

## Chapter 3

Verse 1. O foolish Galatians.

THE Apostle Paul manifests his apostolic care for the Galatians. Sometimes he entreats them, then again he reproaches them, in accordance with his own advice to Timothy: "Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort."

In the midst of his discourse on Christian righteousness Paul breaks off, and turns to address the Galatians. "O foolish Galatians," he cries. "I have brought you the true Gospel, and you received it with eagerness and gratitude. Now all of a sudden you drop the Gospel. What has got into you?"

Paul reproveth the Galatians rather sharply when he calls them "fools, bewitched, and disobedient." Whether he is indignant or sorry, I cannot say. He may be both. It is the duty of a Christian pastor to reprove the people committed to his charge. Of course, his anger must not flow from malice, but from affection and a real zeal for Christ.

There is no question that Paul is disappointed. It hurts him to think that his Galatians showed so little stability. We can hear him say: "I am sorry to hear of your troubles, and disappointed in you for the disgraceful part you played." I say rather much on this point to save Paul from the charge that he railed upon the churches, contrary to the spirit of the Gospel.

A certain distance and coolness can be noted in the title with which the Apostle addresses the Galatians. He does not now address them as his brethren, as he usually does. He addresses them as Galatians in order to remind them of their national trait to be foolish.

We have here an example of bad traits that often cling to individual Christians and entire congregations. Grace does not suddenly transform a Christian into a new and perfect creature. Dregs of the old and natural corruption remain. The Spirit of God cannot at once overcome human deficiency. Sanctification takes time.

Although the Galatians had been enlightened by the Holy Spirit through the preaching of faith, something of their national trait of foolishness plus their original depravity clung to them. Let no man think that once he has received faith, he can presently be converted into a faultless creature. The leavings of old vices will stick to him,

be he ever so good a Christian.

Verse 1. Who has bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth?

Paul calls the Galatians foolish and bewitched. In the fifth chapter he mentions sorcery among the works of the flesh, declaring that witchcraft and sorcery are real manifestations and legitimate activities of the devil. We are all exposed to the influence of the devil, because he is the prince and god of the world in which we live.

Satan is clever. He does not only bewitch men in a crude manner, but also in a more artful fashion. He bedevils the minds of men with hideous fallacies. Not only is he able to deceive the self-assured, but even those who profess the true Christian faith. There is not one among us who is not at times seduced by Satan into false beliefs.

This accounts for the many new battles we have to wage nowadays. But the attacks of the old Serpent are not without profit to us, for they confirm our doctrine and strengthen our faith in Christ. Many a time we were wrestled down in these conflicts with Satan, but Christ has always triumphed and always will triumph. Do not think that the Galatians were the only ones to be bewitched by the devil. Let us realize that we too may be seduced by Satan.

Verse 1. Who has bewitched you?

In this sentence Paul excuses the Galatians, while he blames the false apostles for the apostasy of the Galatians.

As if he were saying: "I know your defection was not willful. The devil sent the false apostles to you, and they tallied you into believing that you are justified by the Law. With this our epistle we endeavor to undo the damage which the false apostles have inflicted upon you."

Like Paul, we struggle with the Word of God against the fanatical Anabaptists of our day; and our efforts are not entirely in vain. The trouble is there are many who refuse to be instructed. They will not listen to reason; they will not listen to the Scriptures, because they are bewitched by the tricky devil who can make a lie look like the truth.

Since the devil has this uncanny ability to make us believe a lie until we would swear a thousand times it were the truth, we must not be proud, but walk in fear and humility, and call upon the Lord Jesus to

save us from temptation.

Although I am a doctor of divinity, and have preached Christ and fought His battles for a long time, I know from personal experience how difficult it is to hold fast to the truth. I cannot always shake off Satan. I cannot always apprehend Christ as the Scriptures portray Him. Sometimes the devil distorts Christ to my vision. But thanks be to God, who keeps us in His Word, in faith, and in prayer.

The spiritual witchery of the devil creates in the heart a wrong idea of Christ. Those who share the opinion that a person is justified by the works of the Law, are simply bewitched. Their belief goes against faith and Christ.

Verse 1. That ye should not obey the truth.

Paul incriminates the Galatians in worse failure. "You are so bewitched that you no longer obey the truth. I fear many of you have strayed so far that you will never return to the truth."

The apostasy of the Galatians is a fine indorsement of the Law, all right. You may preach the Law ever so fervently; if the preaching of the Gospel does not accompany it, the Law will never produce true conversion and heartfelt repentance. We do not mean to say that the preaching of the Law is without value, but it only serves to bring home to us the wrath of God. The Law bows a person down. It takes the Gospel and the preaching of faith in Christ to raise and save a person.

Verse 1. Before whose eyes Jesus Christ has been evidently set forth.

Paul's increasing severity becomes apparent as he reminds the Galatians that they disobeyed the truth in defiance of the vivid description he had given them of Christ. So vividly had he described Christ to them that they could almost see and handle Him. As if Paul were to say: "No artist with all his colors could have pictured Christ to you as vividly as I have pictured Him to you by my preaching. Yet you permitted yourselves to be seduced to the extent that you disobeyed the truth of Christ."

Verse 1. Crucified among you.

"You have not only rejected the grace of God, you have shamefully crucified Christ among you." Paul employs the same phraseology in Hebrews 6:6: "Seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame."

It should make any person afraid to hear Paul say that those who seek to be justified by the Law, not only deny Christ, but also crucify Him anew. If those who seek to be justified by the Law and its works are crucifiers of Christ, what are they, I like to know, who seek salvation by the filthy rags of their own work-righteousness?

Can there be anything more horrible than the papacy, an alliance of people who crucify Christ in themselves, in the Church, and in the hearts of the believers?

Of all the diseased and vicious doctrines of the papacy the worst is this: "If you want to serve God you must earn your own remission of sins and everlasting life, and in addition help others to obtain salvation by giving them the benefit of your extra work-holiness." Monks, friars, and all the rest of them brag that besides the ordinary requirements common to all Christians, they do the works of supererogation, i.e., the performance of more than is required. This is certainly a fiendish illusion.

No wonder Paul employs such sharp language in his effort to recall the Galatians from the doctrine of the false apostles. He says to them: "Don't you realize what you have done? You have crucified Christ anew because you seek salvation by the Law."

True, Christ can no longer be crucified in person, but He is crucified in us when we reject grace, faith, free remission of sins and endeavor to be justified by our own works, or by the works of the Law.

The Apostle is incensed at the presumptuousness of any person who thinks he can perform the Law of God to his own salvation. He charges that person with the atrocity of crucifying anew the Son of God.

Verse 2. This only would I learn of you, Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?

There is a touch of irony in these words of the Apostle. "Come on now, my smart Galatians, you who all of a sudden have become doctors, while I seem to be your pupil: Received ye the Holy Ghost by the works of the Law, or by the preaching of the Gospel?" This question gave them something to think about, because their own experience contradicted them.

"You cannot say that you received the Holy Spirit by the Law. As long as you were servants of the Law, you never received the Holy Ghost. Nobody ever heard of the Holy Ghost being given to

anybody, be he doctor or dunce, as a result of the preaching of the Law. In your own case, you have not only learned the Law by heart, you have labored with all your might to perform it. You most of all should have received the Holy Ghost by the Law, if that were possible. You cannot show me that this ever happened. But as soon as the Gospel came your way, you received the Holy Ghost by the simple hearing of faith, before you ever had a chance to do a single good deed." Luke verifies this statement of Paul in the Book of Acts: "While Peter yet said these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word." (Acts 10:44.) "And as I began to speak, the Holy Ghost fell on them, as on us at the beginning." (Acts 11:15.)

Try to appreciate the force of Paul's argument which is so often repeated in the Book of Acts. That Book was written for the express purpose of verifying Paul's assertion, that the Holy Ghost comes upon men, not in response to the preaching of the Law, but in response to the preaching of the Gospel. When Peter preached Christ at the first Pentecost, the Holy Ghost fell upon the hearers, "and the same day there were added to them about three thousand souls." Cornelius received the Holy Ghost while Peter was speaking of Christ. "The Holy Ghost fell on all of them which heard the word." These are actual experiences that cannot very well be denied. When Paul and Barnabas returned to Jerusalem and reported what they had been able to accomplish among the Gentiles, the whole Church was astonished, particularly when it heard that the uncircumcised Gentiles had received the Holy Ghost by the preaching of faith in Christ.

Now as God gave the Holy Ghost to the Gentiles without the Law by the simple preaching of the Gospel, so He gave the Holy Ghost also to the Jews, without the Law, through faith alone. If the righteousness of the Law were necessary to salvation, the Holy Ghost would never have come to the Gentiles, because they did not bother about the Law. Hence the Law does not justify, but faith in Christ justifies.

How was it with Cornelius? Cornelius and his friends whom he had invited over to his house, do nothing but sit and listen. Peter is doing the talking. They just sit and do nothing. The Law is far removed from their thoughts. They burn no sacrifices. They are not at all interested in circumcision. All they do is to sit and listen to Peter. Suddenly the Holy Ghost enters their hearts. His presence is

unmistakable, "for they spoke with tongues and magnified God."

Right here we have one more difference between the Law and the Gospel. The Law does not bring on the Holy Ghost. The Gospel, however, brings on the gift of the Holy Ghost, because it is the nature of the Gospel to convey good gifts. The Law and the Gospel are contrary ideas. They have contrary functions and purposes. To endow the Law with any capacity to produce righteousness is to plagiarize the Gospel. The Gospel brings donations. It pleads for open hands to take what is being offered. The Law has nothing to give. It demands, and its demands are impossible.

Our opponents come back at us with Cornelius. Cornelius, they point out, was "a devout man, and one that feared God with all his house, which gave much alms to the people and prayed God always." Because of these qualifications, he merited the forgiveness of sins, and the gift of the Holy Ghost. So reason our opponents.

I answer: Cornelius was a Gentile. You cannot deny it. As a Gentile he was uncircumcised. As a Gentile he did not observe the Law. He never gave the Law any thought. For all that, he was justified and received the Holy Ghost. How can the Law avail anything to righteousness? Our opponents are not satisfied. They reply: "Granted that Cornelius was a Gentile and did not receive the Holy Ghost by the Law, yet the text plainly states that he was a devout man who feared God, gave alms, and prayed. Don't you think he deserved the gift of the Holy Ghost?"

I answer: Cornelius had the faith of the fathers who were saved by faith in the Christ to come. If Cornelius had died before Christ, he would have been saved because he believed in the Christ to come. But because the Messiah had already come, Cornelius had to be apprized of the fact. Since Christ has come we cannot be saved by faith in the Christ to come, but we must believe that he has come. The object of Peter's visit was to acquaint Cornelius with the fact that Christ was no longer to be looked for, because He is here.

As to the contention of our opponents that Cornelius deserved grace and the gift of the Holy Ghost, because he was devout and just, we say that these attributes are the characteristics of a spiritual person who already has faith in Christ, and not the characteristics of a Gentile or of natural man. Luke first praises Cornelius for being a devout and God-fearing man, and then Luke mentions the good works, the alms and prayers of Cornelius. Our

opponents ignore the sequence of Luke's words. They pounce on this one sentence, "which gave much alms to the people," because it serves their assertion that merit precedes grace. The fact is that Cornelius gave alms and prayed to God because he had faith. And because of his faith in the Christ to come, Peter was delegated to preach to Cornelius faith in the Christ who had already come. This argument is convincing enough. Cornelius was justified without the Law, therefore the Law cannot justify.

