

***“Paul’s Letter to the Colossians, Introduction —
The Seven Dimensions of the Mystery, Part 5, Section 2”***

Review: “The Seven Dimensions of the Mystery, The Dynamic of the Christian Life, Under Grace — Part 1 (Gal. 1-3)”

- ***The Mature Life of the Believer Under Grace, Endowed in Every Way to His Glory (Gal. 5) — The Dynamic of the Christian Life, Under Grace — Part 1 (Gal. 1-3)***
 - ***The Gospel of God’s Grace was Revealed to Paul by the Heavenly Christ***
 - ***The Gospel of God’s Grace Exhorts Believers to Holy Living, Not License***
 - ***[Today] Abundant Grace is at the Heart of Christian Living (Gal. 4-5)***
- ***The Gospel of God’s Grace was Revealed to Paul by the Heavenly Christ***

Gal. 1:11-12

11 But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man.

12 For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ.

- ***This gospel was distinctive therefore not only in its origin as we read here but also in its content. It is the latter that is the central focus in this letter though. It was from Christ himself, not on earth, but in heaven, that he received this good news of redemption through faith alone. And because it was not taken from the Twelve therefore, Paul had no reason to “... confer with flesh and blood” since he knew by the full authority of Christ himself that his gospel was of the Lord even though it differed from what was being preached by the Twelve.***

Many misunderstand Paul’s statement here because of misunderstandings about why he did go to Jerusalem later, assuming that he himself had doubts as to the correctness of his preaching to the Gentiles and needed assurance from the apostles. But that was not his reason for going according to the second chapter which we will look at next.

- *Significantly, therefore, as I have commented here many times, Paul describes this distinctive gospel, never revealed before since it was kept secret as part of the Mystery Revelation, “my gospel” in three places in his letters, in Romans 2:16, 16:25, and 2 Tim. 2:8. In the latter Romans verse it is revealed that it is part of the Sacred Secret or the Mystery:*

Rom. 16:25-26

25 Now to him that is of power to stablish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began,

26 But now is made manifest, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith:

- *And so, here in the Galatians letter, the letter that is most explicitly focused on the maturing of the saints and their living under grace, he begins with this remarkable statement about the gospel of grace itself. We shall see why as he proceeds in the next chapter.*
- *But before continuing there, let's stop for a moment just to recall what Paul writes about that Gospel of the Grace of God in 1 Cor. 15. It is so clearly written here, but how many know it today. Normally what we hear today has the emphasis on what has been added to the gospel of grace by false teachers.*

1 Cor. 15:1-8

1 Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand;

2 By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain.

3 For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures;

4 And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures:

5 And that he was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve:

6 After that, he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep.

7 After that, he was seen of James; then of all the apostles.

8 And last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time.

- *It should be clear that since this gospel and Paul's other teachings are all part of the Sacred Secret or Mystery, that they are different in*

critical aspects from the other teachings of scripture. As we are proceeding with each of these dimensions of the Mystery, we are seeing that sometimes those differences are substantial and essential for our understanding of how God is working today under grace. That is especially true of the dynamic empowering of the believer today, under grace which is so different from God's working in the believer under other dispensational rules.

These verses and many others have changed my life. What about yours?

- ***The Gospel of God's Grace Exhorts Believers to Holy Living, Not License***

Gal. 2:11-16

11 But when Peter was come to Antioch, I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed.

12 For before that certain came from James, he did eat with the Gentiles: but when they were come, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing them which were of the circumcision.

13 And the other Jews dissembled likewise with him; insomuch that Barnabas also was carried away with their dissimulation.

14 But when I saw that they walked not uprightly according to the truth of the gospel, I said unto Peter before *them* all, If thou, being a Jew, livest after the manner of Gentiles, and not as do the Jews, why compellest thou the Gentiles to live as do the Jews?

15 We *who are* Jews by nature, and not sinners of the Gentiles,

16 Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.

