

Chapter 1

Verse 1. Paul, an apostle, (not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus

Christ, and God the Father, who raised him from the dead).

St. Paul wrote this epistle because, after his departure from the Galatian churches, Jewish-Christian fanatics moved in, who perverted Paul's Gospel of man's free justification by faith in Christ Jesus.

The world bears the Gospel a grudge because the Gospel condemns the religious wisdom of the world. Jealous for its own religious views, the world in turn charges the Gospel with being a subversive and licentious doctrine, offensive to God and man, a doctrine to be persecuted as the worst plague on earth.

As a result we have this paradoxical situation: The Gospel supplies the world with the salvation of Jesus Christ, peace of conscience, and every blessing. Just for that the world abhors the Gospel.

These Jewish-Christian fanatics who pushed themselves into the Galatian churches after Paul's departure, boasted that they were the descendants of Abraham, true ministers of Christ, having been trained by the apostles themselves, that they were able to perform miracles.

In every way they sought to undermine the authority of St. Paul. They said to the Galatians: "You have no right to think highly of Paul. He was the last to turn to Christ. But we have seen Christ. We heard Him preach. Paul came later and is beneath us. It is possible for us to be in error—we who have received the Holy Ghost? Paul stands alone. He has not seen Christ, nor has he had much contact with the other apostles. Indeed, he persecuted the Church of Christ for a long time."

When men claiming such credentials come along, they deceive not only the naive, but also those who seemingly are well-established in the faith. This same argument is used by the papacy. "Do you suppose that God for the sake of a few Lutheran heretics would disown His entire Church? Or do you suppose that God would have left His Church floundering in error all these centuries?" The Galatians were taken in by such arguments with the result that Paul's authority and doctrine were drawn in question.

Against these boasting, false apostles, Paul boldly defends his apostolic authority and ministry. Humble man that he was, he will not now take a back seat. He reminds them of the time when he opposed Peter to his face and reproved the chief of the apostles.

Paul devotes the first two chapters to a defense of his office and his Gospel, affirming that he received it, not from men, but from the Lord Jesus Christ by special revelation, and that if he or an angel from heaven preach any other gospel than the one he had preached, he shall be accursed.

The Certainty of Our Calling

Every minister should make much of his calling and impress upon others the fact that he has been delegated by God to preach the Gospel. As the ambassador of a government is honored for his office and not for his private person, so the minister of Christ should exalt his office in order to gain authority among men. This is not vain glory, but needful glorying.

Paul takes pride in his ministry, not to his own praise but to the praise of God. Writing to the Romans, he declares, "Inasmuch as I am the apostle of the Gentiles, I magnify mine office," i.e., I want to be received not as Paul of Tarsus, but as Paul the apostle and ambassador of Jesus Christ, in order that people might be more eager to hear. Paul exalts his ministry out of the desire to make known the name, the grace, and the mercy of God.

Verse 1. Paul, an apostle, (not of men, etc.)

Paul loses no time in defending himself against the charge that he had thrust himself into the ministry. He says to the Galatians: "My call may seem inferior to you. But those who have come to you are either called of men or by man. My call is the highest possible, for it is by Jesus Christ, and God the Father."

When Paul speaks of those called "by men," I take it he means those whom neither God nor man sent, but who go wherever they like and speak for themselves.

When Paul speaks of those called "by man" I take it he means those who have a divine call extended to them through other persons. God calls in two ways. Either He calls ministers through the agency of men, or He calls them directly as He called the prophets and apostles. Paul declares that the false apostles were called or sent neither by men, nor by man. The most they could claim is that they were sent by others. "But as for me I was called

neither of men, nor by man, but directly by Jesus Christ. My call is in every respect like the call of the apostles. In fact I am an apostle."

Elsewhere Paul draws a sharp distinction between an apostleship and lesser functions, as in I Corinthians 12:28: "And God has set some in the church; first, apostles; secondarily, prophets; thirdly, teachers." He mentions the apostles first because they were appointed directly by God.

Matthias was called in this manner. The apostles chose two candidates and then cast lots, praying that God would indicate which one He would have. To be an apostle he had to have his appointment from God. In the same manner Paul was called as the apostle of the Gentiles.

The call is not to be taken lightly. For a person to possess knowledge is not enough. He must be sure that he is properly called. Those who operate without a proper call seek no good purpose. God does not bless their labors. They may be good preachers, but they do not edify. Many of the fanatics of our day pronounce words of faith, but they bear no good fruit, because their purpose is to turn men to their perverse opinions. On the other hand, those who have a divine call must suffer a good deal of opposition in order that they may become fortified against the running attacks of the devil and the world.

This is our comfort in the ministry, that ours is a divine office to which we have been divinely called. Reversely, what an awful thing it must be for the conscience if one is not properly called. It spoils one's best work. When I was a young man I thought Paul was making too much of his call. I did not understand his purpose. I did not then realize the importance of the ministry. I knew nothing of the doctrine of faith because we were taught sophistry instead of certainty, and nobody understood spiritual boasting. We exalt our calling, not to gain glory among men, or money, or satisfaction, or favor, but because people need to be assured that the words we speak are the words of God. This is no sinful pride. It is holy pride.

Verse 1. And God the Father, who raised him from the dead.

Paul is so eager to come to the subject matter of his epistle, the righteousness of faith in opposition to the righteousness of works, that already in the title he must speak his mind. He did not think it quite enough to say that he was an apostle "by Jesus Christ"; he

adds, "and God the Father, who raised him from the dead."

The clause seems superfluous on first sight. Yet Paul had a good reason for adding it. He had to deal with Satan and his agents who endeavored to deprive him of the righteousness of Christ, who was raised by God the Father from the dead. These perverters of the righteousness of Christ resist the Father and the Son, and the works of them both.

In this whole epistle Paul treats of the resurrection of Christ. By His resurrection Christ won the victory over law, sin, flesh, world, devil, death, hell, and every evil. And this His victory He donated to us. These many tyrants and enemies of ours may accuse and frighten us, but they dare not condemn us, for Christ, whom God the Father has raised from the dead is our righteousness and our victory.

Do you notice how well suited to his purpose Paul writes? He does not say, "By God who made heaven and earth, who is Lord of the angels," but Paul has in mind the righteousness of Christ, and speaks to the point, saying, "I am an apostle, not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised him from the dead."

Verse 2. And all the brethren which are with me.

This should go far in shutting the mouths of the false apostles. Paul's intention is to exalt his own ministry while discrediting theirs. He adds for good measure the argument that he does not stand alone, but that all the brethren with him attest to the fact that his doctrine is divinely true. "Although the brethren with me are not apostles like myself, yet they are all of one mind with me, think, write, and teach as I do."