Take the case of Naaman, the Syrian, who was a Gentile and did not belong to the race of Moses. Yet his flesh was cleansed, the God of Israel was revealed to him, and he received the Holy Ghost. Naaman confessed his faith: "Behold, now I know that there is no God in all the earth, but in Israel." (II Kings 5:15.) Naaman does not do a thing. He does not busy himself with the Law. He was never circumcised. That does not mean that his faith was inactive. He said to the Prophet Elisha: "Your servant will henceforth offer neither burnt offering nor sacrifice to other gods, but to the Lord. In this thing the Lord pardon your servant, that when my master goes into the house of Rimmon to worship there, and he leaneth on my hand, and I bow myself in the house of Rimmon: when I bow down myself in the house of Rimmon, the Lord pardon your servant in this thing." What did the Prophet tell him?" Go in peace." The Jews do not like to hear the prophet say this. "What," they exclaim, "should this heathen be justified without the Law? Should he be made equal to us who are circumcised?"

Long before the time of Moses, God justified men without the Law. He justified many kings of Egypt and Babylonia. He justified Job. Nineveh, that great city, was justified and received the promise of God that He would not destroy the city. Why was Nineveh spared? Not because it fulfilled the Law, but because Nineveh believed the word of God. The Prophet Jonah writes: "So the people of Nineveh believed God, and proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth." They repented. Nowhere in the Book of Jonah do you read that the Ninevites received the Law of Moses, or that they were circumcised, or that they offered sacrifices.

All this happened long before Christ was born. If the Gentiles were justified without the Law and quietly received the Holy Spirit at a time when the Law was in full force, why should the Law count to righteousness now, now that Christ has fulfilled the Law?

And yet many devote much time and labor to the Law, to the

decrees of the fathers, and to the traditions of the Pope. Many of these specialists have incapacitated themselves for any kind of work, good or bad, by their rigorous attention to rules and laws. All the same, they could not obtain a quiet conscience and peace in Christ. But the moment the Gospel of Christ touches them, certainty comes to them, and joy, and a right judgment.

I have good reason for enlarging upon this point. The heart of man finds it difficult to believe that so great a treasure as the Holy Ghost is gotten by the mere hearing of faith. The hearer likes to reason like this: Forgiveness of sins, deliverance from death, the gift of the Holy Ghost, everlasting life are grand things. If you want to obtain these priceless benefits, you must engage in correspondingly great efforts. And the devil says, "Amen."

We must learn that forgiveness of sins, Christ, and the Holy Ghost, are freely granted to us at the preaching of faith, in spite of our sinfulness. We are not to waste time thinking how unworthy we are of the blessings of God. We are to know that it pleased God freely to give us His unspeakable gifts. If He offers His gifts free of charge, why not take them? Why worry about our lack of worthiness? Why not accept gifts with joy and thanksgiving?

Right away foolish reason is once more offended. It scolds us. "When you say that a person can do nothing to obtain the grace of God, you foster carnal security. People become shiftless and will do no good at all. Better not preach this doctrine of faith. Rather urge the people to exert and to exercise themselves in good works, so that the Holy Ghost will feel like coming to them."

What did Jesus say to Martha when she was very "careful and troubled about many things" and could hardly stand to see her sister Mary sitting at the feet of Jesus, just listening? "Martha, Martha," Jesus said, "you are careful and troubled about many things: but one thing is needful; and Mary has chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her." A person becomes a Christian not by working, but by hearing. The first step to being a Christian is to hear the Gospel. When a person has accepted the Gospel, let him first give thanks to God with a glad heart, and then let him get busy on the good works to strive for, works that really please God, and not man-made and self-chosen works.

Our opponents regard faith as an easy thing, but I know from personal experience how hard it is to believe. That the Holy Ghost is received by faith, is quickly said, but not so quickly done.



All believers experience this difficulty. They would gladly embrace the Word with a full faith, but the flesh deters them. You see, our reason always thinks it is too easy and cheap to have righteousness, the Holy Spirit, and life everlasting by the mere hearing of the Gospel

Verse 3. Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?

Paul now begins to warn the Galatians against a twofold danger. The first danger is: "Are ye so foolish, that after ye have begun in the Spirit, ye would now end in the flesh?"

"Flesh" stands for the righteousness of reason which seeks justification by the accomplishment of the Law. I am told that I began in the spirit under the papacy, but am ending up in the flesh because I got married. As though single life were a spiritual life, and married life a carnal life. They are silly. All the duties of a Christian husband, e.g., to love his wife, to bring up his children, to govern his family, etc., are the very fruits of the Spirit.

The righteousness of the Law which Paul also terms the righteousness of the flesh is so far from justifying a person that those who once had the Holy Spirit and lost Him, end up in the Law to their complete destruction.

Verse 4. Have ye suffered so many things in vain?

The other danger against which the Apostle warns the Galatians is this: "Have ye suffered so many things in vain?" Paul wants to say: "Consider not only the good state you had and lost, but consider also the many things you have suffered for the sake of the Gospel and for the name of Christ. You have suffered the loss of your possessions, you have borne reproaches, you have passed through many dangers of body and life. You endured much for the name of Christ and you endured it faithfully. But now you have lost everything, the Gospel, faith, and the spiritual benefit of your sufferings for Christ's sake. What a miserable thing to endure so many afflictions for nothing."

Verse 4. If it be yet in vain.

The Apostle adds the afterthought: "If it be yet in vain. I do not despair of all hope for you. But if you continue to look to the Law for righteousness, I think you should be told that all your past true worship of God and all the afflictions that you have endured for Christ's sake are going to help you not at all. I do not mean to

discourage you altogether. I do hope you will repent and amend."

Verse 5. He therefore that ministereth to you the Spirit, and worketh miracles among you, doeth he it by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?

This argument based on the experience of the Galatians, pleased the Apostle so well that he returns to it after he had warned them against their twofold danger. "You have not only received the Spirit by the preaching of the Gospel, but by the same Gospel you were enabled to do things." "What things?" we ask. Miracles. At least the Galatians had manifested the striking fruits of faith which true disciples of the Gospel manifested in those days. On one occasion the Apostle wrote: "The kingdom of God is not in word, but in power." This "power" revealed itself not only in readiness of speech, but in demonstrations of the supernatural ability of the Holy Spirit.

When the Gospel is preached to faith, hope, love, and patience, God gives His wonder-working Spirit. Paul reminds the Galatians of this. "God had not only brought you to faith by my preaching. He had also sanctified you to bring forth the fruits of faith. And one of the fruits of your faith was that you loved me so devotedly that you were willing to pluck out your eyes for me." To love a fellow-man so devotedly as to be ready to bestow upon him money, goods, eyes in order to secure his salvation, such love is the fruit of the Holy Spirit.

"These products of the Spirit you enjoyed before the false apostles misled you," the Apostle reminds the Galatians. "But you haven't manifested any of these fruits under the regime of the Law. How does it come that you do not grow the same fruits now? You no longer teach truly; you do not believe boldly; you do not live well; you do not work hard; you do not bear things patiently. Who has spoiled you that you no longer love me; that you are not now ready to pluck out your eyes for me? What has happened to cool your personal interest in me?"

The same thing happened to me. When I began to proclaim the Gospel, there were many, very many who were delighted with our doctrine and had a good opinion of us. And now? Now they have succeeded in making us so odious to those who formerly loved us that they now hate us like poison.

Paul argues: "Your experience ought to teach you that the fruits of love do not grow on the stump of the Law. You had not virtue prior

to the preaching of the Gospel and you have no virtues now under the regime of the false apostles."

We, too, may say to those who misname themselves "evangelical" and flout their new-found liberty: Have you put down the tyranny of the Pope and obtained liberty in Christ through the Anabaptists and other fanatics? Or have you obtained your freedom from us who preach faith in Christ Jesus? If there is any honesty left in them they will have to confess that their freedom dates from the preaching of the Gospel.

Verse 6. Even as Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.

The Apostle next adduces the example of Abraham and reviews the testimony of the Scriptures concerning faith. The first passage is taken from Genesis 16:6: "And he believed in the Lord; and he counted it to him for righteousness." The Apostle makes the most of this passage. Abraham may have enjoyed a good standing with men for his upright life, but not with God. In the sight of God, Abraham was a condemned sinner. That he was justified before God was not due to his own exertions, but due to his faith. The Scriptures expressly state: "Abraham believed in the Lord; and he counted it to him for righteousness."

Paul places the emphasis upon the two words: Abraham believed. Faith in God constitutes the highest worship, the prime duty, the first obedience, and the foremost sacrifice. Without faith God forfeits His glory, wisdom, truth, and mercy in us. The first duty of man is to believe in God and to honor Him with his faith. Faith is truly the height of wisdom, the right kind of righteousness, the only real religion. This will give us an idea of the excellence of faith.

To believe in God as Abraham did is to be right with God because faith honors God. Faith says to God: "I believe what you say." When we pay attention to reason, God seems to propose impossible matters in the Christian Creed. To reason it seems absurd that Christ should offer His body and blood in the Lord's Supper; that Baptism should be the washing of regeneration; that the dead shall rise; that Christ the Son of God was conceived in the womb of the Virgin Mary, etc. Reason shouts that all this is preposterous. Are you surprised that reason thinks little of faith? Reason thinks it ludicrous that faith should be the foremost service any person can render to God.

Let your faith supplant reason. Abraham mastered reason by faith in the Word of God. Not as though reason ever yields meekly. It put up a fight against the faith of Abraham. Reason protested that it was absurd to think that Sarah who was ninety years old and barren by nature, should give birth to a son. But faith won the victory and routed reason, that ugly beast and enemy of God. Everyone who by faith slays reason, the world's biggest monster, renders God a real service, a better service than the religions of all races and all the drudgery of meritorious monks can render.

Men fast, pray, watch, suffer. They intend to appease the wrath of God and to deserve God's grace by their exertions. But there is no glory in it for God, because by their exertions these workers pronounce God an unmerciful slave driver, an unfaithful and angry Judge. They despise God, make a liar out of Him, snub Christ and all His benefits; in short they pull God from His throne and perch themselves on it.

Faith truly honors God. And because faith honors God, God counts faith for righteousness.

Christian righteousness is the confidence of the heart in God through Christ Jesus. Such confidence is accounted righteousness for Christ's sake. Two things make for Christian righteousness: Faith in Christ, which is a gift of God; and God's acceptance of this imperfect faith of ours for perfect righteousness. Because of my faith in Christ, God overlooks my distrust, the unwillingness of my spirit, my many other sins. Because the shadow of Christ's wing covers me I have no fear that God will cover all my sins and take my imperfections for perfect righteousness.

God "winks" at my sins and covers them up. God says: "Because you believe in My Son I will forgive your sins until death shall deliver you from the body of sin."

Learn to understand the constitution of your Christian righteousness. Faith is weak, but it means enough to God that He will not lay sin to our charge. He will not punish nor condemn us for it. He will forgive our sins as though they amount to nothing at all. He will do it not because we are worthy of such mercy. He will do it for Jesus' sake in whom we believe.

Paradoxically, a Christian is both right and wrong, holy and profane, an enemy of God and a child of God. These contradictions no person can harmonize who does not understand the true way of

salvation. Under the papacy we were told to toil until the feeling of guilt had left us. But the authors of this deranged idea were frequently driven to despair in the hour of death. It would have happened to me, if Christ had not mercifully delivered me from this error.

We comfort the afflicted sinner in this manner: Brother, you can never be perfect in this life, but you can be holy. He will say: "How can I be holy when I feel my sins?" I answer: You feel sin? That is a good sign. To realize that one is ill is a step, and a very necessary step, toward recovery. "But how will I get rid of my sin?" he will ask. I answer: See the heavenly Physician, Christ, who heals the broken-hearted. Do not consult that Quackdoctor, Reason. Believe in Christ and your sins will be pardoned. His righteousness will become your righteousness, and your sins will become His sins.