- *Even Jews were justified, declared righteous, only through faith and not by works of the law — and this had consequences for lying as well as Paul writes here! And now he addresses that directly and very powerfully. So the point was that the liberty that the gospel delivers has consequence in more than salvation. It also affects living itself. But, living out that liberty involves risks as seen here with Peter, Barnabas, and, of course, James who might very well have been the source of the false teachings that we so causing havoc in the Gentile churches.*
- *Another way to look at this is the following: With law as a guide we are tempted to think that grace has no real power and needs the help of our flesh. Otherwise license and sin will dominate. So we pull*

back and resort to the law. But chapter 7 of Romans makes it clear that is the wrong dynamic and saps grace of its power by actually encouraging the flesh. That is because trusting in the power of the flesh implies a failure to trust God by faith to accomplish his standard within us.

- ***These next verses underscore this teaching with an emphasis on an explanation of the dynamic of the power of grace:***

[READ] Gal. 2:18-21

18 For if I build again the things which I destroyed, I make myself a transgressor.

19 For I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God.

20 I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.

21 I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain.

- ***Here we have some of the most wonderful words in the English language (and some of the most blessed words in the original Greek language as well, of course). They are strong words for legalists, since Paul here writes in verse 19 that he was in effect “killed” by that law, not given life. But the blessedness of that is in the same verse: “For I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God.” So we see both the negative and the positive. What a strong statement of the power of God’s working into us of his abundant grace!***

Or, as verse 20 says, restated, the blessedness is this: “I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.”

- ***Verse 21 stands as a lighthouse of truth and faith for us all:*** “I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain.”
- ***So many today however are frustrating the working of the grace of God by their teachings, for living by grace through faith is radically different from living by works of some law. There are several possible misunderstandings that might lead to this:***

- **Confusing grace with mercy, two significantly different concepts.** *Mercy signifies judgment deserved but not received while grace is all about blessings given apart from any merit on our part. The merit was all the Lord's and in no way ours — but it was imputed to us. Praise God.*

The thought here seems to be that we are to try to keep God's law and find (or should find) that in so doing we inevitably fall short. But since we were not judged we in this failure learn of God's great grace. But the Pauline teaching is that this is mercy and not grace.

- **Thinking that the Law is the actual standard of God's righteousness so that all is measured in reference to that in the end.** *This view holds that the Law must be the believers' guide always as to all that is good and right and holy. But that denies that there is any other source of godliness. But that is exactly the apostle's teaching here regarding the power of God's abundant grace working in us.*
- **Mistaking the will of the flesh with the power of the spirit.** *This is a profound error inherent in all forms of legalisms. It assumes that the desire to please God and obey his commandments is a holy and righteous desire and that our will therefore is the only means of success in fulfilling God's desires for us. Of course this view denies the Pauline teaching that the law encourages the flesh. The teaching in Romans 7 makes that crystal clear, however, as we will see in our next study.*
- *Verses 20 and 21 stand opposed to all legalisms and are therefore ignored or not taken literally by legalists. For they would say (I have heard these exact words often): "Well grace is great but we still have to keep the law, right?"*
- *That the apostle of course again here sets himself up as a living example of this truth was so relevant to those to whom he is writing. Is it equally relevant to us? My life was transformed by these verses so long ago. What about yours?*
- **Verse 20:** *"I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me."*

He also writes of this in Romans 7:7-13. Please study that for yourselves. We will look at it carefully next time Lord willing.

Rom. 7:7-13 [describing the conflicts in the life of a believer who is “carnal”]

7 What shall we say then? *Is the law sin?* God forbid. Nay, I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet.

8 But sin, taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence. For without the law sin was dead.

9 For I was alive without the law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died.

10 And the commandment, which was *ordained* to life, I found to be unto death.

11 For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it slew me.

12 Wherefore the law *is* holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good.

13 Was then that which is good made death unto me? God forbid. But sin, that it might appear sin, working death in me by that which is good; that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful.

