anybody is preaching to you a gospel other than what you accepted, let him be eternally condemned!*
10. *Am I now trying to win the approval of men, or of God? Or am I trying to please men? If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a servant of Christ.* (Gal 1:6-10 NIV)

Note that Paul expresses amazement not merely that the Galatians were forsaking the gospel, but that they were doing it so quickly. Paul had established and taught this church. It must have seemed to him that he had barely shut the door when the Galatians began to listen to the Judaizers' criticism of both Paul and the gospel he had taught them. An old Methodist commentator commenting on this verse said, "Beware of those who push you for a quick decision about truth. Be especially wary if they will not allow you to ask questions but insist you immediately believe without question what they teach. Heresy is like fish. You must eat it quickly or it starts to smell. The truth is like gold and the more it is examined the more it proves itself to be gold."⁴ Someone once told Spurgeon that he needed to be more careful in guarding free grace in his preaching. Spurgeon replied that the gospel is like a lion. Turn it loose and it can take care of itself.⁵

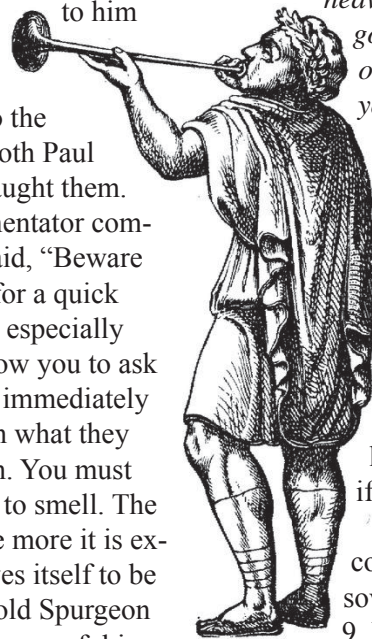
Paul does not consider the teaching of the Judaizers as merely another acceptable interpretation, but as another

4 Exact source unknown.

5 Exact source unknown.

gospel. He immediately clarifies, "I do not mean it actually is another gospel, because there is only one true gospel. The Judaizers, with their view of circumcision and the law of Moses, do not really have a gospel at all. Their news brings bondage, not freedom." It is not good news, but bad news. Their message is a perversion of the only gospel, and Christ's followers must not tolerate it as a sincere difference or a legitimate opinion. *Perversion* is the word Paul uses to describe the message that the Galatians were beginning to believe.

Paul's condemnation in verse 8 could not be more severe, "Let the being who preaches this bad news be condemned." The KJV reads, "Let him be accursed" and it means literally, "Let him be given up to destruction under God's wrath."⁶ Notice several things in Paul's fearful condemnation. *But even if we or an angel from*



heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let him be eternally condemned! First, Paul says, "I don't care if an angel appears to you. If he tells you anything contrary to the gospel I preached, then reject him as one who comes from Satan." Next, Paul includes even himself. "I don't care if it's an angel or if it is me. Don't let anyone contradict the truth of sovereign grace." In verse 9, Paul repeats himself. *As we have already said, so now I say again: If anybody is preaching to you a gospel other than what you accepted, let him be eternally condemned!* It is almost as if Paul is say-

Reisinger—Cont. on page 16

6 Spiros Zodhiates, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament*, s.v. "anathema."

Reisinger—Cont. from page 15

ing, “I’m sure you think I am so upset that I am not aware of the import of my words. Let me repeat myself so you are sure I said what I meant and meant what I said. I pray the wrath of God to fall on the heads of the Judaizers and on your heads also if you desert the gospel.” Notice also that Paul views those who followed the Judaizers as not merely changing their theological view: they had forsaken (“deserted,” v. 6) God himself!

I would love to have been in the Galatian congregation the morning they received this letter. A messenger would have delivered the epistle to one of the elders. The elder may well have been greatly influenced by the Judaizers. When he read the letter, he would have immediately called the other elders. The big question would have been, “Who is going to read this letter to the congregation?” I am sure no one wanted the job! Can you imagine the atmosphere when someone finally did read the letter? Can you imagine sitting next to a Judaizer who had visited you the night before and spent all evening trying to convince you that Paul was all right, but he was not a true apostle and he had not given you all the truth concerning circumcision and the Mosaic law? I think there would have been a lot of squirming and very little hanging around after the meeting.