Verse 2. To the churches of Galatia.

Paul had preached the Gospel throughout Galatia, founding many churches which after his departure were invaded by the false apostles. The Anabaptists in our time imitate the false apostles. They do not go where the enemies of the Gospel predominate. They go where the Christians are. Why do they not invade the Catholic provinces and preach their doctrine to godless princes, bishops, and doctors, as we have done by the help of God? These soft martyrs take no chances. They go where the Gospel has a hold, so that they may not endanger their lives. The false apostles would not go to Jerusalem of Caiaphas, or to the Rome of the Emperor, or to any other place where no man had preached before

as Paul and the other apostles did. But they came to the churches of Galatia, knowing that where men profess the name of Christ they may feel secure.

It is the lot of God's ministers not only to suffer opposition at the hand of a wicked world, but also to see the patient indoctrination of many years quickly undone by such religious fanatics. This hurts more than the persecution of tyrants. We are treated shabbily on the outside by tyrants, on the inside by those whom we have restored to the liberty of the Gospel, and also by false brethren. But this is our comfort and our glory, that being called of God we have the promise of everlasting life. We look for that reward which "eye has not seen, nor ear heard, neither has entered into the heart of man."

Jerome raises the question why Paul called them churches that were no churches, inasmuch as the Galatians had forsaken the grace of Christ for the law of Moses. The proper answer is: Although the Galatians had fallen away from the doctrine of Paul, baptism, the Gospel, and the name of Christ continued among them. Not all the Galatians had become perverted. There were some who clung to the right view of the Word and the Sacraments. These means cannot be contaminated. They remain divine regardless of men's opinion. Wherever the means of grace are found, there is the Holy Church, even though Antichrist reigns there. So much for the title of the epistle. Now follows the greeting of the apostle.

Verse 3. Grace be to you, and peace, from God the Father, and from our

Lord Jesus Christ.

The terms of grace and peace are common terms with Paul and are now pretty well understood. But since we are explaining this epistle, you will not mind if we repeat what we have so often explained elsewhere. The article of justification must be sounded in our ears incessantly because the frailty of our flesh will not permit us to take hold of it perfectly and to believe it with all our heart.

The greeting of the Apostle is refreshing. Grace remits sin, and peace quiets the conscience. Sin and conscience torment us, but Christ has overcome these fiends now and forever. Only Christians possess this victorious knowledge given from above. These two terms, grace and peace, constitute Christianity. Grace involves the

remission of sins, peace, and a happy conscience. Sin is not canceled by lawful living, for no person is able to live up to the Law. The Law reveals guilt, fills the conscience with terror, and drives men to despair. Much less is sin taken away by man-invented endeavors. The fact is, the more a person seeks credit for himself by his own efforts, the deeper he goes into debt. Nothing can take away sin except the grace of God. In actual living, however, it is not so easy to persuade oneself that by grace alone, in opposition to every other means, we obtain the forgiveness of our sins and peace with God.

The world brands this a pernicious doctrine. The world advances free will, the rational and natural approach of good works, as the means of obtaining the forgiveness of sin. But it is impossible to gain peace of conscience by the methods and means of the world. Experience proves this. Various holy orders have been launched for the purpose of securing peace of conscience through religious exercises, but they proved failures because such devices only increase doubt and despair. We find no rest for our weary bones unless we cling to the word of grace.

The Apostle does not wish the Galatians grace and peace from the emperor, or from kings, or from governors, but from God the Father. He wishes them heavenly peace, the kind of which Jesus spoke when He said, "Peace I leave to you: my peace I give to you." Worldly peace provides quiet enjoyment of life and possessions. But in affliction, particularly in the hour of death, the grace and peace of the world will not deliver us. However, the grace and peace of God will. They make a person strong and courageous to bear and to overcome all difficulties, even death itself, because we have the victory of Christ's death and the assurance of the forgiveness of our sins.

Men Should Not Speculate About the Nature of God

The Apostle adds to the salutation the words, "and from our Lord Jesus Christ." Was it not enough to say, "from God the Father"?

It is a principle of the Bible that we are not to inquire curiously into the nature of God. "There shall no man see me, and live," Exodus 33:20. All who trust in their own merits to save them disregard this principle and lose sight of the Mediator, Jesus Christ.

True Christian theology does not inquire into the nature of God, but into God's purpose and will in Christ, whom God incorporated in our

flesh to live and to die for our sins. There is nothing more dangerous than to speculate about the incomprehensible power, wisdom, and majesty of God when the conscience is in turmoil over sin. To do so is to lose God altogether because God becomes intolerable when we seek to measure and to comprehend His infinite majesty.

We are to seek God as Paul tells us in I Corinthians 1:23, 24: "We preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block, and to the Greeks foolishness; but to them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God." Begin with Christ. He came down to earth, lived among men, suffered, was crucified, and then He died, standing clearly before us, so that our hearts and eyes may fasten upon Him. Thus we shall be kept from climbing into heaven in a curious and futile search after the nature of God.

If you ask how God may be found, who justifies sinners, know that there is no other God besides this man Christ Jesus. Embrace Him, and forget about the nature of God. But these fanatics who exclude our Mediator in their dealings with God, do not believe me. Did not Christ Himself say: "I am the way, and the truth, and the life: no man comes to the Father, but by me"? Without Christ there is no access to the Father, but futile rambling; no truth, but hypocrisy; no life, but eternal death.

When you argue about the nature of God apart from the question of justification, you may be as profound as you like. But when you deal with conscience and with righteousness over against the law, sin, death, and the devil, you must close your mind to all inquiries into the nature of God, and concentrate upon Jesus Christ, who says, "Come to me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Doing this, you will recognize the power, and majesty condescending to your condition according to Paul's statement to the Colossians, "In Christ are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge," and, "In him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." Paul in wishing grace and peace not alone from God the Father, but also from Jesus Christ, wants to warn us against the curious incursions into the nature of God. We are to hear Christ, who has been appointed by the Father as our divine Teacher.

Christ is God by Nature

At the same time, Paul confirms our creed, "that Christ is very God." We need such frequent confirmation of our faith, for Satan

will not fail to attack it. He hates our faith. He knows that it is the victory which overcomes him and the world. That Christ is very God is apparent in that Paul ascribes to Him divine powers equally with the Father, as for instance, the power to dispense grace and peace. This Jesus could not do unless He were God.