- ***I have lived “in” this chapter for considerable time and with much anguish of spirit as the apostle himself had, so I know all about it. The teachings here have therefore transformed me, now over 50 years ago. But I have never forgotten the struggles I endured.***

The foundational teaching of the gospel of grace itself having been laid, Paul now proceeds to the practical. Yes, The Gospel of God’s Grace exhorts believers to holy living, not license. To see that we need to start again today in chapter 3:

- ***Let’s not forget our major theme as we move ahead now. We have been seeing in our studies here that great secret, kept hidden in God from before the foundation of the world. As Paul has well written, for us Gentiles, apart from the covenants and promises given to Israel, God’s “chosen people”, God had planned and prepared a great salvation indeed, and all though the riches of grace made sure for us by the completed and perfect sacrifice of his own beloved Son, Christ Jesus. This is most wonderful and blessed and is at the heart of Paul’s doctrine. This blessing is part of the whole realm of blessings, under grace, which he describes here at the beginning as “given to me for you (or “for your benefit”). This teaching is***

contained in seven (or more) parts and I have called them here the various Dimensions of the Mystery”, The Seven-Fold Dimensions of the Mystery Dispensation of the Grace of God.

Today's Outline: The Dynamic of Christian Living Is Above and Beyond Our Works

- ***Salvation by Grace Through Faith Has Consequences for Our Living Also***
- ***Two Analogies Help Us Understand His Teaching,: The Schoolmaster and the Hagar Temptation***
- ***Legalisms Cut the Life-Giving Root of Grace Living***

I. Salvation by Grace Through Faith Has Consequences for Our Living Also:

Gal. 3:1-3

1 O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you?

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

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

- ***So Paul addresses directly the false teachings that had come by way of the Judaizers into the churches of Galatia. Their heresy was damnable indeed since it destroyed the entire meaning of Christ's death for sin and sinners and its full consequence.***
- ***His refutation of their teaching here relied on the simple reminder of how they had been saved in the first place. Paul had preached Christ crucified and risen again in their midst and they had seen him as “a stand in” for the risen Christ. Amen. That is deep teaching indeed.***
- ***For Paul had been so humbled under the hand of God that he could preach powerfully concerning the crucified and risen Christ that the Galatians could see Christ in him as he preached the words that Christ gave him. Or, as he wrote here: “O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you.” Or, looking ahead to Chapter 4, we find these words:***

Gal. 4:14 And my temptation which was in my flesh ye despised not, nor rejected; but received me as an angel of God, even as Christ Jesus.

- *So it is clear. As Paul reminds them, they had become believers through that preaching and the great work of the Spirit of God. It was of that that he reminded them here in this letter. It is that contest and background, that shared history even, that they had in common and which we must also grasp if we would understand his next words here in the Galatians letter:*

II. Two Analogies Help Us Understand Grace: The Schoolmaster and the Hagar Temptation:

The Schoolmaster:

Gal. 3:22-25

22 But the scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe.

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

24 Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith.

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

- *Verse 23 is about Israel and the Jews being “shut up” under Moses Law. This word is usually translated “concluded” as in the previous verse and in Rom. 11:32: “For God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all.” The teaching is that law and grace or works and faith cannot any longer be mixed the way they had been for so many years. Paul’s preaching of grace was given after he set aside the Jewish religion, synagogue to synagogue on his missionary journeys. See Acts 13:43 for an example of this.*
- *So, Paul teaches, the Jews were also set free from the law though their reception by faith of the truth Paul preached. Were there blessings at all under the law? Yes, of course, many. But not regarding salvation itself. No one could be saved though the works of the law. Faith was always an absolute requirement. The schoolmaster today has benefits too, for children, for example. But the focus here is on the enslavement to the law being a negative.*
- *Whether Jew or Gentile, therefore, the blessings under grace are so magnificent, aren’t they? What does Paul write here*

Gal. 3:26-29

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

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

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.