It is imperative that we limit Paul’s words of condemnation to what he calls *preaching another gospel*. Paul is not talking about those who differ with us in church polity, baptism, prophecy, or a host of other particulars. He is talking specifically about anyone who adds anything to “believe on the Lord Jesus” as essential for salvation. Let us be very clear. I believe that the Bible teaches believers-only baptism by immersion as clearly as it teaches the doctrine of justification by

faith. However, if anyone says, “You must be immersed to be saved,” he or she is a Judaizer and comes under Paul’s anathema. The Bible may or may not teach a baptism of the Holy Spirit evidenced by speaking in tongues. If anyone says that the experience is necessary in order to go to heaven, he or she is a Judaizer and comes under Paul’s curse. I believe the five points of Calvinism, but if anyone says that you must believe those five points to be a Christian, he or she is adding to the one true gospel. In other words, Paul’s curse rests on anyone who adds anything to the cross work of Christ as essential to salvation. Someone has said, “To supplement Christ in any way is to sup-



plant Christ all together.”⁷ Paul says that it is all Christ or no Christ at all.

I used to have a neighbor who was a Charismatic. I think he sincerely loved the Lord. He was always giving me literature about speaking in tongues and inviting me to special seeking-meetings. One day I asked him if he thought I was saved. He replied, “Brother John, you are okay as far as you have gone, you just have not gone far enough.” I asked, “Do you think I will make it to heaven?”

He replied, “Yes.” I said, “That’s all the farther I want to go.” I challenged him on his use of the words *full-gospel*. I asked him if my gospel of believe-on-the-Lord-Jesus-Christ-and-thou-shalt-be-saved was a one-half or a three-quarter gospel. He finally conceded that he could not say that speaking in tongues was any part of the gospel.

Beware of Judaizers! A modern Judaizer is anyone who adds anything to faith in Christ as something that is essential to salvation and part of the gospel. In many cases, the particular thing added is something biblical in itself; it becomes heresy, however, when someone elevates it to an essential part of the gospel. My friend D.J. Ward says, “The main thing in preaching is keeping the main thing the main thing – and the main thing is that Christ died for our sins.”

A Judaizer is a legalist at heart. He or she is not free to have a life full of the joy of the Lord because the Holy Spirit does not endorse the feeble efforts of works as sufficient grounds for assurance. The legalist’s insistence that you must be circumcised (or whatever particular work currently advocated) does not bring liberty and peace but instead brings your conscience into bondage and fear. As we will see, Paul uses the strongest possible language to condemn both the Judaizers for teaching heresy and the Galatians for stupidly and quickly buying the heresy. He thought that they had been bewitched.

I love verse 10. It would seem that one of the charges made by the Judaizers was that Paul did not preach the entire gospel because he was a man pleaser. He held back hard truth in order not to offend people. After consigning the Judaizers to divine condemnation, he asks, tongue in cheek,

Augustine and Free Will

I came across the following while cleaning computer files. I have no idea who wrote it. If anyone recognizes it, please let me know so we can give credit. John G. Reisinger, Editor.

The importance of determining whether the will is bound or free is not due merely to our own analysis, however, it is also forced upon us by the history of Christian dogma, for some of the greatest theological debates in the history of the church have centered on this issue. In the early years of the church the majority of the church's theologians seemed to endorse free will, for they were concerned to overcome the entrenched determinism of the Greek and Roman world. On one level they were no doubt right in doing this. For determinism is not the Christian view, nor does it or anything else excuse human responsibility for sin. The early fathers—Chrysostom, Origen, Jerome and others—were right to oppose it. However, in opposing determinism they slipped by varying degrees into a kind of unbiblical exaltation of human ability that inevitably prevented them from seeing to the true depths of human sin and the guilt that accompanies it. Augustine of Hippo rose to challenge this position and argue fiercely for the bondage of the will, at this time largely against Pelagius, his most outspoken opponent.

It was not the intention of Pelagius to deny the universality of sin, at least at the beginning. In this he wished to remain orthodox. But he was unable to see how responsibility could reside in man without free will. Ability must be present if there is to be obligation, he argued. If I ought to do something, I can. In working this out Pelagius argued that the will, rather than being bound over to sin, was actually neutral so that at any given moment or in any situation it is free to choose the good and do it. In this approach sin became only those deliberate and unrelated acts in which the will chooses to do

evil, and any necessary connection between sins or any hereditary principle of sin within the race was forgotten. Pelagius further stated that:

1. The sin of Adam affected no one but himself.
2. Those who have been born since Adam have been born into the condition Adam possessed before his fall, that is, not a position of neutrality so far as sin is concerned.
3. Men are able to live free from sin if they desire to do so, and this they can do even without an awareness of the work of Christ and the supernatural workings of the Holy Spirit.