On one occasion Jesus said to His disciples: "The Father loveth you." Why? Not because the disciples were Pharisees, or circumcised, or particularly attentive to the Law. Jesus said: "The Father loveth you, because ye have loved me, and have believed that I came out from God. It pleased you to know that the Father sent me into the world. And because you believed it the Father loves you." On another occasion Jesus called His disciples evil and commanded them to ask for forgiveness.

A Christian is beloved of God and a sinner. How can these two contradictions be harmonized: I am a sinner and deserve God's wrath and punishment, and yet the Father loves me? Christ alone can harmonize these contradictions. He is the Mediator.

Do you now see how faith justifies without works? Sin lingers in us, and God hates sin. A transfusion of righteousness therefore becomes vitally necessary. This transfusion of righteousness we obtain from Christ because we believe in Him.

Verse 7. Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham.

This is the main point of Paul's argument against the Jews: The children of Abraham are those who believe and not those who are born of Abraham's flesh and blood. This point Paul drives home with all his might because the Jews attached saving value to the genealogical fact: "We are the seed and children of Abraham."

Let us begin with Abraham and learn how this friend of God was justified and saved. Not because he left his country, his relatives,

his father's house; not because he was circumcised; not because he stood ready to sacrifice his own son Isaac in whom he had the promise of posterity. Abraham was justified because he believed. Paul's argumentation runs like this: "Since this is the unmistakable testimony of Holy Writ, why do you take your stand upon circumcision and the Law? Was not Abraham, your father, of whom you make so much, justified and saved without circumcision and the Law by faith alone?" Paul therefore concludes: "They which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham."

Abraham was the father of the faithful. In order to be a child of the believing Abraham you must believe as he did. Otherwise you are merely the physical offspring of the procreating Abraham, i.e., you were conceived and born in sin to wrath and condemnation.

Ishmael and Isaac were both the natural children of Abraham. By rights Ishmael should have enjoyed the prerogatives of the firstborn, if physical generation had any special value. Nevertheless he was left out in the cold while Isaac was called. This goes to prove that the children of faith are the real children of Abraham.

Some find fault with Paul for applying the term "faith" in Genesis 15:6 to Christ. They think Paul's use of the term too wide and general. They think its meaning should be restricted to the context. They claim Abraham's faith had no more in it than a belief in the promise of God that he should have seed.

We reply: Faith presupposes the assurance of God's mercy. This assurance takes in the confidence that our sins are forgiven for Christ's sake. Never will the conscience trust in God unless it can be sure of God's mercy and promises in Christ. Now all the promises of God lead back to the first promise concerning Christ: "And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; it shall bruise your head, and you will bruise his heel." The faith of the fathers in the Old Testament era, and our faith in the New Testament are one and the same faith in Christ Jesus, although times and conditions may differ. Peter acknowledged this in the words: "Which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear? But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved, even as they." (Acts 15: 10, 11.) And Paul writes: "And did all drink the spiritual drink; for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ." (I Cor. 10 :4.) And Christ Himself declared: "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it and was glad."

(John 8:56.) The faith of the fathers was directed at the Christ who was to come, while ours rests in the Christ who has come. Time does not change the object of true faith, or the Holy Spirit. There has always been and always will be one mind, one impression, one faith concerning Christ among true believers whether they live in times past, now, or in times to come. We too believe in the Christ to come as the fathers did in the Old Testament, for we look for Christ to come again on the last day to judge the quick and the dead.

Verse 7. Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham.

Paul is saying: "You know from the example of Abraham and from the plain testimony of the Scriptures that they are the children of Abraham, who have faith in Christ, regardless of their nationality, regardless of the Law, regardless of works, regardless of their parentage. The promise was made to Abraham, 'You will be a father of many nations'; again, 'And in you shall all families of the earth be blessed.'" To prevent the Jews from misinterpreting the word "nations," the Scriptures are careful to say "many nations." The true children of Abraham are the believers in Christ from all nations.

Verse 8. And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith.

"Your boasting does not get you anywhere," says Paul to the Galatians, "because the Sacred Scriptures foresaw and foretold long before the Law was ever given, that the heathen should be justified by the blessed 'seed' of Abraham and not by the Law. This promise was made four hundred and thirty years before the Law was given. Because the Law was given so many years after Abraham, it could not abolish the promised blessing." This argument is strong because it is based on the exact factor of time. "Why should you boast of the Law, my Galatians, when the Law came four hundred and thirty years after the promise?"

The false apostles glorified the Law and despised the promise made to Abraham, although it antedated the Law by many years. It was after Abraham was accounted righteous because of his faith that the Scriptures first make mention of circumcision. "The Scriptures," says Paul, "meant to forestall your infatuation for the righteousness of the Law by installing the righteousness of faith before circumcision and the Law ever were ordained."

Verse 8. Preached before the gospel to Abraham, saying, In you shall all nations be blessed.

The Jews misconstrue this passage. They want the term "to bless" to mean "to praise." They want the passage to read: In you shall all the nations of the earth be praised. But this is a perversion of the words of Holy Writ. With the words "Abraham believed" Paul describes a spiritual Abraham, renewed by faith and regenerated by the Holy Ghost, that he should be the spiritual father of many nations. In that way all the Gentiles could be given to him for an inheritance.

The Scriptures ascribe no righteousness to Abraham except through faith. The Scriptures speak of Abraham as he stands before God, a man justified by faith. Because of his faith God extends to him the promise: "In you shall all nations be blessed."

Verse 9. So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham.

The emphasis lies on the words "with faithful Abraham." Paul distinguishes between Abraham and Abraham. There is a working and there is a believing Abraham. With the working Abraham we have nothing to do. Let the Jews glory in the generating Abraham; we glory in the believing Abraham of whom the Scriptures say that he received the blessing of righteousness by faith, not only for himself but for all who believe as he did. The world was promised to Abraham because he believed. The whole world is blessed if it believes as Abraham believed.

The blessing is the promise of the Gospel. That all nations are to be blessed means that all nations are to hear the Gospel. All nations are to be declared righteous before God through faith in Christ Jesus. To bless simply means to spread abroad the knowledge of Christ's salvation. This is the office of the New Testament Church which distributes the promised blessing by preaching the Gospel, by administering the sacraments, by comforting the broken-hearted, in short, by dispensing the benefits of Christ.

The Jews exhibited a working Abraham. The Pope exhibits a working Christ, or an exemplary Christ. The Pope quotes Christ's saying recorded in John 13:15, "I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you." We do not deny that Christians ought to imitate the example of Christ; but mere imitation will not satisfy God. And bear in mind that Paul is not now



discussing the example of Christ, but the salvation of Christ. That Abraham submitted to circumcision at the command of God, that he was endowed with excellent virtues, that he obeyed God in all things, was certainly admirable of him. To follow the example of Christ, to love one's neighbor, to do good to them that persecute you, to pray for one's enemies, patiently to bear the ingratitude of those who return evil for good, is certainly praiseworthy. But praiseworthy or not, such virtues do not acquit us before God. It takes more than that to make us righteous before God. We need Christ Himself, not His example, to save us. We need a redeeming, not an exemplary Christ, to save us. Paul is here speaking of the redeeming Christ and the believing Abraham, not of the model Christ or the sweating Abraham.

The believing Abraham is not to lie buried in the grave. He is to be dusted off and brought out before the world. He is to be praised to the sky for his faith. Heaven and earth ought to know about him and about his faith in Christ. The working Abraham ought to look pretty small next to the believing Abraham.

Paul's words contain the implication of contrast. When he quotes Scripture to the effect that all nations that share the faith of faithful Abraham are to be blessed, Paul means to imply the contrast that all nations are accursed without faith in Christ.

Verse 10. For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse.

The curse of God is like a flood that swallows everything that is not of faith. To avoid the curse we must hold on to the promise of the blessing in Christ.

The reader is reminded that all this has no bearing upon civil laws, customs, or political matters. Civil laws and ordinances have their place and purpose. Let every government enact the best possible laws. But civil righteousness will never deliver a person from the condemnation of God's Law.

I have good reason for calling your attention to this. People easily mistake civil righteousness for spiritual righteousness. In civil life we must, of course, pay attention to laws and deeds, but in the spiritual life we must not think to be justified by laws and works, but always keep in mind the promise and blessing of Christ, our only Savior.

According to Paul everything that is not of faith is sin. When our opponents hear us repeat this statement of Paul, they make it

appear as if we taught that governments should not be honored, as if we favored rebellion against the constituted authorities, as if we condemned all laws. Our opponents do us a great wrong, for we make a clear-cut distinction between civil and spiritual affairs.

Governmental laws and ordinances are blessings of God for this life only. As for everlasting life, temporal blessings are not good enough. Unbelievers enjoy more temporal blessings than the Christians. Civil or legal righteousness may be good enough for this life but not for the life hereafter. Otherwise the infidels would be nearer heaven than the Christians, for infidels often excel in civil righteousness.

Verse 10. For it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.

Paul goes on to prove from this quotation out of the Book of Deuteronomy that all men who are under the Law are under the sentence of sin, of the wrath of God, and of everlasting death. Paul produces his proof in a roundabout way. He turns the negative statement, "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them," into a positive statement, "As many as are of the works of the law are under the curse." These two statements, one by Paul and the other by Moses, appear to conflict. Paul declares, "Whosoever shall do the works of the Law, is accursed." Moses declares, "Whosoever shall not do the works of the Law, is accursed." How can these two contradictory statements be reconciled? How can the one statement prove the other? No person can hope to understand Paul unless he understands the article of justification. These two statements are not at all inconsistent.

We must bear in mind that to do the works of the Law does not mean only to live up to the superficial requirements of the Law, but to obey the spirit of the Law to perfection. But where will you find the person who can do that? Let him step forward and we will praise him.

Our opponents have their answer ready-made. They quote Paul's own statement in Romans 2:13, "The doers of the law shall be justified." Very well. But let us first find out who the doers of the law are. They call a "doer" of the Law one who performs the Law in its literal sense. This is not to "do" the Law. This is to sin. When our opponents go about to perform the Law they sin against the first, the second, and the third commandments, in fact they sin against

the whole Law. For God requires above all that we worship Him in spirit and in faith. In observing the Law for the purpose of obtaining righteousness without faith in Christ these law-workers go smack against the Law and against God. They deny the righteousness of God, His mercy, and His promises. They deny Christ and all His benefits.

In their ignorance of the true purpose of the Law the exponents of the Law abuse the Law, as Paul says, Romans 10:3, "For they, being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves to the righteousness of God."

In their folly our opponents rush into the Scriptures, pick out a sentence here and a sentence there about the Law and imagine they know all about it. Their work-righteousness is plain idolatry and blasphemy against God. No wonder they abide under the curse of God.

Because God saw that we could not fulfill the Law, He provided a way of salvation long before the Law was ever given, a salvation that He promised to Abraham, saying, "In you shall all nations be blessed."

The very first thing for us to do is to believe in Christ. First, we must receive the Holy Spirit, who enlightens and sanctifies us so that we can begin to do the Law, i.e., to love God and our neighbor. Now, the Holy Ghost is not obtained by the Law, but by faith in Christ. In the last analysis, to do the Law means to believe in Jesus Christ. The tree comes first, and then come the fruits.

The scholastics admit that a mere external and superficial performance of the Law without sincerity and good will is plain hypocrisy. Judas acted like the other disciples. What was wrong with Judas? Mark what Rome answers, "Judas was a reprobate. His motives were perverse, therefore his works were hypocritical and no good." Well, well. Rome does admit, after all, that works in themselves do not justify unless they issue from a sincere heart. Why do our opponents not profess the same truth in spiritual matters? There, above all, faith must precede everything. The heart must be purified by faith before a person can lift a finger to please God.