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

- *The Law bound the Jews until faith in Christ could be realized. The law had brought bondage, not liberty, bondage to hundreds of legal requirements. But when Christ had provided a full and complete redemption available through faith alone and independently of any works of law, then not only Jews but also even Gentiles might be declared to be the sons of God and saved by grace through faith alone.*
- *He writes here also that we Gentiles that have believed, without covenants and promises written to us as they had been to the Jews, also became heirs of God and liberty from the bondage of the Law of Moses that the Jews had been subject to, and liberty from every binding, such as Jew or Gentile, bond or free, male or female. My, such a liberty indeed this is, and all by his abundant grace through faith in Christ Jesus. Amen and amen!*
- *But there is more! For under grace, legal / religious systems do not even have a rightful place, at least not apart from child-rearing. We are now nearly ready to transition to the positive teaching here, into the Dynamic of Living Under Grace. But first, Paul writes enjoins us to consider another aspect of his preparation though the Hagar Temptation Allegory. The teaching in chapter 4 underscores his main point here so well, for if legal works were intended to be a part of our walk, then, as the apostle wrote, Christ died in vain. His reference now goes all the way back to Genesis and to Abraham's early temptations as he sought to walk by faith in the light of the promises of God regarding a son:*
- *The Hagar Temptation:*

[READ] Gal. 4:21-27

21 Tell me, ye that desire to be under the law, do ye not hear the law?

22 For it is written, that Abraham had two sons, the one by a bondmaid, the other by a freewoman.

23 But he *who was* of the bondwoman was born after the flesh; but he of the freewoman was by promise.

24 Which things are an allegory: for these are the two covenants; the one from the mount Sinai, which gendereth to bondage, which is Agar.

25 For this Agar is mount Sinai in Arabia, and answereth to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children.

26 But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all.

27 For it is written, Rejoice, *thou* barren that bearest not; break forth and cry, thou that travailest not: for the desolate hath many more children than she which hath an husband.

[READ] Gal. 4:28-31

28 Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise.

29 But as then he that was born after the flesh persecuted him *that was born* after the Spirit, even so *it is* now.

30 Nevertheless what saith the scripture? Cast out the bondwoman and her son: for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the freewoman.

31 So then, brethren, we are not children of the bondwoman, but of the free.

First the allegory, then the teaching that that allegory presents:

- ***This is a deep teaching, one might say, since Paul references the Law, meaning the Pentateuch or first five books of Moses in verse 21 but he is referring to Genesis chapters 16 through 21, not to the Law of Moses.***
- ***Verses 21-23 give the background of his teaching about the law and bondage to that law in the historical account of the birth of two sons of Abraham, first Ishmael and then Isaac. Here Paul is revealing much more than the history however, for he is giving the historical account a special spiritual meaning. He does that sometimes in his references to the Old Testament. So there are two sons of Abraham, one of Hagar (Ishmael) and one of Sarah (Isaac, the son of the promise) ... we are only giving an overview here, not the whole teaching — perhaps another time.***
- ***Now the application or teaching:***
 - ***It is this simple: Under Grace, Legalisms Have No Rightful Place! Something far more wonderful has taken their place. Chapter 5 gives us that dynamic for Christian, mature living.***

