

***“Paul’s Letter to the Colossians, Introduction —
The Seven Dimensions of the Mystery, Part 5, Section 3”***

Review: 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***
 - ***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 and we will focus on that today.***
- ***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! To Paul was this message given and it is for our understanding and enjoyment in this abundant life of the spirit and grace.

- ***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.

- ***The central teaching here in Colossians 1 and in Romans 16 is that this mystery or sacred secret has been given to Paul having been previously unrevealed because grace in its fullness was simply incompatible with the legal principles that had been in place. But now that grace has been revealed, we really must seek to know it well and to take it to heart. Our lives will show the difference if we do. Amen.***

Our Outline Today:

- ***All Legal Principles are Summited in the Pinnacle of Love***
- ***The Dynamic of the Christian Life, Under Grace Given for Our Understanding – According to Galatians***

Next Time:

- ***The Dynamic of the Christian Life, Under Grace Given for Our Understanding – According to Romans***

I. All Legal Principles are Summited in the Pinnacle of Love:

[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.

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.

- ***Here we have a two verse summary of the teaching on the dynamic of living under grace. What he writes here should be so 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.” Or, as our apostle wrote in Romans chapter 5:

Rom. 5:17 For if by one man's offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ.)

Gal. 5:13-15

13 For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only *use* not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another.

14 For all [the] law is fulfilled [*filled to overflowing*] in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.

15 But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another.

- *Paul writes here a summary statement in just a few words showing just how high above the works of the law grace is, in fact, he writes this seemingly astounding declaration here for all law-keepers to take full note of: "all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." A complimentary scripture is found in 1 Timothy 1:*

[READ] 1 Tim. 1:1-7

1 Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the commandment of God our Saviour, and Lord Jesus Christ, which is our hope;

2 Unto Timothy, my own son in the faith: Grace, mercy, and peace, from God our Father and Jesus Christ our Lord.

3 As I besought thee to abide still at Ephesus, when I went into Macedonia, that thou mightest charge some that they teach no other doctrine,

4 Neither give heed to fables and endless genealogies, which minister questions, rather than godly edifying [*the dispensation of God*] which is in faith: *so do*.

5 Now the end of the commandment [*the goal or purpose of the charge*] is charity [*love*] out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned:

6 From which some having swerved have turned aside unto vain jangling;

7 Desiring to be teachers of the law; understanding neither what they say, nor whereof they affirm.

- *These verses are a fitting tribute to our theme today. The gospel of grace implies a walk of grace and not of legal principle (we are reminded of the meaning of legalism). To Paul that gospel was given as was the teaching of the dynamic of grace. Here that is well summarized. Love is the capstone or pinnacle (in mountain climbing*

terms) of grace living as noted here.

Paul's teaching, therefore, is that the principle of love is foundational to the Christian life of a believer. It overwhelms legal requirements of living and renders them weak and counter-productive, for they incite the flesh and grieve the spirit therefore. The principle of love fulfills every legal requirement, at least in spirit if not in letter. In fact, as he writes in 2 Cor. 3:12-18, the letter of the law "kills". Romans 7 gives us much teaching on this that we will examine next time.

2 Cor. 3:5-6

5 Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God;

6 Who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life.

II. The Dynamic of the Christian Life, Under Grace Given for Our Understanding — According to Galatians:

- *Let's not forget our major theme as we move ahead now into this grace teaching in its fullness in chapter 5:*
- *We are in Colossians ... but are in a digression in Galatians so we could see how distinctive and blessed is Paul's teaching on our privileged position under grace, a position that provides salvation by grace through faith alone, and sanctification through a whole realm of blessings.*
- *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. The consequences of the Lord God's working according to the riches of his grace have many consequences for our salvation AND our sanctification, and it is the latter that we are focusing on now as we continue to look at Paul's letter to the Galatians.*

- ***But to lead us into chapter 5's teaching today, we should do a quick overview of we have learned so far in Galatians, chapters 1-4? Let's see:***

- ***Chapter 1 "... I heard it not of man, but ..."***

Gal. 1:3-4

3 Grace be to you and peace from God the Father, and from our Lord Jesus Christ,

4 Who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father:

Adding the requirement of circumcision changed the gospel fundamentally, Paul writes in chapter 1:

[READ] Gal. 1:6-8

6 I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel:

7 Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ.

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

- ***Adding any legal requirement, even circumcision itself, added a carnal basis in this case for holy living, but ultimately also to the gospel itself, Paul writes here.***

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. So this gospel was different and not what the Twelve had been taught, so Paul did not need to go to Jerusalem for further teaching regarding it... but he went up anyways. "Why?" is the question he answers in chapter 2:

- ***Chapter 2***

Gal. 2:2-5

2 And I went up by revelation, and communicated unto them that gospel which I preach among the Gentiles, but privately to them which were of reputation, lest by any means I should run, or had run, in vain.

3 But neither Titus, who was with me, being a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised:

4 And that because of false brethren unawares brought in, who came in privily to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage:

5 To whom we gave place by subjection, no, not for an hour; that the truth of the gospel might continue with you.

...

Gal. 2:7-9

7 But contrariwise, when they saw that the gospel of the uncircumcision was committed unto me, as *the gospel* of the circumcision was unto Peter;

8 (For he that wrought effectually in Peter to the apostleship of the circumcision, the same was mighty in me toward the Gentiles:)

9 And when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given unto me, they gave to me and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship; that we *should go* unto the heathen, and they unto the circumcision.