There are two classes of doers of the Law, true doers and hypocritical doers. The true doers of the Law are those who are

moved by faith in Christ to do the Law. The hypocritical doers of the Law are those who seek to obtain righteousness by a mechanical performance of good works while their hearts are far removed from God. They act like the foolish carpenter who starts with the roof when he builds a house. Instead of doing the Law, these law-conscious hypocrites break the Law. They break the very first commandment of God by denying His promise in Christ. They do not worship God in faith. They worship themselves.

No wonder Paul was able to foretell the abominations that Antichrist would bring into the Church. That Antichrists would come, Christ Himself prophesied, Matthew 24:5, "For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many." Whoever seeks righteousness by works denies God and makes himself God. He is an Antichrist because he ascribes to his own works the omnipotent capability of conquering sin, death, devil, hell, and the wrath of God. An Antichrist lays claim to the honor of Christ. He is an idolater of himself. The law- righteous person is the worst kind of infidel.

Those who intend to obtain righteousness by their own efforts do not say in so many words: "I am God; I am Christ." But it amounts to that. They usurp the divinity and office of Christ. The effect is the same as if they said, "I am Christ; I am a Savior. I save myself and others." This is the impression the monks give out.

The Pope is the Antichrist, because he is against Christ, because he takes liberties with the things of God, because he lords it over the temple of God.

I cannot tell you in words how criminal it is to seek righteousness before God without faith in Christ, by the works of the Law. It is the abomination standing in the holy place. It deposes the Creator and deifies the creature.

The real doers of the Law are the true believers. The Holy Spirit enables them to love God and their neighbor. But because we have only the first- fruits of the Spirit and not the tenth-fruits, we do not observe the Law perfectly. This imperfection of ours, however, is not imputed to us, for Christ's sake.

Hence, the statement of Moses, "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them," is not contrary to Paul. Moses requires perfect doers of the Law. But where will you find them? Nowhere. Moses himself

confessed that he was not a perfect doer of the Law. He said to the Lord: "Pardon our iniquity and our sin." Christ alone can make us innocent of any transgression. How so? First, by the forgiveness of our sins and the imputation of His righteousness. Secondly, by the gift of the Holy Ghost, who engenders new life and activity in us.

### Objections to the Doctrine of Faith Disproved

Here we shall take the time to enter upon the objections which our opponents raise against the doctrine of faith. There are many passages in the Bible that deal with works and the reward of works which our opponents cite against us in the belief that these will disprove the doctrine of faith which we teach.

The scholastics grant that according to the reasonable order of nature being precedes doing. They grant that any act is faulty unless it proceeds from a right motive. They grant that a person must be right before he can do right. Why don't they grant that the right inclination of the heart toward God through faith in Christ must precede works?

In the eleventh chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews we find a catalogue of various works and deeds of the saints of the Bible. David, who killed a lion and a bear, and defeated Goliath, is mentioned. In the heroic deeds of David the scholastic can discover nothing more than outward achievement. But the deeds of David must be evaluated according to the personality of David. When we understand that David was a man of faith, whose heart trusted in the Lord, we shall understand why he could do such heroic deeds. David said: "The Lord that delivered me out of the paw of the lion, and out of the paw of the bear, he will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine." Again: "You come to me with a sword, and with a spear, and with a shield: but I come to you in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied. This day will the Lord deliver you into mine hand; and I will smite you, and take your head from you." (I Samuel 17:37, 45, 46.) Before David could achieve a single heroic deed he was already a man beloved of God, strong and constant in faith.

Of Abel it is said in the same Epistle: "By faith Abel offered to God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain." When the scholastics come upon the parallel passage in Genesis 4:4 they get no further than the words: "And the Lord had respect to Abel and to his offering." "Aha!" they cry. "See, God has respect to offerings. Works do justify." With mud in their eyes they cannot see that the text says in

Genesis that the Lord had respect to the person of Abel first. Abel pleased the Lord because of his faith. Because the person of Abel pleased the Lord, the offering of Abel pleased the Lord also. The Epistle to the Hebrews expressly states: "By faith Abel offered to God a more excellent sacrifice."

In our dealings with God the work is worth nothing without faith, for "without faith it is impossible to please him." (Hebrews 11:6.) The sacrifice of Abel was better than the sacrifice of Cain, because Abel had faith. As to Cain he had no faith or trust in God's grace, but strutted about in his own fancied worth. When God refused to recognize Cain's worth, Cain got angry at God and at Abel. The Holy Spirit speaks of faith in different ways in the Sacred Scriptures. Sometimes He speaks of faith independently of other matters. When the Scriptures speak of faith in the absolute or abstract, faith refers to justification directly. But when the Scripture speaks of rewards and works it speaks of compound or relative faith. We will furnish some examples. Galatians 5:6, "Faith which worketh by love." Leviticus 18:5, "Which if a man do, he shall live in them." Matthew 19:17, "If you will enter into life, keep the commandments." Psalm 37:27, "Depart from evil, and do good." In these and other passages where mention is made of doing, the Scriptures always speak of a faithful doing, a doing inspired by faith. "Do this and you will live," means: First have faith in Christ, and Christ will enable you to do and to live.

In the Word of God all things that are attributed to works are attributable to faith. Faith is the divinity of works. Faith permeates all the deeds of the believer, as Christ's divinity permeated His humanity. Abraham was accounted righteous because faith pervaded his whole personality and his every action.

When you read how the fathers, prophets, and kings accomplished great deeds, remember to explain them as the Epistle to the Hebrews accounts for them: "Who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions." (Hebrews 11:33.) In this way will we correctly interpret all those passages that seem to support the righteousness of works. The Law is truly observed only through faith. Hence, every "holy," "moral" law-worker is accursed.

Supposing that this explanation will not satisfy the scholastics, supposing that they should completely wrap me up in their arguments (they cannot do it), I would rather be wrong and give all

credit to Christ alone. Here is Christ. Paul, Christ's apostle, declares that "Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us." (Gal. 3:13.) I hear with my own ears that I cannot be saved except by the blood and death of Christ. I conclude, therefore, that it is up to Christ to overcome my sins, and not up to the Law, or my own efforts. If He is the price of my redemption, if He was made sin for my justification, I don't give a care if you quote me a thousand Scripture passages for the righteousness of works against the righteousness of faith. I have the Author and Lord of the Scriptures on my side. I would rather believe Him than all that ruffraff of "pious" law-workers.

Verse 11. But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident: for, The just shall live by faith.

The Apostle draws into his argument the testimony of the Prophet Habakkuk: "The just shall live by his faith." This passage carries much weight because it eliminates the Law and the deeds of the Law as factors in the process of our justification.

The scholastics misconstrue this passage by saying: "The just shall live by faith, if it is a working faith, or a faith formed and performed by charitable works." Their annotation is a forgery. To speak of formed or unformed faith, a sort of double faith, is contrary to the Scriptures. If charitable works can form and perfect faith I am forced to say eventually that charitable deeds constitute the essential factor in the Christian religion. Christ and His benefits would be lost to us.

Verse 12. And the law is not of faith.

In direct opposition to the scholastics Paul declares: "The law is not of faith." What is this charity the scholastics talk so much about? Does not the Law command charity? The fact is the Law commands nothing but charity, as we may gather from the following Scripture passages: "You will love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might" (Deut. 6:5.) "Strewing mercy to thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments." (Exodus 20:6.) "On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets." (Matt. 22:40.) If the law requires charity, charity is part of the Law and not of faith. Since Christ has displaced the Law which commands charity, it follows that charity has been abrogated with the Law as a factor in our justification, and only faith is left.

Verse 12. But, The man that doeth them shall live in them.

Paul undertakes to explain the difference between the righteousness of the Law and the righteousness of faith. The righteousness of the Law is the fulfillment of the Law according to the passage: "The man that doeth them shall live in them." The righteousness of faith is to believe the Gospel according to the passage: "The just shall live by faith." The Law is a statement of debit, the Gospel a statement of credit. By this distinction Paul explains why charity which is the commandment of the Law cannot justify, because the Law contributes nothing to our justification.

Indeed, works do follow after faith, but faith is not therefore a meritorious work. Faith is a gift. The character and limitations of the Law must be rigidly maintained.

When we believe in Christ we live by faith. When we believe in the Law we may be active enough but we have no life. The function of the Law is not to give life; the function of the Law is to kill. True, the Law says: "The man that doeth them shall live in them." But where is the person who can do "them," i.e., love God with all his heart, soul, and mind, and his neighbor as himself?

Paul has nothing against those who are justified by faith and therefore are true doers of the Law. He opposes those who think they can fulfill the Law when in reality they can only sin against the Law by trying to obtain righteousness by the Law. The Law demands that we fear, love, and worship God with a true faith. The law-workers fail to do this. Instead, they invent new modes of worship and new kinds of works which God never commanded. They provoke His anger according to the passage: "But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men." (Matthew 15:9.) Hence, the law-righteous workers are downright rebels against God, and idolaters who constantly sin against the first commandment. In short, they are no good at-all though outwardly they seem to be extremely solicitous of the honor of God.

We who are justified by faith as the saints of old, may be under the Law, but we are not under the curse of the Law because sin is not imputed to us for Christ's sake. If the Law cannot be fulfilled by the believers, if sin continues to cling to them despite their love for God, what can you expect of people who are not yet justified by faith, who are still enemies of God and His Word, like the unbelieving law-workers? It goes to show how impossible it is for those who



have not been justified by faith to fulfill the Law.

Verse 13. Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree.

Jerome and his present-day followers rack their miserable brains over this comforting passage in an effort to save Christ from the fancied insult of being called a curse. They say: "This quotation from Moses does not apply to Christ. Paul is taking liberties with Moses by generalizing the statements in Deuteronomy 21:23. Moses has 'he that is hanged.' Paul puts it 'every one that hangeth.' On the other hand, Paul omits the words 'of God' in his quotation from Moses: 'For he that is hanged is accursed of God.' Moses speaks of a criminal who is worthy of death." "How," our opponents ask, "can this passage be applied to the holy Christ as if He were accursed of God and worthy to be hanged?" This piece of exegesis may impress the naive as a zealous attempt to defend the honor and glory of Christ. Let us see what Paul has in mind.

Paul does not say that Christ was made a curse for Himself. The accent is on the two words "for us." Christ is personally innocent. Personally, He did not deserve to be hanged for any crime of His own doing. But because Christ took the place of others who were sinners, He was hanged like any other transgressor. The Law of Moses leaves no loopholes. It says that a transgressor should be hanged. Who are the other sinners? We are. The sentence of death and everlasting damnation had long been pronounced over us. But Christ took all our sins and died for them on the Cross. "He was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors." (Isaiah 53:12.)

All the prophets of old said that Christ should be the greatest transgressor, murderer, adulterer, thief, blasphemer that ever was or ever could be on earth. When He took the sins of the whole world upon Himself, Christ was no longer an innocent person. He was a sinner burdened with the sins of a Paul who was a blasphemer; burdened with the sins of a Peter who denied Christ; burdened with the sins of a David who committed adultery and murder, and gave the heathen occasion to laugh at the Lord. In short, Christ was charged with the sins of all men, that He should pay for them with His own blood. The curse struck Him. The Law found Him among sinners. He was not only in the company of sinners. He had gone so far as to invest Himself with the flesh and

blood of sinners. So the Law judged and hanged Him for a sinner.

In separating Christ from us sinners and holding Him up as a holy exemplar, errorists rob us of our best comfort. They misrepresent Him as a threatening tyrant who is ready to slaughter us at the slightest provocation.

I am told that it is preposterous and wicked to call the Son of God a cursed sinner. I answer: If you deny that He is a condemned sinner, you are forced to deny that Christ died. It is not less preposterous to say, the Son of God died, than to say, the Son of God was a sinner.

