

Chapter 2

PAUL AN APOSTLE NOT OF MEN

Paul, an apostle, (not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised him from the dead;) and all the brethren which are with me, unto the churches of Galatia: grace be to you and peace from God the Father, and from our Lord Jesus Christ, Who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father: to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen. (Galatians 1:1-5)

The messengers who had brought Paul word of the Galatian heresy returned from Antioch to the region of Galatia after Paul had completed his epistle and had entrusted it to them. It is proper to assume that, when they arrived home, they took Paul's epistle to each of the churches in Galatia and read it to each congregation. It is also proper to assume that they transcribed Paul's epistle and left a copy with each church. If they made copies of his epistle, there is a good possibility each of the churches studied the epistle diligently with their pastor as their guide. Like those pastors of old, it is our privilege to guide you in an understanding of Paul's epistle to the Galatians.

This study will lead us into a greater understanding of the gospel according to Paul and of

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our relationship with the Lord. In this regard, the best commentary on the Bible is the Bible itself. Paul expressed this to the Corinthian church when he taught them that the Holy Spirit teaches the believer by *comparing spiritual things with spiritual things*; thus we learn by comparing Scripture with Scripture. Early in my personal relationship with the Lord, I learned to accept the Bible to be what it declares itself to be -- God's revelation to man by His Holy Spirit through men chosen of God.

Then I learned to think of God as the Bible reveals Him to be, according to His attributes revealed in the Scriptures. Thus when I found conditions in the Bible which I could not explain, they were not a stumbling block to me. I understood there could be no errors or contradictions in the Bible, just portions of which I lacked sufficient information to explain. Now, after more than forty-four years of diligently studying the Word of God, many of the unexplainable things have fallen to the process of comparing spiritual things with spiritual things and have been made plain. It is extremely important that we approach the Scriptures this way, because the Bible tells us *God's ways are not our ways*.

This is self-evident because the Bible also says, *the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned*. Thus it is impossible for the natural (unsaved) man to discern spiritual truth. He cannot because he is spiritually dead. This, of course, is the result of Adam's transgression. Therefore from Adam's day to this, all of mankind has been born into this world physically alive, but spiritually dead and blind to the truth of God. This precludes, then, the possibility of a natural understanding of spiritual truth and the possibility that a viable relationship with God could begin

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with man.

When we consider that the natural man is *dead in trespasses and sin*; and man's ways are not God's ways; and *that there is not a just man upon the earth that doeth good, and sinneth not*; then we recognize that a right relationship with God could only be brought about by God's initiation of the conditions that could make it possible. Saul of Tarsus is a good example of this. Before his salvation he was very religious, but he was lost. He was a *Hebrew of the Hebrews*, who had risen above his peers to be a religious ruler in Israel, but he was lost. Saul was the epitome of the religious man. He was strict in his deportment and in his religious life, but he was lost. He, like his nation, had a zeal for God, but it was not according to knowledge. Saul's zeal for God was so great, it led him to think he was doing God a service by persecuting Christians, but he was lost.

So, for Saul, or for any of us to be accepted of God, Christ had to act on behalf of the human family in His life and in His death. Faith in the vicarious sacrifice of Jesus Christ has enabled God to declare *the ungodly, sinners, and the enemies of God* to be saints. This is quite a mystery. Yet it is expressed in Paul's statement to the Corinthians: ... *Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures; and that He was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the Scriptures...* Thus the Christ Who died is the Christ of the Scriptures. The Christ Who died had to die according to the Scriptures; thus He had to die by crucifixion at the hands of the Jews and of the Romans. The Christ Who died had to die as a curse for sin; yet He, himself, had performed every jot and tittle of the law and all righteousness; so the Christ Who died bore the curse of sin as though He, himself, had sinned. The Christ Who died had to have the

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power to willingly lay His life down and the power to take it up again. The Christ Who died according to the Scriptures had to ascend up to heaven where He ever lives to make intercession for those for whom He died.

The natural man is confounded by this. God's unmerited favor, revealed in the vicarious atonement of Jesus Christ, does not fit into his natural way of thinking. The natural man thinks in terms of his biased perception of good and evil, which he received as a result of Adam's disobedience in the garden of Eden. He thinks he can become one of *the gods* by the Devil's lie -- by exercising his concepts of right and wrong, through his knowledge of good and evil.

At best, this is a futile exercise. Man would be better disposed to listen to God rather than to follow *the lie* of the serpent, but he cannot. His spiritually dead condition prevents him from doing this. He continues to operate in his knowledge of good and evil. This veil can only be lifted when the heart of man turns to the Lord. This change of mind can only be accomplished by the preaching of the Word of God and the quickening power of the Spirit of God. Thus illumination to faith in the truth is accomplished by the Spirit of God giving the gift of faith to the sinner so that he might believe God and be *accepted in the Beloved*.