It is easy to see how Pelagius' position greatly limited the true scope of sin and inevitably led to a denial of the absolute need for the unmerited grace of God in salvation. Moreover, even in a case where the gospel of grace is freely preached to the sinner, what ultimately determines whether he or she will be saved or not is not the supernatural workings of the Holy Spirit within, but rather the will of man which either receives or else rejects the Savior.

Early in his life Augustine had thought much as Pelagius. But he had come to see that the view did not do justice either to the biblical doctrine of sin, which is always portrayed as far more than mere individual and isolated acts, or to the grace of God, which is ultimately the only fully determining element in salvation. So far as sin goes, Augustine argued that there is an inherited depravity of which it is simply not possible for the individual to stop sinning. His key phrase was *non posse non peccare* (that is, *not able to*

not sin). It means that a person is not able to choose God. Augustine says that man, having used his free will badly in the Fall, lost both himself and his will. He says that the will has been so enslaved that it can have no power for righteousness. He says ironically that the will is indeed free of *righteousness*, but enslaved to sin. He says that it is free to *turn from God*, but not to come to Him.

In the matter of grace Augustine was concerned to stress that grace is an absolute necessity; apart from it no one can be saved. Moreover, it is a matter of grace from beginning to end, not just of prevenient grace or partial grace to which the sinner adds by his own efforts. Otherwise, salvation would not be of God entirely, his honor would be diminished, and man for his part would have room for boasting in heaven. In defending these views Augustine won the day, and the church supported him. But the church increasingly drifted back toward Pelagianism during the ensuing Middle Ages.

Later, at the time of the Reformation, the same battle erupted again on several fronts. One very direct confrontation was [an] exchange between Erasmus and Luther. Erasmus had been sympathetic to the Reformation in its early stages, for he, like all clear thinkers of the day, readily saw the corruptions of the medieval church and longed for their correction. But Erasmus did not have Luther's deep spiritual undergirdings and thus was eventually prevailed upon to challenge Luther, which he did in the matter of the will. He said that the will must be free, for reasons much like those given by Pelagius. But this was not a subject

Augustine—Cont. from page 17

for which Erasmus had great interest; hence, while he opposed Luther, he nevertheless counseled moderation.

It was no small matter to Luther, however. Consequently, he plunged into his subject zealously, viewing it as that upon which the very truth of God depended. We must acknowledge here, as we read Luther, that he does acknowledge the psychological fact that men and women do make choices. Indeed, this is so obvious that no one can really deny it. But it is in the area of a man's choice of God or failure to choose God that Luther is thinking, and in this area he denies the freedom of the will as much as Erasmus affirmed it. Man is wholly given over to sin, says Luther. Therefore, his only proper role is to humbly acknowledge that sin, confess his blindness, and acknowledge that he can no more choose God by his enslaved will than he can please him by his sullied moral acts. Man's sole role is to admit his sin and call upon the eternal God for mercy, knowing even as he seeks to do this that he cannot do it unless God is first of all active in him to convict him of sin and lead his will to embrace the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation.

John Calvin, Ulrich, Zwingli, Martin Bucer, and all the other leading Protestant reformers were one with Luther in these convictions. However, in reaction to the Reformation, the Roman Church at the Council of Trent took a semi-Pelagian position. And later, in Holland, Jacob Arminius rose to revive the old Pelagianism in its full form. Today it is probably the case that the vast majority of Christians from all denominations and many theological traditions are Pelagian, though they would not recognize their beliefs by this word. Are they right? Or are Augustine and the leaders of the Reformation right? Is man totally ruined by his fall into sin? Or did he only fall part way? Ω

Fullness of joy!

(Meikle)

“In Your presence there is fullness of joy! At Your right hand are pleasures forevermore!” Psalm 16:11

In this present life I may have some tainted pleasures;
but in eternity, I shall always have pure delights and holy raptures!

In this life I may have at times a measure of health;
but in eternity, I shall always have perpetual vigor!

In this life I may have some acres of ground;
but in eternity, I shall always have an unbounded inheritance in the heavenly Canaan!

Here, I may have fine clothing of silk;
there I will have robes of righteousness and garments of glory!

Here I may have a beautiful house;
there I will have a house not made with hands!

Here I may have bread to eat and water to drink;
there I will have the hidden manna and the river of life!

Here I may have a portion of the good things of time;
there I will have the glorious treasures of eternity!

As to spiritual things, in this life I may have some communications of grace;
but in eternity, I shall have eternal glory!

Here I have freedom from the reign of sin;
there I will have deliverance from the presence of sin!

Here I have glances of heaven by faith;
there I will have immediate vision of glory!