John the Baptist called Him "the lamb of God, which takes away the sin of the world." Being the unspotted Lamb of God, Christ was personally innocent. But because He took the sins of the world His sinlessness was defiled with the sinfulness of the world. Whatever sins I, you, all of us have committed or shall commit, they are Christ's sins as if He had committed them Himself. Our sins have to be Christ's sins or we shall perish forever.

Isaiah declares of Christ: "The Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all." We have no right to minimize the force of this declaration. God does not amuse Himself with words. What a relief for a Christian to know that Christ is covered all over with my sins, your sins, and the sins of the whole world.

The papists invented their own doctrine of faith. They say charity creates and adorns their faith. By stripping Christ of our sins, by making Him sinless, they cast our sins back at us, and make Christ absolutely worthless to us. What sort of charity is this? If that is a sample of their vaunted charity we want none of it.

Our merciful Father in heaven saw how the Law oppressed us and how impossible it was for us to get out from under the curse of the Law. He therefore sent His only Son into the world and said to Him: "You are now Peter, the liar; Paul, the persecutor; David, the adulterer; Adam, the disobedient; the thief on the cross. You, My Son, must pay the world's iniquity." The Law growls: "All right. If Your Son is taking the sin of the world, I see no sins anywhere else but in Him. He shall die on the Cross." And the Law kills Christ. But we go free.

The argument of the Apostle against the righteousness of the Law is impregnable. If Christ bears our sins, we do not bear them. But if Christ is innocent of our sins and does not bear them, we must bear

them, and we shall die in our sins. "But thanks be to God, which gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

Let us see how Christ was able to gain the victory over our enemies. The sins of the whole world, past, present, and future, fastened themselves upon Christ and condemned Him. But because Christ is God He had an everlasting and unconquerable righteousness. These two, the sin of the world and the righteousness of God, met in a death struggle. Furiously the sin of the world assailed the righteousness of God. Righteousness is immortal and invincible. On the other hand, sin is a mighty tyrant who subdues all men. This tyrant pounces on Christ. But Christ's righteousness is unconquerable. The result is inevitable. Sin is defeated and righteousness triumphs and reigns forever.

In the same manner was death defeated. Death is emperor of the world. He strikes down kings, princes, all men. He has an idea to destroy all life. But Christ has immortal life, and life immortal gained the victory over death. Through Christ death has lost her sting. Christ is the Death of death.

The curse of God waged a similar battle with the eternal mercy of God in Christ. The curse meant to condemn God's mercy. But it could not do it because the mercy of God is everlasting. The curse had to give way. If the mercy of God in Christ had lost out, God Himself would have lost out, which, of course, is impossible.

"Christ," says Paul, "spoiled principalities and powers, He made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it." (Col. 2:15.) They cannot harm those who hide in Christ. Sin, death, the wrath of God, hell, the devil are mortified in Christ. Where Christ is near the powers of evil must keep their distance. St. John says: "And this is the victory that overcomes the world, even our faith." (I John 5:4.)

You may now perceive why it is imperative to believe and confess the divinity of Christ. To overcome the sin of a whole world, and death, and the wrath of God was no work for any creature. The power of sin and death could be broken only by a greater power. God alone could abolish sin, destroy death, and take away the curse of the Law. God alone could bring righteousness, life, and mercy to light. In attributing these achievements to Christ the Scriptures pronounce Christ to be God forever. The article of justification is indeed fundamental. If we remain sound in this one article, we remain sound in all the other articles of the Christian faith. When we teach justification by faith in Christ we confess at

the same time that Christ is God.

I cannot get over the blindness of the Pope's theologians. To imagine that the mighty forces of sin, death, and the curse can be vanquished by the righteousness of man's paltry works, by fasting, pilgrimages, masses, vows, and such gewgaws. These blind leaders of the blind turn the poor people over to the mercy of sin, death, and the devil. What chance has a defenseless human creature against these powers of darkness? They train sinners who are ten times worse than any thief, whore, murderer. The divine power of God alone can destroy sin and death, and create righteousness and life.

When we hear that Christ was made a curse for us, let us believe it with joy and assurance. By faith Christ changes places with us. He gets our sins, we get His holiness.

By faith alone can we become righteous, for faith invests us with the sinlessness of Christ. The more fully we believe this, the fuller will be our joy. If you believe that sin, death, and the curse are void, why, they are null, zero. Whenever sin and death make you nervous write it down as an illusion of the devil. There is no sin now, no curse, no death, no devil because Christ has done away with them. This fact is sure. There is nothing wrong with the fact. The defect lies in our lack of faith.

In the Apostolic Creed we confess: "I believe in the holy Christian Church." That means, I believe that there is no sin, no curse, no evil in the Church of God. Faith says: "I believe that." But if you want to believe your eyes you will find many shortcomings and offenses in the members of the holy Church. You see them succumb to temptation, you see them weak in faith, you see them giving way to anger, envy, and other evil dispositions. "How can the Church be holy?" you ask. It is with the Christian Church as it is with the individual Christian. If I examine myself I find enough unholiness to shock me. But when I look at Christ in me I find that I am altogether holy. And so it is with the Church.

Holy Writ does not say that Christ was under the curse. It says directly that Christ was made a curse. In II Corinthians 5:21 Paul writes: "For he (God) has made him (Christ) to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." Although this and similar passages may be properly explained by saying that Christ was made a sacrifice for the curse and for sin, yet in my judgment it is better to leave these passages stand as

they read: Christ was made sin itself; Christ was made the curse itself. When a sinner gets wise to himself he does not only feel miserable, he feels like misery personified; he does not only feel like a sinner, he feels like sin itself.

To finish with this verse: All evils would have overwhelmed us, as they shall overwhelm the unbelievers forever, if Christ had not become the great transgressor and guilty bearer of all our sins. The sins of the world got Him down for a moment. They came around Him like water. Of Christ, the Old Testament Prophet complained: "Your fierce wrath goes over me; your terrors have cut me off." (Psalm 88 16.) By Christ's salvation we have been delivered from the terrors of God to a life of eternal felicity.

Verse 14. That the blessing of Abraham might come, on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ.

Paul always keeps this text before him: "In your seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed." The blessing promised to Abraham could come upon the Gentiles only by Christ, the seed of Abraham. To become a blessing to all nations Christ had to be made a curse to take away the curse from the nations of the earth. The merit that we plead, and the work that we proffer is Christ who was made a curse for us.

Let us become expert in the art of transferring our sins, our death, and every evil from ourselves to Christ; and Christ's righteousness and blessing from Christ to ourselves.

Verse 14. That we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.

"The promise of the Spirit" is Hebrew for "the promised Spirit." The Spirit spells freedom from the Law, sin, death, the curse, hell, and the judgment of God. No merits are mentioned in connection with this promise of the Spirit and all the blessings that go with Him. This Spirit of many blessings is received by faith alone. Faith alone builds on the promises of God, as Paul says in this verse.

Long ago the prophets visualized the happy changes Christ would effect in all things. Despite the fact that the Jews had the Law of God they never ceased to look longingly for Christ. After Moses no prophet or king added a single law to the Book. Any changes or additions were deferred to the time of Christ's coming. Moses told the people: "The Lord your God will raise up to you a Prophet from the midst of you, of your brethren, like to me; to him ye shall listen."

(Deut. 18:15.)

God's people of old felt that the Law of Moses could not be improved upon until the Messiah would bring better things than the Law, i.e., grace and remission of sins.

Verse 15. Brethren, I speak after the manner of men; Though it be but a man's covenant, yet if it be confirmed, no man disannulleth, or addeth thereto.

After the preceding, well-taken argument, Paul offers another based on the similarity between a man's testament and God's testament. A man's testament seems too weak a premise for the Apostle to argue from in confirmation of so important a matter as justification. We ought to prove earthly things by heavenly things, and not heavenly things by earthly things. But where the earthly thing is an ordinance of God we may use it to prove divine matters. In Matthew 7:11 Christ Himself argued from earthly to heavenly things when He said: "If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children; how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?"

To come to Paul's argument. Civil law, which is God's ordinance, prohibits tampering with any testament of man. Any person's last will and testament must be respected. Paul asks: "Why is it that man's last will is scrupulously respected and not God's testament? You would not think of breaking faith with a man's testament. Why do you not keep faith with God's testament?"

The Apostle says that he is speaking after the manner of men. He means to say: "I will give you an illustration from the customs of men. If a man's last will is respected. and it is, how much more ought the testament of God be honored: 'In your seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed.' When Christ died, this testament was sealed by His blood. After His death the testament was opened, it was published to the nations. No man ought to alter God's testament as the false apostles do who substitute the Law and traditions of men for the testament of God."

As the false prophets tampered with God's testament in the days of Paul, so many do in our day. They will observe human laws punctiliously, but the laws of God they transgress without the flicker of an eyelid. But the time will come when they will find out that it is no joke to pervert the testament of God.

Verse 16. Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made.

He says not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to your seed, which is Christ.

The word testament is another name for the promise that God made to Abraham concerning Christ. A testament is not a law, but an inheritance. Heirs do not look for laws and assessments when they open a last will; they look for grants and favors. The testament which God made out to Abraham did not contain laws. It contained promises of great spiritual blessings.

The promises were made in view of Christ, in one seed, not in many seeds. The Jews will not accept this interpretation. They insist that the singular "seed" is put for the plural "seeds." We prefer the interpretation of Paul, who makes a fine case for Christ and for us out of the singular "seed," and is after all inspired to do so by the Holy Ghost.

Verse 17. And this I say, that the covenant, that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect.

The Jews assert that God was not satisfied with His promises, but after four hundred and thirty years He gave the Law. "God," they say, "must have mistrusted His own promises, and considered them inadequate for salvation. Therefore He added to His promises something better, the Law. The Law," they say, "canceled the promises."

Paul answers: "The Law was given four hundred and thirty years after the promise was made to Abraham. The Law could not cancel the promise because the promise was the testament of God, confirmed by God in Christ many years before the Law. What God has once promised He does not take back. Every promise of God is a ratified promise."

Why was the Law added to the promise? Not to serve as a medium by which the promise might be obtained. The Law was added for these reasons: That there might be in the world a special people, rigidly controlled by the Law, a people out of which Christ should be born in due time; and that men burdened by many laws might sigh and long for Him, their Redeemer, the seed of Abraham. Even the ceremonies prescribed by the Law foreshadowed Christ. Therefore the Law was never meant to cancel the promise of God. The Law was meant to confirm the promise until the time should come when

God would open His testament in the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

God did well in giving the promise so many years before the Law, that it may never be said that righteousness is granted through the Law and not through the promise. If God had meant for us to be justified by the Law, He would have given the Law four hundred and thirty years before the promise, at least He would have given the Law at the same time He gave the promise. But He never breathed a word about the Law until four hundred years after. The promise is therefore better than the Law. The Law does not cancel the promise, but faith in the promised Christ cancels the Law.

The Apostle is careful to mention the exact number of four hundred and thirty years. The wide divergence in the time between the promise and the Law helps to clinch Paul's argument that righteousness is not obtained by the Law.

Let me illustrate. A man of great wealth adopts a strange lad for his son. Remember, he does not owe the lad anything. In due time he appoints the lad heir to his entire fortune. Several years later the old man asks the lad to do something for him. And the young lad does it. Can the lad then go around and say that he deserved the inheritance by his obedience to the old man's request? How can anybody say that righteousness is obtained by obedience to the Law when the Law was given four hundred and thirty years after God's promise of the blessing?

One thing is certain, Abraham was never justified by the Law, for the simple reason that the Law was not in his day. If the Law was non-existent how could Abraham obtain righteousness by the Law? Abraham had nothing else to go by but the promise. This promise he believed and that was counted to him for righteousness. If the father obtained righteousness through faith, the children get it the same way.