This was the message of grace Paul preached in Galatia. It is the only way into the presence of God. Thus it is a way that is totally dependent upon faith in God's work on man's behalf and does not enlist the moral efforts of man in any way. The gospel of grace is the *narrow way* into the kingdom of God, and the moralistic system of the Judaizers is an expression of one of the many ways of the *broad way* that Jesus said would lead to death and destruction.

This magnifies the importance of Solomon's statement, *There is a way that seemeth right*

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unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death. Solomon's statement compared with the deception of Eve tells us the singular way, which produced the *ways of death*, had its source in the Devil -- through his *tree of the knowledge of good and evil*.

So then every religious system, with the exception of Biblical Christianity, has had its source in the *evil tree* and is incapable of producing a solution to man's spiritually dead condition. They promise life, but they are incapable of producing life, for they themselves *are dead in trespasses and in sin*. In contrast, Jesus said, *I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me*. And Peter added, *Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved*.

Less than twenty-four hours after Jesus said, *I am the way, the truth, and the life*, He was crucified and buried. After seventy-two hours in the grave, Jesus arose from the dead. Thus, by His resurrection, He proved *He is the Son of God with power*. Further, within the last twenty-four hours before His death, He said, *Because I live, ye shall live also*. This declares the believer's resurrection and life is based on the resurrection of Jesus Christ. This was an essential part of the message of grace and faith that Paul took into the region of Galatia on his first missionary journey. Therefore Paul's message was not a message of moralistic religious works. It was a message of faith and hope to a people, who by their religious works, had no hope.

As we have seen, Paul testified that all he had counted valuable, from his life as a Pharisee and Jewish elder, he *counted but dung, that he might win Christ*, so that Paul brought nothing from his self-righteous life as a Pharisee into his new life in Christ. When Paul learned that the Judaizers were corrupting the gospel with empty ritual and feeble attempts at law keeping, he

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knew (by his own past life and by the revelation he had received of the Lord) how damaging these concepts were. These concepts were the basis for *another gospel*. Such a gospel was not good news. Such a gospel would leave all who trusted it *dead in trespasses and in sin*.

Therefore Paul began his letter to the Galatians by establishing his God-given authority.

He made it very clear -- the gospel he preached was not of man. So he wrote:

Paul, an apostle, (not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised him from the dead;) and all the brethren which are with me, unto the churches of Galatia: Grace be to you and peace from God the Father, and from our Lord Jesus Christ, Who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father: to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen. (Galatians 1:1-5)

There are two prepositions in the grammatical construction of Paul's opening statement that are very important. They are *of* and *by*. Paul was not an apostle *of men*, neither was he an apostle *by men*. The *of* speaks of source and the *by* speaks of means. In other words, the gospel Paul preached, as well as his apostleship, did not have its source in man. He was an apostle of Jesus Christ, and his gospel was the message of Jesus Christ. He did not represent himself; he represented Jesus Christ. Neither was Paul an apostle *by men*. In other words, Paul did not gain his status as an apostle of Jesus Christ by the elective process of man. He received it by the sovereign call of God. Paul had risen, as Saul of Tarsus, to the highest echelons of Jewish life *by men*. Once he was saved, all of that was changed. He then determined to live and serve the Lord by the authority and power of God and not by the political hypocrisy and men pleasing he had done as a member of the Jewish Sanhedrin.

Paul had no doubts about his calling. He knew that the Lord had called him to be an apostle *to bear [His] name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel*. He knew

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the Lord Jesus had chosen him to replace the *bishopric* of the fallen Judas Iscariot. Paul also knew of the election of the disciples, who had chosen Matthias for this ministry. The Scriptures prove their election was *of men*. Paul's election was of God. So regarding authority -- Paul's apostleship was *by Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised him from the dead*. Likewise, Paul's gospel was received by the direct revelation of Jesus Christ and not from men.

At the time of the writing of the book of Galatians, the council at Jerusalem (which met to determine whether circumcision and law keeping were necessary for salvation) had not yet convened. However within a short period of time following Paul's writing of the letter to the Galatians, Paul and Barnabas came to Jerusalem for the council. The issue was fully discussed. The council's position concurred with Paul's position on salvation by grace without ritual or law. Thus Paul was fully vindicated by the decision of the council. At the conclusion of the council, they wrote a brief letter to the Gentile churches which fully agreed with all that Paul had preached and written to them. On Paul's second trip into the region of Galatia:

... as [Paul and Silas] went through the cities, they delivered them the decrees for to keep, that were ordained of the apostles and elders which were at Jerusalem. And so were the churches established in the faith, and increased in numbers daily. (Acts 16:4-5)

Despite the congruity of the events thus far, some expositors argue that Paul's ministry to the Galatians occurred after the council at Jerusalem, during his second missionary journey (which took him through Syria, Cilicia and the regions beyond). This would place the writing of the epistle to the Galatians some time after Paul's return from his second missionary journey.

