

## The Covenants, Grace, And Law (Part Twenty-Five)

### Galatians (B)

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As we began giving a background for the book of Galatians last week, we found at the very beginning of the epistle that Paul felt constrained, first of all, to defend his apostleship, and then the authenticity of his message. He stated that his office as apostle was equal to that of the twelve, and that his message was by special revelation of Jesus Christ. He had not received his understanding in the manner that is normal to most. You and I learn it from someone else, some other human being, and we are assisted in this by God leading and guiding by His spirit. But the apostle Paul had special revelation from God so that he had this message to take to the world.

Sandwiched in between these two defenses that he put up in the first chapter was the statement that Jesus Christ gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father. It is very easy to read over that, but this is a very early introduction of what becomes the theme of many of Paul's arguments in the epistle—the importance of the death of Jesus Christ to Christianity *and* the electing will of God, which we are going to see just a little bit later in this sermon today. So today we will add more to our understanding in these areas.

When we left off last week the **enemy** against whom Paul was writing in the book of Galatians was clearly identified. It was a syncretism of Gnosticism and Judaism. Undoubtedly, I think that it was primarily a Judaistic enemy, but there were elements of Gnosticism, and that can be seen in the things that Paul wrote—things that have no application at all to Judaism unless the two of them are joined together. We were seeing that Judaism, which was Paul's religion before conversion, was nothing more than a national religion that drew somewhat on the Bible. It was not the religion of Moses. It was not the religion of Ezra.

I used a number of scriptures out of the book of Matthew when Jesus had His confrontations with the Pharisees. The Pharisees, along with the Sadducees,

were the primary sects of the Judaistic religion, and there is ample evidence from Jesus' ministry that Judaism was not the *true* religion.

Now what is involved here in Galatians is *not* merely a belief in the God of the Jews. Please get that. What is involved here in the book of Galatians is not merely a belief in the God of the Jews, or to accept a few Jewish beliefs, but rather to accept and live under the *entire* system of this Pharisaic /Sadducean lifestyle, with demon-driven Gnosticism thrown in besides.

Please understand that, because if you do not get this and pass somewhat over it, you are not going to understand much of what is in the book of Galatians and you are going to miss its points. The issue here is not just believing in God, or the God of the Jews, or even just a few laws. It was rather the entire Jewish way of life—this Pharisaic/Sadducean lifestyle with the demon-driven, ascetic Gnosticism thrown in besides.

Judaism began after the reform of Ezra. Ezra was a priest—a contemporary of Nehemiah—in the fifth century BC. It was during the time after Ezra that the sect of the Pharisees arose. They were at first lay members who rose in opposition to the temple priests. Nobody has ever been able to nail down exactly what the issue was that caused the Pharisees to band together as a group. It may have been felt that the temple priests had too much power, too much authority, and were taking advantage of people, abusing them, whatever, and what became the sect of the Pharisees began to arise.

The Sadducees was the priestly class, and they were combined with the wealthy, and they made up the Sadducean party. By the time of Christ, the Pharisees began attracting some Scribes as well. You will frequently see them linked together. "The Scribes and the Pharisees confronted Jesus [on this]," or "Jesus was speaking to the Scribes and the Pharisees."

The Pharisees were the stricter of this sect, and despite this were more popular with the people, but they were also generally less accurate in their interpretation of the Scriptures. By the time of Christ, both Sadducees and Pharisees had evolved into what we would consider political parties with overtones of religious conviction, and these religious convictions were

different, varied. What they were doing was vying for power in the community, and of course confronting one another over what we might consider minor points of law.

Turn now to Matthew 23:2-4. We will continue to expand our understanding of what was going on, where Judaism came from, so that we can understand more clearly what the enemy was in the book of Galatians.

**Matthew 23:2-4** Saying, [Jesus speaking] The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat: All therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do; but do not ye after their works: for they say, and do not. For they bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers.