We use the argument of time also. We say our sins were taken away by the death of Christ fifteen hundred years ago, long before there were any religious orders, canons, or rules of penance, merits, etc. What did people do about their sins before these new inventions were hatched up?

Paul finds his arguments for the righteousness of faith everywhere. Even the element of time serves to build his case against the false apostles. Let us fortify our conscience with similar arguments. They help us in the trials of our faith. They turn our attention from the Law



to the promises, from sin to righteousness; from death to life.

It is not for nothing that Paul bears down on this argument. He foresaw this confusion of the promise and the Law creeping into the Church. Accustom yourself to separate Law and Gospel even in regard to time. When the Law comes to pay your conscience a visit, say: "Mister Law, you come too soon. The four hundred and thirty years aren't up yet. When they are up, you come again. Won't you?"

Verse 18. For if the inheritance be of the law, it is no more of promise.

In Romans 4:14, the Apostle writes: "For if they which are made of the law be heirs, faith is made void, and the promise made of none effect." It cannot be otherwise. That the Law is something entirely different from the promise is plain. The Law thunders: "You will, you will not." The promise of the "seed" pleads: "Take this gift of God." If the inheritance of the gifts of God were obtained by the Law, God would be a liar. We would have the right to ask Him: "Why did you make this promise in the first place: 'In your seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed'? Why did you not say: 'In your works you will be blessed'?"

Verse 18. But God gave it to Abraham by promise.

So much is certain, before the Law ever existed, God gave Abraham the inheritance or blessing by the promise. In other words, God granted to Abraham remission of sins, righteousness, salvation, and everlasting life. And not only to Abraham but to all believers, because God said: "In your seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed." The blessing was given unconditionally. The Law had no chance to butt in because Moses was not yet born. "How then can you say that righteousness is obtained by the Law?"

The Apostle now goes to work to explain the province and purpose of the Law.

Verse 19. Wherefore then serveth the law?

The question naturally arises: If the Law was not given for righteousness or salvation, why was it given? Why did God give the Law in the first place if it cannot justify a person?

The Jews believed if they kept the Law they would be saved. When they heard that the Gospel proclaimed a Christ who had come into the world to save sinners and not the righteous; when they heard that sinners were to enter the kingdom of heaven before the

righteous, the Jews were very much put out. They murmured: "These last have wrought but one hour, and you have made them equal to us, which have borne the burden and heat of the day." (Matthew 20:12.) They complained that the heathen who at one time had been worshipers of idols obtained grace without the drudgery of the Law that was theirs.

Today we hear the same complaints. "What was the use of our having lived in a cloister, twenty, thirty, forty years; what was the sense of having vowed chastity, poverty, obedience; what good are all the masses and canonical hours that we read; what profit is there in fasting, praying, etc., if any man or woman, any beggar or scour woman is to be made equal to us, or even be considered more acceptable to God than we?"

Reason takes offense at the statement of Paul: "The law was added because of transgressions." People say that Paul abrogated the Law, that he is a radical, that he blasphemed God when he said that. People say: "We might as well live like wild people if the Law does not count. Let us abound in sin that grace may abound. Let us do evil that good may come of it."

What are we to do? Such scoffing distresses us, but we cannot stop it. Christ Himself was accused of being a blasphemer and rebel. Paul and all the other apostles were told the same things. Let the scoffers slander us, let them spare us not. But we must not on their account keep silent. We must speak frankly in order that afflicted consciences may find surcease. Neither are we to pay any attention to the foolish and ungodly people for abusing our doctrine. They are the kind that would scoff, Law or no Law. Our first consideration must be the comfort of troubled consciences, that they may not perish with the multitudes.

When he saw that some were offended at his doctrine, while others found in it encouragement to live after the flesh, Paul comforted himself with the thought that it was his duty to preach the Gospel to the elect of God, and that for their sake he must endure all things. Like Paul we also do all these things for the sake of God's elect. As for the scoffers and skeptics, I am so disgusted with them that in all my life I would not open my mouth for them once. I wish that they were back there where they belong under the iron heel of the Pope.

People foolish but wise in their conceits jump to the conclusion: If the Law does not justify, it is good for nothing. How about that? Because money does not justify, would you say that money is good

for nothing? Because the eyes do not justify, would you have them taken out? Because the Law does not justify it does not follow that the Law is without value. We must find and define the proper purpose of the Law. We do not offhand condemn the Law because we say it does not justify.

We say with Paul that the Law is good if it is used properly. Within its proper sphere the Law is an excellent thing. But if we ascribe to the Law functions for which it was never intended, we pervert not only the Law but also the Gospel. It is the universal impression that righteousness is obtained through the deeds of the Law. This impression is instinctive and therefore doubly dangerous. Gross sins and vices may be recognized or else repressed by the threat of punishment. But this sin, this opinion of man's own righteousness refuses to be classified as sin. It wants to be esteemed as high-class religion. Hence, it constitutes the mighty influence of the devil over the entire world. In order to point out the true office of the Law, and thus to stamp out that false impression of the righteousness of the Law, Paul answers the question: "Wherefore then serveth the Law?" with the words:

Verse 19. It was added because of transgressions.

All things differ. Let everything serve its unique purpose. Let the sun shine by day, the moon and the stars by night. Let the sea furnish fish, the earth grain, the woods trees, etc. Let the Law also serve its unique purpose. It must not step out of character and take the place of anything else. What is the function of the Law? "Transgression," answers the Apostle.

#### The Twofold Purpose of the Law

The Law has a twofold purpose. One purpose is civil. God has ordained civil laws to punish crime. Every law is given to restrain sin. Does it not then make men righteous? No. In refraining from murder, adultery, theft, or other sins, I do so under compulsion because I fear the jail, the noose, the electric chair. These restrain me as iron bars restrain a lion and a bear. Otherwise they would tear everything to pieces. Such forceful restraint cannot be regarded as righteousness, rather as an indication of unrighteousness. As a wild beast is tied to keep it from running amuck, so the Law bridles mad and furious man to keep him from running wild. The need for restraint shows plainly enough that those who need the Law are not righteous, but wicked men who are fit to be tied. No, the Law does not justify.

The first purpose of the Law, accordingly, is to restrain the wicked.

The devil gets people into all kinds of scrapes. Therefore God instituted governments, parents, laws, restrictions, and civil ordinances. At least they help to tie the devil's hands so that he does not rage up and down the earth. This civil restraint by the Law is intended by God for the preservation of all things, particularly for the good of the Gospel that it should not be hindered too much by the tumult of the wicked. But Paul is not now treating of this civil use and function of the Law.

The second purpose of the Law is spiritual and divine. Paul describes this spiritual purpose of the Law in the words, "Because of transgressions," i.e., to reveal to a person his sin, blindness, misery, his ignorance, hatred, and contempt of God, his death, hell, and condemnation.

This is the principal purpose of the Law and its most valuable contribution. As long as a person is not a murderer, adulterer, thief, he would swear that he is righteous. How is God going to humble such a person except by the Law? The Law is the hammer of death, the thunder of hell, and the lightning of God's wrath to bring down the proud and shameless hypocrites. When the Law was instituted on Mount Sinai it was accompanied by lightning, by storms, by the sound of trumpets, to tear to pieces that monster called self-righteousness. As long as a person thinks he is right he is going to be incomprehensibly proud and presumptuous. He is going to hate God, despise His grace and mercy, and ignore the promises in Christ. The Gospel of the free forgiveness of sins through Christ will never appeal to the self-righteous.

This monster of self-righteousness, this stiff-necked beast, needs a big axe. And that is what the Law is, a big axe. Accordingly, the proper use and function of the Law is to threaten until the conscience is scared stiff.

The awful spectacle at Mount Sinai portrayed the proper use of the Law. When the children of Israel came out of Egypt a feeling of singular holiness possessed them. They boasted: "We are the people of God. All that the Lord has spoken we will do." (Ex. 19:8) This feeling of holiness was heightened when Moses ordered them to wash their clothes, to refrain from their wives, and to prepare themselves all around. The third day came and Moses led the people out of their tents to the foot of the mountain into the presence of the Lord. What happened? When the children of Israel

saw the whole mountain burning and smoking, the black clouds rent by fierce lightning flashing up and down in the inky darkness, when they heard the sound of the trumpet blowing louder and longer, shattered by the roll of thunder, they were so frightened that they begged Moses: "Speak you with us, and we will hear: but let not God speak with us, lest we die." (Ex. 20:19.) I ask you, what good did their scrubbing, their snow-white clothes, and their continence do them? No good at all. Not a single one could stand in the presence of the glorious Lord. Stricken by the terror of God, they fled back into their tents, as if the devil were after them.

The Law is meant to produce the same effect today which it produced at Mount Sinai long ago. I want to encourage all who fear God, especially those who intend to become ministers of the Gospel, to learn from the Apostle the proper use of the Law. I fear that after our time the right handling of the Law will become a lost art. Even now, although we continually explain the separate functions of the Law and the Gospel, we have those among us who do not understand how the Law should be used. What will it be like when we are dead and gone?

We want it understood that we do not reject the Law as our opponents claim. On the contrary, we uphold the Law. We say the Law is good if it is used for the purposes for which it was designed, to check civil transgression, and to magnify spiritual transgressions. The Law is also a light like the Gospel. But instead of revealing the grace of God, righteousness, and life, the Law brings sin, death, and the wrath of God to light. This is the business of the Law, and here the business of the Law ends, and should go no further.

The business of the Gospel, on the other hand, is to quicken, to comfort, to raise the fallen. The Gospel carries the news that God for Christ's sake is merciful to the most unworthy sinners, if they will only believe that Christ by His death has delivered them from sin and everlasting death to grace, forgiveness, and everlasting life. By keeping in mind the difference between the Law and the Gospel we let each perform its special task. Of this difference between the Law and the Gospel nothing can be discovered in the writings of the monks or scholastics, nor for that matter in the writings of the ancient fathers. Augustine understood the difference somewhat. Jerome and others knew nothing of it. The silence in the Church concerning the difference between the Law and the Gospel has resulted in untold harm. Unless a sharp distinction is maintained

between the purpose and function of the Law and the Gospel, the Christian doctrine cannot be kept free from error.

Verse 19. It was added because of transgressions.

In other words, that transgressions might be recognized as such and thus increased. When sin, death, and the wrath of God are revealed to a person by the Law, he grows impatient, complains against God, and rebels. Before that he was a very holy man; he worshipped and praised God; he bowed his knees before God and gave thanks, like the Pharisee. But now that sin and death are revealed to him by the Law he wishes there were no God. The Law inspires hatred of God. Thus sin is not only revealed by the Law; sin is actually increased and magnified by the Law.

The Law is a mirror to show a person what he is like, a sinner who is guilty of death, and worthy of everlasting punishment. What is this bruising and beating by the hand of the Law to accomplish? This, that we may find the way to grace. The Law is an usher to lead the way to grace. God is the God of the humble, the miserable, the afflicted. It is His nature to exalt the humble, to comfort the sorrowing, to heal the broken-hearted, to justify the sinners, and to save the condemned. The fatuous idea that a person can be holy by himself denies God the pleasure of saving sinners. God must therefore first take the sledge-hammer of the Law in His fists and smash the beast of self-righteousness and its brood of self-confidence, self-wisdom, self-righteousness, and self-help. When the conscience has been thoroughly frightened by the Law it welcomes the Gospel of grace with its message of a Savior who came into the world, not to break the bruised reed, nor to quench the smoking flax, but to preach glad tidings to the poor, to heal the broken-hearted, and to grant forgiveness of sins to all the captives.

Man's folly, however, is so prodigious that instead of embracing the message of grace with its guarantee of the forgiveness of sin for Christ's sake, man finds himself more laws to satisfy his conscience. "If I live," says he, "I will mend my life. I will do this, I will do that." Man, if you don't do the very opposite, if you don't send Moses with the Law back to Mount Sinai and take the hand of Christ, pierced for your sins, you will never be saved.