To bestow peace and grace lies in the province of God, who alone can create these blessings. The angels cannot. The apostles could only distribute these blessings by the preaching of the Gospel. In attributing to Christ the divine power of creating and giving grace, peace, everlasting life, righteousness, and forgiveness of sins, the conclusion is inevitable that Christ is truly God. Similarly, St. John concludes from the works attributed to the Father and the Son that they are divinely One. Hence, the gifts which we receive from the Father and from the Son are one and the same. Otherwise Paul should have written: "Grace from God the Father, and peace from our Lord Jesus Christ." In combining them he ascribes them equally to the Father and the Son. I stress this on account of the many errors emanating from the sects.

The Arians were sharp fellows. Admitting that Christ had two natures, and that He is called "very God of very God," they were yet able to deny His divinity. The Arians took Christ for a noble and perfect creature, superior even to the angels, because by Him God created heaven and earth. Mohammed also speaks highly of Christ. But all their praise is mere palaver to deceive men. Paul's language is different. To paraphrase him: "You are established in this belief that Christ is very God because He gives grace and peace, gifts which only God can create and bestow."

Verse 4. Who gave himself for our sins.

Paul sticks to his theme. He never loses sight of the purpose of his epistle. He does not say, "Who received our works," but "who gave." Gave what? Not gold, or silver, or paschal lambs, or an angel, but Himself. What for? Not for a crown, or a kingdom, or our goodness, but for our sins. These words are like so many thunderclaps of protest from heaven against every kind and type of self-merit. Underscore these words, for they are full of comfort for sore consciences.

How may we obtain remission of our sins? Paul answers: "The man who is named Jesus Christ and the Son of God gave himself for our sins." The heavy artillery of these words explodes papacy, works, merits, superstitions. For if our sins could be removed by our own

efforts, what need was there for the Son of God to be given for them? Since Christ was given for our sins it stands to reason that they cannot be put away by our own efforts.

This sentence also defines our sins as great, so great, in fact, that the whole world could not make amends for a single sin. The greatness of the ransom, Christ, the Son of God, indicates this. The vicious character of sin is brought out by the words "who gave himself for our sins." So vicious is sin that only the sacrifice of Christ could atone for sin. When we reflect that the one little word "sin" embraces the whole kingdom of Satan, and that it includes everything that is horrible, we have reason to tremble. But we are careless. We make light of sin. We think that by some little work or merit we can dismiss sin.

This passage, then, bears out the fact that all men are sold under sin. Sin is an exacting despot who can be vanquished by no created power, but by the sovereign power of Jesus Christ alone.

All this is of wonderful comfort to a conscience troubled by the enormity of sin. Sin cannot harm those who believe in Christ, because He has overcome sin by His death. Armed with this conviction, we are enlightened and may pass judgment upon the papists, monks, nuns, priests, Mohammedans, Anabaptists, and all who trust in their own merits, as wicked and destructive sects that rob God and Christ of the honor that belongs to them alone.

Note especially the pronoun "our" and its significance. You will readily grant that Christ gave Himself for the sins of Peter, Paul, and others who were worthy of such grace. But feeling low, you find it hard to believe that Christ gave Himself for your sins. Our feelings shy at a personal application of the pronoun "our," and we refuse to have anything to do with God until we have made ourselves worthy by good deeds.

This attitude springs from a false conception of sin, the conception that sin is a small matter, easily taken care of by good works; that we must present ourselves to God with a good conscience; that we must feel no sin before we may feel that Christ was given for our sins.

This attitude is universal and particularly developed in those who consider themselves better than others. Such readily confess that they are frequent sinners, but they regard their sins as of no such importance that they cannot easily be dissolved by some good

action, or that they may not appear before the tribunal of Christ and demand the reward of eternal life for their righteousness. Meantime they pretend great humility and acknowledge a certain degree of sinfulness for which they soulfully join in the publican's prayer, "God be merciful to me a sinner." But the real significance and comfort of the words "for our sins" is lost upon them.

The genius of Christianity takes the words of Paul "who gave himself for our sins" as true and efficacious. We are not to look upon our sins as insignificant trifles. On the other hand, we are not to regard them as so terrible that we must despair. Learn to believe that Christ was given, not for picayune and imaginary transgressions, but for mountainous sins; not for one or two, but for all; not for sins that can be discarded, but for sins that are stubbornly ingrained.

Practice this knowledge and fortify yourself against despair, particularly in the last hour, when the memory of past sins assails the conscience. Say with confidence: "Christ, the Son of God, was given not for the righteous, but for sinners. If I had no sin I should not need Christ. No, Satan, you cannot delude me into thinking I am holy. The truth is, I am all sin. My sins are not imaginary transgressions, but sins against the first table, unbelief, doubt, despair, contempt, hatred, ignorance of God, ingratitude towards Him, misuse of His name, neglect of His Word, etc.; and sins against the second table, dishonor of parents, disobedience of government, coveting of another's possessions, etc. Granted that I have not committed murder, adultery, theft, and similar sins in deed, nevertheless I have committed them in the heart, and therefore I am a transgressor of all the commandments of God.

"Because my transgressions are multiplied and my own efforts at self-justification rather a hindrance than a furtherance, therefore Christ the Son of God gave Himself into death for my sins." To believe this is to have eternal life.

Let us equip ourselves against the accusations of Satan with this and similar passages of Holy Scripture. If he says, "You will be damned," you tell him: "No, for I fly to Christ who gave Himself for my sins. In accusing me of being a damnable sinner, you are cutting your own throat, Satan. You are reminding me of God's fatherly goodness toward me, that He so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life. In calling me a sinner, Satan,

you really comfort me above measure." With such heavenly cunning we are to meet the devil's craft and put from us the memory of sin.

St. Paul also presents a true picture of Christ as the virgin-born Son of God, delivered into death for our sins. To entertain a true conception of Christ is important, for the devil describes Christ as an exacting and cruel judge who condemns and punishes men. Tell him that his definition of Christ is wrong, that Christ has given Himself for our sins, that by His sacrifice He has taken away the sins of the whole world.

Make ample use of this pronoun "our." Be assured that Christ has canceled the sins, not of certain persons only, but your sins. Do not permit yourself to be robbed of this lovely conception of Christ. Christ is no Moses, no law-giver, no tyrant, but the Mediator for sins, the Giver of grace and life.

We know this. Yet in the actual conflict with the devil, when he scares us with the Law, when he frightens us with the very person of the Mediator, when he misquotes the words of Christ, and distorts for us our Savior, we so easily lose sight of our sweet High-Priest.

For this reason I am so anxious for you to gain a true picture of Christ out of the words of Paul "who gave himself for our sins." Obviously, Christ is no judge to condemn us, for He gave Himself for our sins. He does not trample the fallen but raises them. He comforts the broken-hearted. Otherwise Paul should lie when he writes "who gave himself for our sins."