- *Here, in chapter 4, as a further introduction to that teaching, we see the detailed explanation of what it means to be free from the law, or better, from law, any legal rule at all. And, as the apostle writes here, the standard of the Lord God and his son Jesus Christ as revealed to Paul is an absolute standard. We are not delivered from the bondage to the law BUT ARE STILL obligated to keep it. NO! That is a gross error but so commonly taught and believed today.*
 - *So, Hagar and her son Ishmael were blessed in that through the promises given to Abraham there were countless blessings which included Hagar and her son as indeed Abraham's. But only Sarah and then Isaac would be counted as heirs of the inheritance promised by faith in and through God's word of truth.*
 - *The contrast here is an absolute one: submission to one part of the law implies submission to the whole law, and one transgression implies that Christ is of NO effect, for if we may be justified by a work (of obedience) we are indeed fallen from grace, he writes here. These are radical teachings indeed. Do we hear them? These contrasts are so great, aren't they? It is no wonder the legalists today do not teach much from Galatians but rather are enamored by the letter of James where he so often promotes to law.*
- *But the consequence of this truth concerning our liberty in Christ Jesus is not license and immorality in living but rather in the fruit of the spirit of grace operating within us. That fruit is summarized here as verse 6 says so clearly, by the outworking of love.*
- *Again, it is this simple: Under Grace, Legalisms Have No Rightful Place! Something far more wonderful have taken their place. Chapter 5 gives us that dynamic for Christian, mature living. We will begin to consider that now just by reading the first verses in chapter 5, saving the teaching for next time.*

III. Legalisms Cut the Life-Giving Root of Grace Living:

- *It is due time (or past time) for us to define this key word, "legalism": A legal system specifies requirement and rewards, the one is always*

dependent on the other. Obedience brings blessing. Disobedience, on the other hand, brings punishment and judgment. It is that simple. Moses Law is the ultimate example of such a legal system, one that was God given to the children of Israel. But any legal system, given by God or man-made, is similar in that regard. Obedience = blessing, disobedience = judgment. The Blessings do not flow apart from the condition being met. However, with God's law the judgments did not always follow since often mercy was shown.

But under the fullness of grace, the blessings flow not due to our obedience but due to Christ's obedience. Praise God!

[READ] Gal. 5:1-6

1 Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage.

2 Behold, I Paul say unto you, that if ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing.

3 For I testify again to every man that is circumcised, that he is a debtor to do the whole law.

4 Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by [the] law; ye are fallen from grace.

[A two verse summary of the teaching here on the dynamic of living under grace]

5 For we through the Spirit wait for the hope of righteousness by faith.

6 For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love.

- *What he writes here should not be clear:*

LAW MAKES UNLIMITED DEMANDS THAT CANNOT BE KEPT (AND ONLY CAN CONDEMN) WHILE GRACE FREELY PROVIDES UNLIMITED BLESSINGS THROUGH FAITH (WHICH ONLY CAN BLESS AND ENCOURAGE). The result is FULLY sufficient to please Almighty God, in fact it exalts him and glorifies the finished work of his son Jesus Christ. And that is because it is his plan under grace to do just that, to remove all human bases for righteousness so that the righteous act of his believed son is held as high as possible. Amen.

So, "we through the Spirit wait for the hope of righteousness by faith". These are wonderful words brings much joy to those who will hear.

May we indeed “stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, not entangled again with the yoke of bondage.”

- ***So we must never mix truth with error, or as we have seen here today, mixing a works-based righteousness with fruit bearing under the empowering of grace. But the emphasis of legalism is exactly that, to require a works-righteousness which leads always to failure and the destruction of the Christian life. Truly, submission to any law for approval or acceptance by God short-circuits the flow of grace. Let's never forget what Paul wrote in Colossians chapter 1 and in Romans chapter 16:***

Col. 1:26-27

26 Even the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints:

27 To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory:

Rom. 16:25-27

25 Now to him that is of power to stablish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began,

26 But now is made manifest, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith:

27 To God only wise, be glory through Jesus Christ for ever. Amen.

Summarize: The Dynamic of Christian Living Is Above and Beyond Our Works

- ***Salvation by Grace Through Faith Has Consequences in Living Also***
- ***Two Analogies Help Us Understand His Teaching, the Schoolmaster and the Hagar Events***
- ***Under Grace, Legalisms Have No Rightful Place***
- ***Legalisms Cut the Life-Giving Root of Grace Living***
- ***All Legal Principles are Summarized in the Pinnacle of Love***