When the Law drives you to the point of despair, let it drive you a little farther, let it drive you straight into the arms of Jesus who says: "Come to me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

Verse 19. Till the seed should come to whom the promise was made.

The Law is not to have its say indefinitely. We must know how long the Law is to put in its licks. If it hammers away too long, no person would and could be saved. The Law has a boundary beyond which it must not go. How long ought the Law to hold sway? "Till the seed should come to whom the promise was made." That may be taken literally to mean until the time of the Gospel. "From the days of John the Baptist," says Jesus, "until now the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force. For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John." (Matthew 11:12, 13.) When Christ came the Law and the ceremonies of Moses ceased.

Spiritually, it means that the Law is not to operate on a person after he has been humbled and frightened by the exposure of his sins and the wrath of God. We must then say to the Law: "Mister Law, lay off him. He has had enough. You scared him good and proper." Now it is the Gospel's turn. Now let Christ with His gracious lips talk to him of better things, grace, peace, forgiveness of sins, and eternal life.

Verse 19. And it was ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator.

The Apostle digresses a little from his immediate theme. Something occurred to him and he throws it in by the way. It occurred to him that the Law differs from the Gospel in another respect, in respect to authorship. The Law was delivered by the angels, but the Gospel by the Lord Himself. Hence, the Gospel is superior to the Law, as the word of a lord is superior to the word of his servant.

The Law was handed down by a being even inferior to the angels, by a middleman named Moses. Paul wants us to understand that Christ is the mediator of a better testament than mediator Moses of the Law. Moses led the people out of their tents to meet God. But they ran away. That is how good a mediator Moses was.

Paul says: "How can the Law justify when that whole sanctified people of Israel and even mediator Moses trembled at the voice of God? What kind of righteousness do you call that when people run away from it and hate it the worst way? If the Law could justify, people would love the Law. But look at the children of Israel running away from it."

The flight of the children of Israel from Mount Sinai indicates how people feel about the Law. They don't like it. If this were the only

argument to prove that salvation is not by the Law, this one Bible history would do the work. What kind of righteousness is this law-righteousness when at the commencement exercises of the Law Moses and the scrubbed people run away from it so fast that an iron mountain, the Red Sea even, could not have stopped them until they were back in Egypt once again? If they could not hear the Law, how could they ever hope to perform the Law?

If all the world had stood at the mountain, all the world would have hated the Law and fled from it as the children of Israel did. The whole world is an enemy of the Law. How, then, can anyone be justified by the Law when everybody hates the Law and its divine author?

All this goes to show how little the scholastics know about the Law. They do not consider its spiritual effect and purpose, which is not to justify or to pacify afflicted consciences, but to increase sin, to terrify the conscience, and to produce wrath. In their ignorance the papists spout about man's good will and right judgment, and man's capacity to perform the Law of God. Ask the people of Israel who were present at the presentation of the Law on Mount Sinai whether what the scholastics say is true. Ask David, who often complains in the Psalms that he was cast away from God and in hell, that he was frantic about his sin, and sick at the thought of the wrath and judgment of God. No, the Law does not justify.

Verse 20. Now a mediator is not a mediator of one.

Here the Apostle briefly compares the two mediators: Moses and Christ. "A mediator," says Paul, "is not a mediator of one." He is necessarily a mediator of two: The offender and the offended. Moses was such a mediator between the Law and the people who were offended at the Law. They were offended at the Law because they did not understand its purpose. That was the veil which Moses put over his face. The people were also offended at the Law because they could not look at the bare face of Moses. It shone with the glory of God. When Moses addressed the people he had to cover his face with that veil of his. They could not listen to their mediator Moses without another mediator, the veil. The Law had to change its face and voice. In other words, the Law had to be made tolerable to the people.

Thus covered, the Law no longer spoke to the people in its undisguised majesty. It became more tolerable to the conscience. This explains why men fail to understand the Law properly, with the



result that they become secure and presumptuous hypocrites. One of two things has to be done: Either the Law must be covered with a veil and then it loses its full effectiveness, or it must be unveiled and then the full blast of its force kills. Man cannot stand the Law without a veil over it. Hence, we are forced either to look beyond the Law to Christ, or we go through life as shameless hypocrites and secure sinners.

Paul says: "A mediator is not a mediator of one." Moses could not be a mediator of God only, for God needs no mediator. Again, Moses could not be a mediator of the people only. He was a mediator between God and the people. It is the office of a mediator to conciliate the party that is offended and to placate the party that is the offender. However, Moses' mediation consisted only in changing the tone of the Law to make it more tolerable to the people. Moses was merely a mediator of the veil. He could not supply the ability to perform the Law.

What do you suppose would have happened if the Law had been given without a mediator and the people had been denied the services of a go-between? The people would have perished, or in case they had escaped they would have required the services of another mediator to preserve them alive and to keep the Law in force. Moses came along and he was made the mediator. He covered his face with a veil. But that is as much as he could do. He could not deliver men's consciences from the terror of the Law. The sinner needs a better mediator.

That better mediator is Jesus Christ. He does not change the voice of the Law, nor does He hide the Law with a veil. He takes the full blast of the wrath of the Law and fulfills its demands most meticulously.

Of this better Mediator Paul says: "A mediator is not a mediator of one." We are the offending party; God is the party offended. The offense is of such a nature that God cannot pardon it. Neither can we render adequate satisfaction for our offenses. There is discord between God and us. Could not God revoke His Law? No. How about running away from God? It cannot be done. It took Christ to come between us and God and to reconcile God to us. How did Christ do it? "Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross." (Col. 2:14.)

This one word, "mediator," is proof enough that the Law cannot

justify. Otherwise we should not need a mediator.

In Christian theology the Law does not justify. In fact it has the contrary effect. The Law alarms us, it magnifies our sins until we begin to hate the Law and its divine Author. Would you call this being justified by the Law?

Can you imagine a more arrant outrage than to hate God and to abhor His Law? What an excellent Law it is. Listen: "I am the Lord your God, which have brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. You will have no other gods. . . showing mercy to thousands . . . honor your father and your mother; that your days may be long upon the land. . ." (Ex. 20:2, 3, 6, 12.) Are these not excellent laws, perfect wisdom? "Let not God speak with us, lest we die," cried the children of Israel. Is it not amazing that a person should refuse to hear things that are good for him? Any person would be glad to hear, I should think, that he has a gracious God who shows mercy to thousands. Is it not amazing that people hate the Law that promotes their safety and welfare, e.g., "You must not kill; You must not commit adultery; You must not steal"?

The Law can do nothing for us except to arouse the conscience. Before the Law comes to me I feel no sin. But when the Law comes, sin, death, and hell are revealed to me. You would not call this being made righteous. You would call it being condemned to death and hell-fire.

Verse 20. But God is one.

God does not offend anybody, therefore He needs no mediator. But we offend God, therefore we need a mediator. And we need a better mediator than Moses. We need Christ.

Verse 21. Is the law then against the promises of God?

Before he digressed Paul stated that the Law does not justify. Shall we then discard the Law? No, no. It supplies a certain need. It supplies men with a needed realization of their sinfulness. Now arises another question: If the Law does no more than to reveal sin, does it not oppose the promises of God? The Jews believed that by the restraint and discipline of the Law the promises of God would be hastened, in fact earned by them.

Paul answers: "Not so. On the contrary, if we pay too much attention to the Law the promises of God will be slowed up. How can God fulfill His promises to a people that hates the Law?"

Verse 21. God forbid.

God never said to Abraham: "In you shall all the nations of the earth be blessed because you have kept the Law." When Abraham was still uncircumcised and without the Law or any law, indeed, when he was still an idol worshiper, God said to him: "Get you out of your country, etc.; I am your shield, etc.; In your seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed." These are unconditional promises which God freely made to Abraham without respect to works.

This is aimed especially at the Jews who think that the promises of God are impeded by their sins. Paul says: "The Lord is not slack concerning His promises because of our sins, or hastens His promises because of any merit on our part." God's promises are not influenced by our attitudes. They rest in His goodness and mercy.

Just because the Law increases sin, it does not therefore obstruct the promises of God. The Law confirms the promises, in that it prepares a person to look for the fulfillment of the promises of God in Christ.

The proverb has it that Hunger is the best cook. The Law makes afflicted consciences hungry for Christ. Christ tastes good to them. Hungry hearts appreciate Christ. Thirsty souls are what Christ wants. He invites them: "Come to me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Christ's benefits are so precious that He will dispense them only to those who need them and really desire them.

For if there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law.

The Law cannot give life. It kills. The Law does not justify a person before God; it increases sin. The Law does not secure righteousness; it hinders righteousness. The Apostle declares emphatically that the Law of itself cannot save.

Despite the intelligibility of Paul's statement, our enemies fail to grasp it. Otherwise they would not emphasize free will, natural strength, the works of supererogation, etc. To escape the charge of forgery they always have their convenient annotation handy, that Paul is referring only to the ceremonial and not to the moral law. But Paul includes all laws. He expressly says: "If there had been a law given."

There is no law by which righteousness may be obtained, not a single one. Why not?

Verse 22. But the Scripture has concluded all under sin.

Where? First in the promises concerning Christ in Genesis 3:15 and in Genesis 22:18, which speak of the seed of the woman and the seed of Abraham. The fact that these promises were made to the fathers concerning Christ implies that the fathers were subject to the curse of sin and eternal death. Otherwise why the need of promises?

Next, Holy Writ "concludes" all under sin in this passage from Paul: "For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse." Again, in the passage which the Apostle quotes from Deuteronomy 27:26, "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them." This passage clearly submits all men to the curse, not only those who sin openly against the Law, but also those who sincerely endeavor to perform the Law, inclusive of monks, friars, hermits, etc.

The conclusion is inevitable: Faith alone justified without works. If the Law itself cannot justify, much less can imperfect performance of the Law or the works of the Law, justify.

Verse 22. That the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe.

The Apostle stated before that "the Scripture has concluded all under sin." Forever? No, only until the promise should be fulfilled. The promise, you will recall, is the inheritance itself or the blessing promised to Abraham, deliverance from the Law, sin, death, and the devil, and the free gift of grace, righteousness, salvation, and eternal life. This promise, says Paul, is not obtained by any merit, by any law, or by any work. This promise is given. To whom? To those who believe. In whom? In Jesus Christ.

Verse 23. But before faith came.

The Apostle proceeds to explain the service which the Law is to render. Previously Paul had said that the Law was given to reveal the wrath and death of God upon all sinners. Although the Law kills, God brings good out of evil. He uses the Law to bring life. God saw that the universal illusion of self-righteousness could not be put down in any other way but by the Law. The Law dispels all self-illusions. It puts the fear of God in a man. Without this fear there can be no thirst for God's mercy. God accordingly uses the Law for a hammer to break up the illusion of self-righteousness, that we should despair of our own strength and efforts at

self-justification.

Verse 23. But before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up to the faith which should afterwards be revealed.

The Law is a prison to those who have not as yet obtained grace. No prisoner enjoys the confinement. He hates it. If he could he would smash the prison and find his freedom at all cost. As long as he stays in prison he refrains from evil deeds. Not because he wants to, but because he has to. The bars and the chains restrain him. He does not regret the crime that put him in jail. On the contrary, he is mighty sore that he cannot rob and kill as before. If he could escape he would go right back to robbing and killing.

The Law enforces good behavior, at least outwardly. We obey the Law because if we don't we will be punished. Our obedience is inspired by fear. We obey under duress and we do it resentfully. Now what kind of righteousness is this when we refrain from evil out of fear of punishment? Hence, the righteousness of the Law is at bottom nothing but love of sin and hatred of righteousness.