I do not bother my head with speculations about the nature of God. I simply attach myself to the human Christ, and I find joy and peace, and the wisdom of God in Him. These are not new truths. I am repeating what the apostles and all teachers of God have taught long ago. Would to God we could impregnate our hearts with these truths.

Verse 4. That he might deliver us from this present evil world.

Paul calls this present world evil because everything in it is subject to the malice of the devil, who reigns over the whole world as his domain and fills the air with ignorance, contempt, hatred, and disobedience of God. In this devil's kingdom we live.

As long as a person is in the world he cannot by his own efforts rid himself of sin, because the world is bent upon evil. The people of the world are the slaves of the devil. If we are not in the Kingdom of

Christ, it is certain we belong to the kingdom of Satan and we are pressed into his service with every talent we possess.

Take the talents of wisdom and integrity. Without Christ, wisdom is double foolishness and integrity double sin, because they not only fail to perceive the wisdom and righteousness of Christ, but hinder and blaspheme the salvation of Christ. Paul justly calls it the evil or wicked world, for when the world is at its best the world is at its worst. The grossest vices are small faults in comparison with the wisdom and righteousness of the world. These prevent men from accepting the Gospel of the righteousness of Christ. The white devil of spiritual sin is far more dangerous than the black devil of carnal sin because the wiser, the better men are without Christ, the more they are likely to ignore and oppose the Gospel.

With the words, "that he might deliver us," Paul argues that we stand in need of Christ. No other being can possibly deliver us from this present evil world. Do not let the fact disturb you that a great many people enjoy excellent reputations without Christ. Remember what Paul says, that the world with all its wisdom, might, and righteousness is the devil's own. God alone is able to deliver us from the world.

Let us praise and thank God for His mercy in delivering us from the captivity of Satan, when we were unable to do so by our own strength. Let us confess with Paul that all our work-righteousness is loss and dung. Let us condemn as fily our rags all talk about free will, all religious orders, masses, ceremonies, vows, fastings, and the like.

In branding the world the devil's kingdom of iniquity, ignorance, error, sin, death, and everlasting despair, Paul at the same time declares the Kingdom of Christ to be a kingdom of equity, light, grace, remission of sin, peace, saving health, and everlasting life into which we are translated by our Lord Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever.

In this passage Paul contends against the false apostles for the article of Justification. Christ, says Paul, has delivered us from this wicked kingdom of the devil and the world according to the good will, the pleasure and commandment of the Father. Hence we are not delivered by our own will, or shrewdness, or wisdom, but by the mercy and love of God, as it is written, I John 4:10, "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins."

Another reason why Paul, like John, emphasizes the Father's will is Christ's habit of directing attention to the Father. For Christ came into the world to reconcile God with us and to draw us to the Father.

Not by curious inquiries into the nature of God shall we know God and His purpose for our salvation, but by taking hold of Christ, who according to the will of the Father has given Himself into death for our sins. When we understand this to be the will of the Father in Christ, then shall we know God to be merciful, and not angry. We shall realize that He loved us wretched sinners so much indeed that He gave us His only-begotten Son into death for us.

The pronoun "our" refers to both God and Father. He is our God and our Father. Christ's Father and our Father are one and the same. Hence Christ said to Mary Magdalene: "Go to my brethren, and say to them, I ascend to my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God." God is our Father and our God, but only in Christ Jesus.

Verse 5. To whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

Hebrew writing is interspersed with expressions of praise and gratitude. This peculiarity can be traced in the apostolic writings, particularly in those of Paul. The name of the Lord is to be mentioned with great reverence and thanksgiving.

Verse 6. I marvel.

How patiently Paul deals with his seduced Galatians! He does not pounce on them but, like a father, he fairly excuses their error. With motherly affection he talks to them yet he does it in a way that at the same time he also reproves them. On the other hand, he is highly indignant at the seducers whom he blames for the apostasy of the Galatians. His anger bursts forth in elemental fury at the beginning of his epistle. "If any may," he cries, "preach any other gospel to you than that ye have received, let him be accursed." Later on, in the fifth chapter, he threatens the false apostles with damnation. "He that troubleth you shall bear his judgment, whosoever he be." He pronounces a curse upon them. "I would they were even cut off which trouble you."

He might have addressed the Galatians after this fashion: "I am ashamed of you. Your ingratitude grieves me. I am angry with you." But his purpose was to call them back to the Gospel. With this purpose in his mind he speaks very gently to them. He could not have chosen a milder expression than this, "I marvel." It indicates

his sorrow and his displeasure.

Paul minds the rule which he himself lays down in a later chapter where he says: "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering yourself, lest you also be tempted." Toward those who have been misled we are to show ourselves parentally affectionate, so that they may perceive that we seek not their destruction but their salvation. Over against the devil and his missionaries, the authors of false doctrines and sects, we ought to be like the Apostle, impatient, and rigorously condemnatory, as parents are with the dog that bites their little one, but the weeping child itself they soothe.

The right spirit in Paul supplies him with an extraordinary facility in handling the afflicted consciences of the fallen. The Pope and his bishops, inspired by the desire to lord it over men's souls, crack out thunders and curses upon miserable consciences. They have no care for the saving of men's souls. They are interested only in maintaining their position.

Verse 6. That ye are so soon.

Paul deplores the fact that it is difficult for the mind to retain a sound and steadfast faith. A man labors for a decade before he succeeds in training his little church into orderly religion, and then some ignorant and vicious poltroon comes along to overthrow in a minute the patient labor of years. By the grace of God we have effected here in Wittenberg the form of a Christian church. The Word of God is taught as it should be, the Sacraments are administered, and everything is prosperous. This happy condition, secured by many years of arduous labors, some lunatic might spoil in a moment. This happened in the churches of Galatia which Paul had brought into life in spiritual travail. Soon after his departure, however, these Galatian churches were thrown into confusion by the false apostles.

The church is a tender plant. It must be watched. People hear a couple of sermons, scan a few pages of Holy Writ, and think they know it all. They are bold because they have never gone through any trials of faith. Void of the Holy Spirit, they teach what they please as long as it sounds good to the common people who are ever ready to join something new.

We have to watch out for the devil lest he sow tares among the

wheat while we sleep. No sooner had Paul turned his back on the churches of Galatia, than the false apostles went to work. Therefore, let us watch over ourselves and over the whole church.

Verse 6. I marvel that ye are so soon removed.