This theory does not fit the preponderance of the evidence in the book of Acts and the book of Galatians for several reasons. First, there is no mention of the council's letter in the book of

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Galatians. Second, Paul's efforts to establish the authority with which he spoke would have been unnecessary in view of the council's letter. Third, Peter's statements to the council (concurring with Paul) would be impossible to reconcile with Peter's hypocrisy at Antioch. Fourth, the references to the *three years after* and the *fourteen years after* (Paul's salvation) would be impossible to reconcile with the historical events recorded in the book of Acts.

At the time of the writing of the letter to the Galatians, it was necessary for Paul to show the source of his gospel. Paul's authority can be compared to that of the angel Gabriel, who, when contending with the Devil for the body of Moses, said, *the Lord rebuke thee*. Paul's authority for his gospel transcended the authority of the Judaizers, as well as the authority of all who did not and do not stand in the truth of the of the saving grace of Jesus Christ. Thus Paul wrote:

But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ. (Galatians 1:11-12)

Once he had established the source of his gospel, he referred to *all the brethren which are with me*. This statement refers primarily to those messengers who had brought him word of the heresy. Paul apparently wanted the Galatians to know that he knew of their circumstances by eye witnesses and not by idle gossip. The messengers who had brought word to Paul were believers. They, apparently, rejected the claims of the Judaizers, but did not have the spiritual wisdom to refute the claims themselves. So they came looking for Paul. Paul was their spiritual father, and they were confident he could provide the answers to the claims of the Judaizers. These brethren possessed a spiritual intuition which warned them of the error (because of the indwelling Holy Spirit), but they lacked the experience to deal with the problems themselves. Thus the letter to

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the Galatian churches was the answer they sought.

This brings us to the next statement in Paul's opening remarks. Paul had gone to the region of Galatia with the message of the grace of God. Therefore he addressed his letter, *Grace be to you and peace from God the Father, and from our Lord Jesus Christ*. Grace and peace go together. Law and peace do not. The phrase *Grace and peace* is found frequently in the New Testament. The phrase *Law and peace* is never found -- not in the New Testament, nor in the Old Testament. Law and peace are incompatible because law produces condemnation and death, whereas grace supplies peace.

Grace supplies peace in two ways. First, it is the grace of God, through the shed blood of the Lord Jesus Christ, which gives the believer *peace with God*. Second, as the believer grows in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ, through the preaching and teaching of the Word of God, his hopes are increased. These hopes are hopes which supply *the peace of God that passeth all understanding*. Consequently the believer has hope when, outwardly, there may not appear to be a basis for hope.

Grace and peace have their source in the Person and the work of the Lord Jesus Christ. In His Person, Jesus is God the Son, the Son of God, so He has the authority to mediate between God and man. In His work, Jesus provided the basis for the justification of sinners. Therefore Paul continued:

Who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father: to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen. (Galatians 1:4-5)

It is interesting to observe the depth of the theology in the opening remarks of Paul to the

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Galatians. Some teachers of the Bible have considered these opening statements to be a mere form of address, like: *Dear Sirs*. These statements are much, much more than that.

To this point in Paul's letter, Paul has established his authority with the Galatians. It was from *the Lord Jesus Christ, and God the Father, Who raised him from the dead*. In addition to providing authority, this statement also declared the deity of Jesus Christ to the Galatians and Paul's belief in His resurrection from the dead. These two truths are fundamental to the gospel.

In Paul's next statement, he declared the truth of the vicarious atonement of Jesus Christ, which provided the Galatians with the forgiveness of sin and delivered them from *this present evil world*. Additionally, this sacrifice was declared to be the will of the Father. All of this was predicated on Paul's earlier statement -- *Grace and peace be unto you*. Consequently what appears to some to be mere social amenities is, in reality, a declaration of the fundamentals of the gospel, which were being attacked by the Judaizers.

Thus it was Paul's gospel which had delivered the Galatians from this present evil world, and it was the *other gospel* of the Judaizers, which sought to pull them back into that evil manner of thinking from which they had been delivered. This *present evil world* is not the earth upon which they dwelt, neither is it the age in which they lived. Rather it is a manner of thinking which has spanned the ages from the fall of man to the present time. It is *a way that seemeth right unto a man*. It is *another gospel*, which demands that man have a part in his eternal salvation through ritual and law. Thus it is the Devil's lie.

If indeed the believer is delivered entirely by the grace of God, apart from the works of the law, then Paul's final statement in his opening paragraph resounds above the error of the

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Judaizers like thunder from heaven -- *To God be the glory for ever and ever. Amen!*