- *So Paul went up to Jerusalem "by revelation". This was not Paul's experience and wisdom alone that led to this visit but the Lord himself. The consequences of his visit with the Twelve were also what the Lord wanted. If only today many would take this revelation now written here to heart. But instead, legalism dominates in so many Christian's lives, who ...*

- *Chapter 3 "Having begun in the spirit, are now made perfect ["completed"] by the flesh."*

[READ] 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?

[READ] Gal. 3:9-12

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

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

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.

12 And the law is not of faith: but, The man that doeth them shall live in them.

▪ ***Chapters 3 & 4 – The Schoolmaster & Hagar Allegories Focus on Liberty from Law!***

Gal. 3:22-29

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.

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.

- ***Children grow up and become mature, they become “of age”, as it were. They they are no longer “under a schoolmaster or tutor”. So it is also with us who have believed, even if we are Jews and surely if we are Gentiles.***
- ***This brings us to that great section here I have been anticipating for so long ...***

[READ] Gal. 5:16-25

16 This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh.

17 For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would. *[the spiritual life]*

18 But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law.
 19 Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are *these*; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness,
 20 Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies,
 21 Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told *you* in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.
 22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith,
 23 Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.
 24 And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts.
 25 If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.

- *The life of the maturing believer under the fullness of grace that God has revealed as a part of the Sacred Secret, the Mystery, revealed to the apostle of the Gentiles for us, is so much more than law keeping as we see written here. It is the difference between the “fruit of the spirit” and the “works of the flesh”. Paul’s teaching is as outlined here:*
 - *The summary statement of Paul’s Positive teaching is stated here in verses 16-18 where we see the two different living dynamics in operation, the one, of the spirit (or spiritual) and the other of the flesh (or carnal) — spiritual on the one hand, and carnal on the other.*
 - *The contrast is painted so clearly with these two lists. The works of the flesh are negatively enumerated here in verses 19-21. These, whether “Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, or Idolatry and witchcraft” and the rest, variously describe the lives of unbelievers for whom there is no inheritance in the Kingdom of God, for not believing on our Lord Jesus, they have their inheritance in the Lake of Fire.*
 - *On the other hand, in verses 22-23 we see such a contrast: The fruit of the spirit is positively enumerated next, with “love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and temperance.” These variously describe the lives of believers, against such no law can ever condemn.*

Note that Paul keeps returning to the Law and legal works

righteousness. This is often emphasized in his teaching in the Galatians letters where he says it so well in chapter 2:

Gal. 2:5 “... to whom we gave place by subjection, no, not for an hour; that the truth of the gospel might continue with you.”

- **Legalism really does cut at the gospel foundation itself as we have seen. That is its natural consequence and therefore this letter is so critical for our understanding. Indeed, the fruit of the spirit is so far above works of law that he must continue to return to this issue. Even the purity of the gospel itself is at stake.**
- **And there is another issue too. The works of the flesh are all that can be produced by a “carnal” believer. The reason for that is that then the spirit will be grieving (Eph. 4:30) rather than fighting against the flesh so that the flesh and its desires dominate over the desires of the new nature. Ephesians 4 puts it this way:**

Eph. 4:-32

29 Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers.

30 And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption.

31 Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice:

32 And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.

- **Then, back in Galatians 5, verse 24, the apostle gives the reason behind this so starkly painted contrast: Our flesh has already been crucified! The apostle uses such strong and compelling language here, doesn't he? But it should strike home in us readers. Does it?**
- **Then concluding the teaching in verse 25 we find the exhortation (concluding the exhortation given in verses 16-18, for verses 19-23 are rather parenthetical):**

“If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.”

- *A few comments on this teaching:*
 - *Clearly this is a central, perhaps THE central teaching in the dynamic of the Christian Life in Paul's letter, and these verses are the most important part of this letter and concerning which the other chapters were an introduction setting the background and context.*
 - *The central question here then must be: what is walking by the spirit all about and how may one do that*
- *Now, we need to be very careful here and not go contrary to the spirit of this teaching.... Let's repeat again those words in verse 25: Those In Christ "have crucified the flesh with its lusts" Explain as the dynamic of grace living. All who are in Christ! The key to this life above the desires of the flesh is here, in reckoning upon this precious truth. Next time we will look at this further, Lord willing. But the key to this life of grace is here, when we reckon on having been crucified with Christ the spirit subdues the flesh allowing the fruit to be borne in us.*
- *There is such a difference between a life dominated by legal works and a life filled to overflowing with the grace of Christ who dwells within every believer. Paul as summaries it so well here, hasn't he? And yet most believers today have not understood this much crucial concept and continue to dwell in the realm of legal obedience and therefore failure and anxiety over our acceptance before Almighty God, whom we incorrectly assume will still hold all of our sins against us some day. But, believed, isn't God's abundant grace so wonderful? Amen.*
- *They were long ago transforming for me. What about you?*

Next time: The Dynamic of the Christian Life, Under Grace Given for Our Understanding — According to Romans, chapter 7. This is the complementary teaching to Gal. 5 and it is equally important of run to understand. There is much food for thought there.