Again the Apostle puts in a gentle word. He does not berate the Galatians, "I marvel that ye are so unsteady, unfaithful." He says, "I marvel that ye are so soon removed." He does not address them as evildoers. He speaks to them as people who have suffered great loss. He condemns those who removed them rather than the Galatians. At the same time he gently reproves them for rather themselves to be removed. The criticism is implied that they should have been permitting a little more settled in their beliefs. If they had taken better hold of the Word they could not have been removed so easily.

Jerome thinks that Paul is playing upon the name Galatians, deriving it from the Hebrew word Galath, which means fallen or carried away, as though Paul wanted to say, "You are true Galatians, i.e., fallen away in name and in fact." Some believe that the Germans are descended from the Galatians. There may be something to that. For the Germans are not unlike the Galatians in their lack of constancy. At first we Germans are very enthusiastic, but presently our emotions cool and we become slack. When the light of the Gospel first came to us many were zealous, heard sermons greedily, and held the ministry of God's Word in high esteem. But now that religion has been reformed, many who formerly were such earnest disciples have discarded the Word of God, have become sow-bellies like the foolish and inconsistent Galatians.

Verse 6. From him that called you into the grace of Christ.

The reading is a little doubtful. The sentence may be construed to read: "From that Christ that called you into grace"; or it may be construed to read: "From God that called you into the grace of Christ." I prefer the former for it seems to me that Paul's purpose is to impress upon us the benefits of Christ. This reading also preserves the implied criticism that the Galatians withdrew themselves from that Christ who had called them not to the law, but to grace. With Paul we decry the blindness and perverseness of men in that they will not receive the message of grace and salvation, or having received it they quickly let go of it, in spite of the fact that the Gospel bestows all good things spiritual:

forgiveness of sins, true righteousness, peace of conscience, everlasting life; and all good things temporal: good judgment, good government and peace.

Why does the world abhor the glad tidings of the Gospel and the blessings that go with it? Because the world is the devil's. Under his direction the world persecutes the Gospel and would if it could nail again Christ, the Son of God, to the Cross although He gave Himself into death for the sins of the world. The world dwells in darkness. The world is darkness.

Paul accentuates the point that the Galatians had been called by Christ to grace. "I taught you the doctrine of grace and of liberty from the Law, from sin and wrath, that you should be free in Christ, and not slaves to the hard laws of Moses. Will you allow yourselves to be carried away so easily from the living fountain of grace and life?"

Verse 6. To another gospel.

Note the resourcefulness of the devil. Heretics do not advertise their errors. Murderers, adulterers, thieves disguise themselves. So the devil masquerades all his devices and activities. He puts on white to make himself look like an angel of light. He is astoundingly clever to sell his patent poison for the Gospel of Christ. Knowing Satan's guile, Paul sardonically calls the doctrine of the false apostles "another gospel," as if he would say, "You Galatians have now another gospel, while my Gospel is no longer esteemed by you."

We infer from this that the false apostles had depreciated the Gospel of Paul among the Galatians on the plea that it was incomplete. Their objection to Paul's Gospel is identical to that recorded in the fifteenth chapter of the Book of Acts to the effect that it was not enough for the Galatians to believe in Christ, or to be baptized, but that it was needful to circumcise them, and to command them to keep the law of Moses, for "except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved." As though Christ were a workman who had begun a building and left it for Moses to finish.

Today the Anabaptists and others, finding it difficult to condemn us, accuse us Lutherans of timidity in professing the whole truth. They grant that we have laid the foundation in Christ, but claim that we have failed to go through with the building. In this way these

perverse fanatics parade their cursed doctrine as the Word of God, and, flying the flag of God's name, they deceive many. The devil knows better than to appear ugly and black. He prefers to carry on his nefarious activities in the name of God. Hence the German proverb: "All mischief begins in the name of God."

When the devil sees that he cannot hurt the cause of the Gospel by destructive methods, he does it under the guise of correcting and advancing the cause of the Gospel. He would like best of all to persecute us with fire and sword, but this method has availed him little because through the blood of martyrs the church has been watered. Unable to prevail by force, he engages wicked and ungodly teachers who at first make common cause with us, then claim that they are particularly called to teach the hidden mysteries of the Scriptures to superimpose upon the first principles of Christian doctrine that we teach. This sort of thing brings the Gospel into trouble. May we all cling to the Word of Christ against the wiles of the devil, "for we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places."

Verse 7. Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you.

Here again the apostle excuses the Galatians, while he blames the false apostles for disturbing their consciences and for stealing them out of his hand. How angry he gets at these deceivers! He calls them troublemakers, seducers of poor consciences.

This passage adduces further evidence that the false apostles defamed Paul as an imperfect apostle and a weak and erroneous preacher. They condemn Paul, Paul condemns them. Such warfare of condemnation is always going on in the church. The papists and the fanatics hate us, condemn our doctrine, and want to kill us. We in turn hate and condemn their cursed doctrine. In the meanwhile the people are uncertain whom to follow and which way to turn, for it is not given to everybody to judge these matters. But the truth will win out. So much is certain, we persecute no man, neither does our doctrine trouble men. On the contrary, we have the testimony of many good men who thank God on their knees for the consolation that our doctrine has brought them. Like Paul, we are not to blame that the churches have trouble. The fault lies with the Anabaptists and other fanatics.

Every teacher of work-righteousness is a trouble-maker. Has it never occurred to you that the pope, cardinals, bishops, monks,

and that the whole synagogue of Satan are trouble-makers? The truth is, they are worse than false apostles. The false apostles taught that in addition to faith in Christ the works of the Law of God were necessary to salvation. But the papists omit faith altogether and teach self-devised traditions and works that are not commanded of God, indeed are contrary to the Word of God, and for these traditions they demand preferred attention and obedience.

Paul calls the false apostles troublers of the church because they taught circumcision and the keeping of the Law as needful to salvation. They insisted that the Law must be observed in every detail. They were supported in this contention by the Jews, with the result that those who were not firmly established in faith were easily persuaded that Paul was not a sincere teacher of God because he ignored the Law. The Jews were offended at the idea that the Law of God should be entirely ignored by Paul and that the Gentiles, former idol-worshippers, should gratuitously attain to the station of God's people without circumcision, without the penitentiary performance of the law, by grace alone through faith in Christ Jesus.

These criticisms were amplified by the false apostles. They accused Paul of designs to abolish the law of God and the Jewish dispensation, contrary to the law of God, contrary to their Jewish heritage, contrary to apostolic example, contrary to Paul's own example. They demanded that Paul be shunned as a blasphemer and a rebel, while they were to be heard as true teachers of the Gospel and authentic disciples of the apostles. Thus Paul stood defamed among the Galatians. He was forced to attack the false apostles. He did so without hesitation.