Here I have God in His ordinances;
there I will have uninterrupted communion with Him!

Here I have some experience of His love;
there I will have all the transports of eternal assurance and everlasting bliss!

Here I have access to the throne of grace;
there I will have continuous attendance at the throne of glory!

Here I often sin against God;
there I shall never offend His holy heart!

Courtesy of Grace Quotes:
<http://www.gracegems.org/>

Reisinger—Cont. from page 16

“Am I now trying to win the approval of men, or of God? Or am I trying to please men? If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a servant of Christ.”

The Judaizers’ insistence on the necessity of certain Old Covenant practices implicitly denies Jesus as messiah. If messiah’s advent was going to usher in a new age in God’s economy (an era in which all who are in the covenant community rest from their own works [Heb. 4:6-11]), and yet the old economy with its insistence on work is still in force, then the messianic age has not come. Adherence to the Mosaic law diminishes Jesus to just another rabbi. In effect, the Judaizers are saying, “Follow this teacher from Galilee if you want, but the really important thing is to keep the Mosaic law.” Paul is pointing out that following Jesus is incompatible with following the Mosaic law. The two are mutually exclusive if we are seeking salvation. This same principle of mutual exclusivity applies to the Roman Catholic addition of works to grace. Our difference with Rome hinges on one word – the word *and*. Rome agrees with us that salvation is by grace through faith, but they then add “and also by works.” Works, however, effectively negate grace. The addition contradicts the main proposition. Moreover, works cancel the freedom that grace brings by placing people under bondage. How can we rejoice in a salvation of which we are unsure? How can we confidently enter God’s presence when we are unsure of our welcome? The practical problem with adding works to grace is that we never know when we have compiled enough good works to make God willing to deal with us. The Judaizers in Paul’s day compromised the freedom of the gospel; every Judaizer since that time continues to do the same. They would say, “Paul was a good man and he taught you a lot of truth.

However, he left out some of the ‘hard sayings’ for fear of offending you. He failed to remind you that circumcision and obedience to the law of Moses is also necessary to be saved.” When anyone talks like this, even if he or she is a bright shining angel, run as fast as you can.

It is necessary that we keep reminding ourselves that Paul’s primary target is the Judaizers with their false teaching who unsettled the Galatian Christians. When we teach truth that is new to some people, they often become upset. They argue that what we are teaching must be wrong because it is upsetting the church. Both truth and error will upset a congregation. Truth will upset the goats and error will upset the sheep. Paul was not condemning the Judaizers simply because the church was in turmoil, but because the confusion in the church stemmed from the Judaizers’ contradiction of the Word of God. Someone has said, “If you feed the congregation sheep food, you will not have to worry about church discipline. The goats will not hang around.”⁸

I am certain of one thing. Nothing you will ever believe or experience will add one single thing to the justification that you received the moment you trusted Jesus Christ. If you have Christ, you have everything you need for time and eternity. If you have everything in the world except Christ, you are hopeless in the sight of God.

Ω

⁸ Exact source unknown.

Piper—Cont. from page 14

the “one thing” that we lack—perfect righteousness. Yes, we should keep the commandments, but only as they come through the filter of their fulfillment in Jesus. Practically, this means we should look to Jesus himself, revealed in his life and death and teaching, for the guidance we need. We must depend on Jesus’ power to do that the way a branch depends on a vine. In this way Christ, not Moses, gets all the glory for the purchase and the performance of the new covenant.

But even with this divinely enabled transformation (Mark 10:27), our righteousness is not perfect in this life, and it will not suffice for our right standing before God. Therefore, Jesus’ demand that we do the will of his Father and that we keep his commandments is also a demand that we despair of making our obedience the ground of God’s acceptance. Our transformation is the fruit of our union with Jesus. That union is where the ground of our acceptance lies. And that union is established by believing in Jesus. The fruit demonstrates the reality of the union and the authenticity of faith. This is God’s will—that we believe on his Son, that we enjoy our union with him, that we rest in God’s merciful declaration of our perfection and acceptance, and that we bear the fruit of love. Ω

Logic is a wonderful helpmate but a very poor master.

“[One] can so design a syllogism to be valid in its form and false in regards to truth. For example, ‘All unicorns are white’ (major premise); ‘Fluffy is a unicorn’ (minor premise); hence, ‘Fluffy is white’ (conclusion). The syllogism is correct in form. The issue though is the TRUTH concerning the major and minor premises—the existence of unicorns. Unless someone is willing to show that their premises are true biblically, all the syllogistic forms created by all the doctors of philosophy in the world won’t make the conclusions biblical.”

Mark LaCour

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