All the same, the Law accomplishes this much, that it will outwardly at least and to a certain extent repress vice and crime.

But the Law is also a spiritual prison, a veritable hell. When the Law begins to threaten a person with death and the eternal wrath of God, a man just cannot find any comfort at all. He cannot shake off at will the nightmare of terror which the Law stirs up in his conscience. Of this terror of the Law the Psalms furnish many glimpses.

The Law is a civil and a spiritual prison. And such it should be. For that the Law is intended. Only the confinement in the prison of the Law must not be unduly prolonged. It must come to an end. The freedom of faith must succeed the imprisonment of the Law.

Happy the person who knows how to utilize the Law so that it serves the purposes of grace and of faith. Unbelievers are ignorant of this happy knowledge. When Cain was first shut up in the prison of the Law he felt no pang at the fratricide he had committed. He thought he could pass it off as an incident with a shrug of the shoulder. "Am I my brother's keeper?" he answered God flippantly. But when he heard the ominous words, "What have you done? the voice of your brother's blood crieth to me from the ground," Cain began to feel his imprisonment. Did he know how to get out of prison? No. He failed to call the Gospel to his aid. He said: "My

punishment is greater than I can bear." He could only think of the prison. He forgot that he was brought face to face with his crime so that he should hurry to God for mercy and for pardon. Cain remained in the prison of the Law and despaired.

As a stone prison proves a physical handicap, so the spiritual prison of the Law proves a chamber of torture. But this it should only be until faith be revealed. The silly conscience must be educated to this. Talk to your conscience. Say: "Sister, you are now in jail all right. But you don't have to stay there forever. It is written that we are 'shut up to faith which should afterwards be revealed.' Christ will lead you to freedom. Do not despair like Cain, Saul, or Judas. They might have gone free if they had called Christ to their aid. Just take it easy, Sister Conscience. It's good for you to be locked up for a while. It will teach you to appreciate Christ."

How anybody can say that he by nature loves the Law is beyond me. The Law is a prison to be feared and hated. Any unconverted person who says he loves the Law is a liar. He does not know what he is talking about. We love the Law about as well as a murderer loves his gloomy cell, his straight-jacket, and the iron bars in front of him. How then can the Law justify us?

Verse 23. Shut up to the faith which should afterwards be revealed.

We know that Paul has reference to the time of Christ's coming. It was then that faith and the object of faith were fully revealed. But we may apply the historical fact to our inner life. When Christ came He abolished the Law and brought liberty and life to light. This He continues to do in the hearts of the believers. The Christian has a body in whose members, as Paul says, sin dwells and wars. I take sin to mean not only the deed but root, tree, fruit, and all. A Christian may perhaps not fall into the gross sins of murder, adultery, theft, but he is not free from impatience, complaints, hatreds, and blasphemy of God. As carnal lust is strong in a young man, in a man of full age the desire for glory, and in an old man covetousness, so impatience, doubt, and hatred of God often prevail in the hearts of sincere Christians. Examples of these sins may be garnered from the Psalms, Job, Jeremiah, and all the Sacred Scriptures.

Accordingly each Christian continues to experience in his heart times of the Law and times of the Gospel. The times of the Law are discernible by heaviness of heart, by a lively sense of sin, and a feeling of despair brought on by the Law. These periods of the Law

will come again and again as long as we live. To mention my own case. There are many times when I find fault with God and am impatient with Him. The wrath and the judgment of God displease me, my wrath and impatience displease Him. Then is the season of the Law, when "the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh."

The time of grace returns when the heart is enlivened by the promise of God's mercy. It soliloquizes: "Why are you cast down, O my soul? and why are you disquieted within me? Can you see nothing but law, sin, death, and hell? Is there no grace, no forgiveness, no joy, peace, life, heaven, no Christ and God? Trouble me no more, my soul. Hope in God who has not spared His own dear Son but has given Him into death for your sins." When the Law carries things too far, say: "Mister Law, you are not the whole show. There are other and better things than you. They tell me to trust in the Lord."

There is a time for the Law and a time for grace. Let us study to be good timekeepers. It is not easy. Law and grace may be miles apart in essence, but in the heart, they are pretty close together. In the heart fear and trust, sin and grace, Law and Gospel cross paths continually.

Whether reason hears that justification before God is obtained by grace alone, it draws the inference that the Law is without value. The doctrine of the Law must therefore be studied carefully lest we either reject the Law altogether, or are tempted to attribute to the Law a capacity to save.

There are three ways in which the Law may be abused. First, by the self-righteous hypocrites who fancy that they can be justified by the Law. Secondly, by those who claim that Christian liberty exempts a Christian from the observance of the Law. "These," says Peter, "use their liberty for a cloak of maliciousness," and bring the name and the Gospel of Christ into ill repute. Thirdly, the Law is abused by those who do not understand that the Law is meant to drive us to Christ. When the Law is properly used its value cannot be too highly appraised. It will take me to Christ every time.

Verse 24. Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us to Christ.

This simile of the schoolmaster is striking. Schoolmasters are indispensable. But show me a pupil who loves his schoolmaster.

How little love is lost upon them the Jews showed by their attitude toward Moses. They would have been glad to stone Moses to death. (Ex. 17:4.) You cannot expect anything else. How can a pupil love a teacher who frustrates his desires? And if the pupil disobeys, the schoolmaster whips him, and the pupil has to like it and even kiss the rod with which he was beaten. Do you think the schoolboy feels good about it? As soon as the teacher turns his back, the pupil breaks the rod and throws it into the fire. And if he were stronger than the teacher he would not take the beatings, but beat up the teacher. All the same, teachers are indispensable, otherwise the children would grow up without discipline, instruction, and training.

But how long are the scolding and the whippings of the schoolmaster to continue? Only for a time, until the boy has been trained to be a worthy heir of his father. No father wants his son to be whipped all the time. The discipline is to last until the boy has been trained to be his father's worthy successor.

The Law is such a schoolmaster. Not for always, but until we have been brought to Christ. The Law is not just another schoolmaster. The Law is a specialist to bring us to Christ. What would you think of a schoolmaster who could only torment and beat a child? Yet of such schoolmasters there were plenty in former times, regular bruisers. The Law is not that kind of a schoolmaster. It is not to torment us always. With its lashings it is only too anxious to drive us to Christ. The Law is like the good schoolmaster who trains his children to find pleasure in doing things they formerly detested.

Verse 24. That we might be justified by faith.

The Law is not to teach us another Law. When a person feels the full force of the Law he is likely to think: I have transgressed all the commandments of God; I am guilty of eternal death. If God will spare me I will change and live right from now on. This natural but entirely wrong reaction to the Law has bred the many ceremonies and works devised to earn grace and remission of sins.

The Law means to enlarge my sins, to make me small, so that I may be justified by faith in Christ. Faith is neither law nor word; but confidence in Christ "who is the end of the law." How so is Christ the end of the Law? Not in this way that He replaced the old Law with new laws. Nor is Christ the end of the Law in a way that makes Him a hard judge who has to be bribed by works as the papists teach. Christ is the end or finish of the Law to all who believe in



Him. The Law can no longer accuse or condemn them.

But what does the Law accomplish for those who have been justified by Christ? Paul answers this question next.

Verse 25. But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster.

The Apostle declares that we are free from the Law. Christ fulfilled the Law for us. We may live in joy and safety under Christ. The trouble is, our flesh will not let us believe in Christ with all our heart. The fault lies not with Christ, but with us. Sin clings to us as long as we live and spoils our happiness in Christ. Hence, we are only partly free from the Law. "With the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin." (Romans 7:25.)

As far as the conscience is concerned it may cheerfully ignore the Law. But because sin continues to dwell in the flesh, the Law waits around to molest our conscience. More and more, however, Christ increases our faith and in the measure in which our faith is increased, sin, Law, and flesh subside.

If anybody objects to the Gospel and the sacraments on the ground that Christ has taken away our sins once and for always, you will know what to answer. You will answer: Indeed, Christ has taken away my sins. But my flesh, the world, and the devil interfere with my faith. The little light of faith in my heart does not shine all over me at once. It is a gradual diffusion. In the meanwhile I console myself with the thought that eventually my flesh will be made perfect in the resurrection.

Verse 26. For we are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.

Paul as a true apostle of faith always has the word "faith" on the tip of his tongue. By faith, says he, we are the children of God. The Law cannot beget children of God. It cannot regenerate us. It can only remind us of the old birth by which we were born into the kingdom of the devil. The best the Law can do for us is to prepare us for a new birth through faith in Christ Jesus. Faith in Christ regenerates us into the children of God. St. John bears witness to this in his Gospel: "As many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name." (John 1:12.) What tongue of man or angel can adequately extol the mercy of God toward us miserable sinners in that He adopted us for His own children and fellow-heirs with His Son by the simple means of faith in Christ Jesus!

Verse 27. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.

To "put on Christ" may be understood in two ways, according to the Law and according to the Gospel. According to the Law as in Romans 13:14, "Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ," which means to follow the example of Christ.

To put on Christ according to the Gospel means to clothe oneself with the righteousness, wisdom, power, life, and Spirit of Christ. By nature we are clad in the garb of Adam. This garb Paul likes to call "the old man." Before we can become the children of God this old man must be put off, as Paul says, Ephesians 4:29. The garment of Adam must come off like soiled clothes. Of course, it is not as simple as changing one's clothes. But God makes it simple. He clothes us with the righteousness of Christ by means of Baptism, as the Apostle says in this verse: "As many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ." With this change of garments a new birth, a new life stirs in us. New affections toward God spring up in the heart. New determinations affect our will. All this is to put on Christ according to the Gospel. Needless to say, when we have put on the robe of the righteousness of Christ we must not forget to put on also the mantle of the imitation of Christ.

Verse 28. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female; for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. The list might be extended indefinitely: There is neither preacher nor hearer, neither teacher nor scholar, neither master nor servant, etc. In the matter of salvation, rank, learning, righteousness, influence count for nothing.

With this statement Paul deals a death blow to the Law. When a person has put on Christ nothing else matters. Whether a person is a Jew, a punctilious and circumcised observer of the Law of Moses, or whether a person is a noble and wise Greek does not matter. Circumstances, personal worth, character, achievements have no bearing upon justification. Before God they count for nothing. What counts is that we put on Christ.

Whether a servant performs his duties well; whether those who are in authority govern wisely; whether a man marries, provides for his family, and is an honest citizen; whether a woman is chaste, obedient to her husband, and a good mother: all these advantages do not qualify a person for salvation. These virtues are commendable, of course; but they do not count points for

justification. All the best laws, ceremonies, religions, and deeds of the world cannot take away sin guilt, cannot dispatch death, cannot purchase life.

There is much disparity among men in the world, but there is no such disparity before God. "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." (Romans 3:23.) Let the Jews, let the Greeks, let the whole world keep silent in the presence of God. Those who are justified are justified by Christ. Without faith in Christ the Jew with his laws, the monk with his holy orders, the Greek with his wisdom, the servant with his obedience, shall perish forever.

Verse 28. For ye are all one in Christ Jesus.

There is much imparity among men in the world. And it is a good thing. If the woman would change places with the man, if the son would change places with the father, the servant with the master, nothing but confusion would result. In Christ, however, all are equal. We all have one and the same Gospel, "one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all," one Christ and Savior of all. The Christ of Peter, Paul, and all the saints is our Christ. Paul can always be depended on to add the conditional clause, "In Christ Jesus." If we lose sight of Christ, we lose out.

Verse 29. And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

"If ye be Christ's" means, if you believe in Christ. If you believe in Christ, then are you the children of Abraham indeed. Through our faith in Christ Abraham gains paternity over us and over the nations of the earth according to the promise: "In your seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed." Through faith we belong to Christ and Christ to us.