Verse 7. And would pervert the gospel of Christ. To paraphrase this sentence: "These false apostles do not merely trouble you, they abolish Christ's Gospel. They act as if they were the only true Gospel-preachers. For all that they muddle Law and Gospel. As a result they pervert the Gospel. Either Christ must live and the Law perish, or the Law remains and Christ must perish; Christ and the Law cannot dwell side by side in the conscience. It is either grace or law. To muddle the two is to eliminate the Gospel of Christ entirely."

It seems a small matter to mingle the Law and Gospel, faith and works, but it creates more mischief than man's brain can conceive. To mix Law and Gospel not only clouds the knowledge of grace, it

cuts out Christ altogether.

The words of Paul, "and would pervert the gospel of Christ," also indicate how arrogant these false apostles were. They were shameless boasters. Paul simply had to exalt his own ministry and Gospel.

Verse 8. But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than that which we have preached to you, let him be accursed.

Paul's zeal for the Gospel becomes so fervent that it almost leads him to curse angels. "I would rather that I, my brethren, yes, the angels of heaven be anathematized than that my gospel be overthrown."

The Greek word _anathema_, Hebrew _herem_, means to accurse, execrate, to damn. Paul first (hypothetically) curses himself. Knowing persons first find fault with themselves in order that they may all the more earnestly reprove others.

Paul maintains that there is no other gospel besides the one he had preached to the Galatians. He preached, not a gospel of his own invention, but the very same Gospel God had long ago prescribed in the Sacred Scriptures. No wonder Paul pronounces curses upon himself and upon others, upon the angels of heaven, if anyone should dare to preach any other gospel than Christ's own.

Verse 9. As we said before, so say I now again. If any man preach any other gospel to you than that ye have received, let him be accursed.

Paul repeats the curse, directing it now upon other persons. Before, he cursed himself, his brethren, and an angel from heaven. "Now," he says, "if there are any others who preach a gospel different from that you have received from us, let them also be accursed." Paul herewith curses and excommunicates all false teachers including his opponents. He is so worked up that he dares to curse all who pervert his Gospel. Would to God that this terrible pronouncement of the Apostle might strike fear into the hearts of all who pervert the Gospel of Paul.

The Galatians might say: "Paul, we do not pervert the Gospel you have brought to us. We did not quite understand it. That is all. Now these teachers who came after you have explained everything so beautifully." This explanation the Apostle refuses to accept. They must add nothing; they must correct nothing. "What you received

from me is the genuine Gospel of God. Let it stand. If any man brings any other gospel than the one I brought you, or promises to deliver better things than you have received from me, let him be accursed."

In spite of this emphatic denunciation so many accept the pope as the supreme judge of the Scriptures. "The Church," they say, "chose only four gospels. The Church might have chosen more. Ergo the Church is above the Gospel." With equal force one might argue: "I approve the Scriptures. Ergo I am above the Scriptures. John the Baptist confessed Christ. Hence he is above Christ." Paul subordinates himself, all preachers, all the angels of heaven, everybody to the Sacred Scriptures. We are not the masters, judges, or arbiters, but witnesses, disciples, and confessors of the Scriptures, whether we be pope, Luther, Augustine, Paul, or an angel from heaven.

Verse 10. For do I now persuade men, or God?

With the same vehemence Paul continues: "You Galatians ought to be able to tell from my preaching and from the many afflictions which I have endured, whether I serve men or God. Everybody can see that my preaching has stirred up persecution against me everywhere, and has earned for me the cruel hatred of my own people, in fact the hatred of all men. This should convince you that by my preaching I do not seek the favor and praise of men, but the glory of God."

No man can say that we are seeking the favor and praise of men with our doctrine. We teach that all men are naturally depraved. We condemn man's free will, his strength, wisdom, and righteousness. We say that we obtain grace by the free mercy of God alone for Christ's sake. This is no preaching to please men. This sort of preaching procures for us the hatred and disfavor of the world, persecutions, excommunications, murders, and curses.

"Can't you see that I seek no man's favor by my doctrine?" asks Paul. "If I were anxious for the favor of men I would flatter them. But what do I do? I condemn their works. I teach things only that I have been commanded to teach from above. For that I bring down upon my head the wrath of Jews and Gentiles. My doctrine must be right. It must be divine. Any other doctrine cannot be better than mine. Any other doctrine must be false and wicked."

With Paul we boldly pronounce a curse upon every doctrine that

does not agree with ours. We do not preach for the praise of men, or the favor of princes. We preach for the favor of God alone whose grace and mercy we proclaim. Whosoever teaches a gospel contrary to ours, or different from ours, let us be bold to say that he is sent of the devil.

Verse 10. Or do I seek to please men?

"Do I serve men or God?" Paul keeps an eye on the false apostles, those flatterers of men. They taught circumcision to avoid the hatred and persecution of men.

To this day you will find many who seek to please men in order that they may live in peace and security. They teach whatever is agreeable to men, no matter whether it is contrary to God's Word or their own conscience. But we who endeavor to please God and not men, stir up hell itself. We must suffer reproach, slanders, death.

For those who go about to please men we have a word from Christ recorded in the fifth chapter of St. John: "How can ye believe, which receive honor one of another, and seek not the honor that comes from God alone?"

Verse 10. For if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ.

Observe the consummate cleverness with which the false apostles went about to bring Paul into disrepute. They combed Paul's writings for contradictions (our opponents do the same) to accuse him of teaching contradictory things. They found that Paul had circumcised Timothy according to the Law, that Paul had purified himself with four other men in the Temple at Jerusalem, that Paul had shaven his head at Cenchrea. The false apostles slyly suggested that Paul had been constrained by the other apostles to observe these ceremonial laws. We know that Paul observed these _decora_ out of charitable regard for the weak brethren. He did not want to offend them. But the false apostles turned Paul's charitable regard to his disadvantage. If Paul had preached the Law and circumcision, if he had commended the strength and free will of man, he would not have been so obnoxious to the Jews. On the contrary they would have praised his every action.

VERSES 11, 12. 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.

This passage constitutes Paul's chief defense against the

accusations of his opponents. He maintains under oath that he received his Gospel not from men, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ.

In declaring that his Gospel is not after man, Paul does not merely wish to state that his Gospel is not mundane. The false apostles made the same claim for their gospel. Paul means to say that he learned his Gospel not in the usual and accepted manner through the agency of men by hearing, reading, or writing. He received the Gospel by special revelation directly from Jesus Christ.

Paul received his Gospel on the way to Damascus when Christ appeared to him. St. Luke furnishes an account of the incident in the ninth chapter of the Book of Acts. "Arise," said Christ to Paul, "and go into the city, and it shall be told you what you must do." Christ did not send Paul into the city to learn the Gospel from Ananias. Ananias was only to baptize Paul, to lay his hands on Paul, to commit the ministry of the Word to Paul, and to recommend him to the Church. Ananias recognized his limited assignment when he said to Paul: "Brother Saul, the Lord, even Jesus, that appeared to you in the way as you came, has sent me, that you mightest receive your sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost." Paul did not receive instruction from Ananias. Paul had already been called, enlightened, and taught by Christ in the road. His contact with Ananias was merely a testimonial to the fact that Paul had been called by Christ to preach the Gospel.

Paul was forced to speak of his conversion to combat the slanderous contention of the false apostles to the effect that this apostleship was inferior to that of the other apostles.

If it were not for the example of the Galatian churches I would never have thought it possible that anybody who had received the Word of God with such eagerness as they had, could so quickly let go of it. Good Lord, what terrible mischief one single false statement can create.

The article of justification is fragile. Not in itself, of course, but in us. I know how quickly a person can forfeit the joy of the Gospel. I know in what slippery places even those stand who seem to have a good footing in the matters of faith. In the midst of the conflict when we should be consoling ourselves with the Gospel, the Law rears up and begins to rage all over our conscience. I say the Gospel is frail because we are frail.

What makes matters worse is that one-half of ourselves, our own reason, stands against us. The flesh resists the spirit, or as Paul puts it, "The flesh lusteth against the Spirit." Therefore we teach that to know Christ and to believe in Him is no achievement of man, but the gift of God. God alone can create and preserve faith in us. God creates faith in us through the Word. He increases, strengthens and confirms faith in us through His word. Hence the best service that anybody can render God is diligently to hear and read God's Word. On the other hand, nothing is more perilous than to be weary of the Word of God. Thinking he knows enough, a person begins little by little to despise the Word until he has lost Christ and the Gospel altogether.

Let every believer carefully learn the Gospel. Let him continue in humble prayer. We are molested not by puny foes, but by mighty ones, foes who never grow tired of warring against us. These, our enemies, are many: Our own flesh, the world, the Law, sin, death, the wrath and judgment of God, and the devil himself.

The arguments which the false apostles advanced impress people to this day. "Who are you to dissent from the fathers and the entire Church, and to bring a contradictory doctrine? Are you wiser than so many holy men, wiser than the whole Church?" When Satan, abetted by our own reason, advances these arguments against us, we lose heart, unless we keep on saying to ourselves: "I don't care if Cyprian, Ambrose, Augustine, Peter, Paul, John, or an angel from heaven, teaches so and so. I know that I teach the truth of God in Christ Jesus."

When I first took over the defense of the Gospel, I remembered what Doctor Staupitz said to me. "I like it well," he said, "that the doctrine which you proclaim gives glory to God alone and none to man. For never can too much glory, goodness, and mercy be ascribed to God." These words of the worthy Doctor comforted and confirmed me. The Gospel is true because it deprives men of all glory, wisdom, and righteousness and turns over all honor to the Creator alone. It is safer to attribute too much glory to God than to man.

You may argue that the Church and the fathers are holy. Yet the Church is compelled to pray: "Forgive us our trespasses," I am not to be believed, nor is the Church to be believed, or the fathers, or the apostles, or an angel from heaven, if they teach anything contrary to the Word of God. Let the Word of God abide forever.

Peter erred in life and in doctrine. Paul might have dismissed Peter's error as a matter of no consequence. But Paul saw that Peter's error would lead to the damage of the whole Church unless it were corrected. Therefore he withstood Peter to his face. The Church, Peter, the apostles, angels from heaven, are not to be heard unless they teach the genuine Word of God.

This argument is not always to our advantage. People ask: "Whom then shall we believe?" Our opponents maintain that they teach the pure Word of God. We do not believe them. They in turn hate and persecute us for vile heretics. What can we do about it? With Paul we glory in the Gospel of Jesus Christ. What do we gain? We are told that our glorying is idle vanity and unadulterated blasphemy. The moment we abase ourselves and give in to the rage of our opponents, Papists and Anabaptists grow arrogant. The Anabaptists hatch out some new monstrosity. The Papists revive their old abominations. What to do? Let everybody become sure of his calling and doctrine, that he may boldly say with Paul: "But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than ye have received, let him be accursed."

VERSES 13, 14. For ye have heard of my conversation in time past in the Jews' religion, how that beyond measure I persecuted the church of God, and wasted it: And profited in the Jews' religion above many my equals in mine own nation.

This passage does not contain doctrine. Paul adduces his own case for an example. "I have," he says, "at one time defended the traditions of the Pharisees more fiercely than any of your false apostles. Now, if the righteousness of the Law had been worth anything I would never have forsaken it. So carefully did I live up to the Law that I excelled many of my companions. So zealous was I in defense of the Law that I wasted the church of God."

Verse 14. Being more exceedingly zealous of the traditions of my fathers.

Speaking now of the Mosaic Law, Paul declares that he was wrapped up in it. To the Philippians he wrote: "As touching the law, a Pharisee; concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless." He means to say, "I can compare myself with the best and holiest of all those who are of the circumcision. Let them show me if they can, a more earnest defender of the Mosaic Law than I was at one time. This fact, O Galatians, should have put you on your guard against these

deceivers who make so much of the Law. If anybody ever had reason to glory in the righteousness of the Law, it was I." I too may say that before I was enlightened by the Gospel, I was as zealous for the papistical laws and traditions of the fathers as ever a man was. I tried hard to live up to every law as best I could. I punished myself with fasting, watching, praying, and other exercises more than all those who today hate and persecute me. I was so much in earnest that I imposed upon my body more than it could stand. I honored the pope as a matter of conscience. Whatever I did, I did with a single heart to the glory of God. But our opponents, well-fed idlers that they are, will not believe what I and many others have endured.

VERSES 15, 16, 17. But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace. To reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen; immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood: Neither went I up to Jerusalem to them which were apostles before me; but I went into Arabia, and returned again to Damascus.

Here Paul relates that immediately upon being called by God to preach the Gospel to the Gentiles, he went into Arabia without consulting a single person. "When it had pleased God," he writes, "I did not deserve it. I had been an enemy of Christ. I had blasphemed His Gospel. I had shed innocent blood. In the midst of my frenzy I was called. Why? On account of my outrageous cruelty? Indeed not. My gracious God who shows mercy to whom He will, pardoned all mine iniquities. He bestowed His grace upon me, and called me for an apostle."

We also have come to the knowledge of the truth by the same kindness of God. I crucified Christ daily in my cloistered life, and blasphemed God by my wrong faith. Outwardly I kept myself chaste, poor, and obedient. I was much given to fasting, watching, praying, saying of masses, and the like. Yet under the cloak of my outward respectability I continually mistrusted, doubted, feared, hated, and blasphemed God. My righteousness was a filthy puddle. Satan loves such saints. They are his darlings, for they quickly destroy their body and soul by depriving them of the blessings of God's generous gifts.

I tell you I stood in awe of the pope's authority. To dissent from him I considered a crime worthy of eternal death. I thought of John Huss as a cursed heretic. I counted it a sin even to think of him. I would

gladly have furnished the wood to burn him. I would have felt I had done God a real service.

In comparison with these sanctimonious hypocrites of the papacy, publicans and harlots are not bad. They at least feel remorse. They at least do not try to justify their wicked deeds. But these pretended saints, so far from acknowledging their errors, justify them and regard them as acceptable sacrifices to God.

Verse 15. When it pleased God.

"By the favor of God I, a wicked and cursed wretch, a blasphemer, persecutor, and rebel, was spared. Not content to spare me, God granted to me the knowledge of His salvation, His Spirit, His Son, the office of an apostle, everlasting life." Paul speaking.

God not only pardoned our iniquities, but in addition overwhelmed us with blessings and spiritual gifts. Many, however, are ungrateful. Worse, by opening again a window to the devil many begin to loathe God's Word, and end by perverting the Gospel.

Verse 15. Who separated me from my mother's womb.

This is a Hebrew expression, meaning to sanctify, ordain, prepare. Paul is saying, "When I was not yet born God ordained me to be an apostle, and in due time confirmed my apostleship before the world. Every gift, be it small or great, spiritual or temporal, and every good thing I should ever do, God has ordained while I was yet in my mother's womb where I could neither think nor perform any good thing. After I was born God supported me. Heaping mercy upon mercy, He freely forgave my sins, replenishing me with His grace to enable me to learn what great things are ours in Christ. To crown it all, He called me to preach the Gospel to others."

Verse 15. And called me by his grace.

"Did God call me on account of my holy life? Or on account of my pharisaical religion? Or on account of my prayers, fastings, and works? Never. Well, then, it is certain God did not call me on account of my blasphemies, persecutions, oppressions. What prompted Him to call me? His grace alone."

Verse 16. To reveal his Son to me.

We now hear what kind of doctrine was committed to Paul: The doctrine of the Gospel, the doctrine of the revelation of the Son of God. This doctrine differs greatly from the Law. The Law terrorizes the conscience. The Law reveals the wrath and judgment of God.

The Gospel does not threaten. The Gospel announces that Christ is come to forgive the sins of the world. The Gospel conveys to us the inestimable treasures of God.

Verse 16. That I might preach him among the heathen.

"It pleased God," says the Apostle, "to reveal himself in me. Why? For a twofold purpose. That I personally should believe in the Son of God, and that I should reveal Him to the Gentiles."

Paul does not mention the Jews, for the simple reason that he was the called and acknowledged apostle of the Gentiles, although he preached Christ also to the Jews.

We can hear the Apostle saying to himself: "I will not burden the Gentiles with the Law, because I am their apostle and not their lawgiver. Not once did you Galatians hear me speak of the righteousness of the Law or of works. My job was to bring you the Gospel. Therefore you ought to listen to no teachers of the Law, but the Gospel: not Moses, but the Son of God; not the righteousness of works, but the righteousness of faith must be proclaimed to the Gentiles. That is the right kind of preaching for Gentiles."

Verse 16. Immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood.

Once Paul had received the Gospel from Christ, he conferred with nobody in Damascus. He asked no man to teach him. He did not go up to Jerusalem to sit at the feet of Peter and the other apostles. At once he preached Jesus Christ in Damascus.

Verse 17. Neither went I up to Jerusalem to them which were apostles before me; but I went into Arabia, and returned again to Damascus.

"I went to Arabia before I saw any of the apostles. I took it upon myself to preach the Gospel to the Gentiles without delay, because Christ had called me for that purpose." This statement refutes the assertion of the false apostles that Paul had been a pupil of the apostles, from which the false apostles inferred that Paul had been instructed in the obedience of the Law, that therefore the Gentiles also ought to keep the Law and submit to circumcision.

VERSES 18, 19. Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to see

Peter, and abode with him fifteen days. But other of the apostles saw I none, save James the Lord's brother.

Paul minutely recounts his personal history to stop the cavil of the

false apostles. Paul does not deny that he had been with some of the apostles. He went to Jerusalem uninvited, not to be instructed, but to visit with Peter. Luke reports the occasion in the ninth chapter of the Book of Acts. Barnabas introduced Paul to the apostles and related to them how Paul had met the Lord Jesus on the way to Damascus, also how Paul had preached boldly at Damascus in the name of Jesus. Paul says that he saw Peter and James, but he denies that he learned anything from them.

Why does Paul harp on this seemingly unimportant fact? To convince the churches of Galatia that his Gospel was the true Word of Christ which he learned from Christ Himself and from no man. Paul was forced to affirm and re-affirm this fact. His usefulness to all the churches that had used him as their pastor and teacher was at stake.

Verse 20. Now the things which I write to you, behold, before God, I lie not.

Was it necessary for Paul to go under oath? Yes. Paul is reporting personal history. How else would the churches believe him? The false apostles might say, "Who knows whether Paul is telling the truth?" Paul, the elect vessel of God, was held in so little esteem by his own Galatians to whom he had preached Christ that it was necessary for him to swear an oath that he spoke the truth. If this happened to Paul, what business have we to complain when people doubt our words, or hold us in little regard, we who cannot begin to compare ourselves with the Apostle?

Verse 21. Afterwards I came into the regions of Syria and Cilicia.

Syria and Cilicia are adjacent countries. Paul traces his movements carefully in order to convince the Galatians that he had never been the disciple of any apostle.

VERSES 22, 23, 24. And was unknown by face to the churches of Judaea which were in Christ: But they had heard only, that he which persecuted us in times past now preaches the faith which once he destroyed. And they glorified God in me.

In Syria and Cilicia Paul won the indorsement of all the churches of Judea, by his preaching. All the churches everywhere, even those of Judea, could testify that he had preached the same faith everywhere. "And," Paul adds, "these churches glorified God in me, not because I taught that circumcision and the law of Moses should be observed, but because I urged upon all faith in the Lord Jesus

Christ."