The primary interest at this point is "Moses' seat," because that might help to understand the Pharisees a little bit. According to commentaries, Moses' seat was literally a chair that appeared in *every* synagogue, not just the main one in Jerusalem. Every synagogue had a Moses' seat, and it was from this seat that the person doing the teaching on Sabbath would sit. We stand to teach. In the first century they sat to teach. It is interesting that I was looking at something this morning in the book of Nehemiah, and it says that Ezra *stood* to teach. So it is one of those things that changed, of no account anyway, but at that time they *sat* when they taught, and they sat in what *they* called "Moses' seat."

As a little aside, when I was looking at this I could not help but think of the Pope. When he speaks what they call "ex cathedra," then his word is said to be infallible. What is so interesting is that word "cathedra." It is the word "seat" in this verse. Do you know what a cathedral is? A cathedral is a magnificent church building. No it is not! I mean, yes it is! But you see, the root for that word means, "This is the place where the religious authority sits."

I have heard many church of God ministers speak of Moses' seat, but as far as I know, there is nothing mentioned directly in the Bible about it. It appears to have been something that the Jews added, even as they added to very many of God's revealed laws. What is interesting here is that Jesus

acknowledged the authority of those sitting in Moses' seat. Now why? Because His Father, God, had certainly allowed its existence.

One thing certain is that the person who sat in Moses' seat had a measure of authority, and Jesus said it was to be respected. Apparently, the majority of those seats were occupied by Pharisees and by some Scribes. If you know what is in Matthew 23, Jesus took *great* exception as to how they used their authority. They said, and they did not. It is very clear that they used their authority as a position of abuse, of elevating themselves and putting others down, or putting burdens on the people that Jesus did not agree with.

**John 3:1** There was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews.

Nicodemus was part of the Sanhedrin. He is identified as a ruler. There are two reasons for bringing this up. Apparently, the Pharisees were either extremely influential, or they held the majority of the seats in the Sanhedrin as well. As I said a little bit earlier, that by the time we get to Jesus' time, they had become what we would consider a political party that had religious convictions.

Their primary function was in the political area, and attached to it was a religious function as well. They had the public pretty well boxed in both civilly and religiously because they were in the Sanhedrin. They apparently had great influence, even to the point of controlling it, and at the same time sat in Moses' seat in the synagogue.

One of the purposes of John 3 is to begin to show the fundamental difference between Jesus' doctrine and Judaism. To the Jews, being descended from Abraham and living according to Judaism's way of life was one's ticket into the Kingdom of God. Well, very quickly in this confrontation with Nicodemus, Jesus said "**NO!**" Now you will not literally see His "no" there, but He says, "you must be born of water and of spirit." In other words, just being born a Jew and living the Jewish lifestyle according to Judaism was not going to cut it. Being a child—a direct descendant of Abraham, of and by itself—was not going to cut it.

There was more to this. Already we are beginning to see early in Jesus' ministry that the stage is set for confrontation with Judaism. Fundamentally they were coming at the fulfillment of God's promises from different directions. It is so interesting that when Jesus and the apostles were confronting Judaism, they were facing religious thought that was very strict. But according to Jesus' testimony—and we are going to see a little bit later, according to Paul's testimony of those people in Galatia—*they* were not keeping God's laws! Did you get that? They were strict, but they were not keeping God's laws.

Remember we read from Matthew 15 last week, and a parallel scripture comes right out of Mark 7. "Full well you have rejected the commands of God that you might keep your own tradition." They had a very strict religion, but it was not the religion of God. If it was the religion of God, it would have had the law of God, and the instruction of God as its central core around which everything else would revolve. This is going to be very important to Galatians, because what we are seeing right here in Jesus' ministry is that He was not confronting a religion based on the law of God at all. Judaism was *not* based on the law of God.

Today, the church of God is confronting religious thought that is just the opposite of Judaism. It is as liberal as to almost make each person a sect unto himself. Like you can have your own way, but the end product is exactly the same. We can see clearly that *they* do not keep God's laws either.

The Pharisees made up a large part of the Sanhedrin, which was the ruling governmental body of the Jews under the supervising Roman authority. Remember they had to go see Pilate in order to get power to do certain things. This has very strong ramifications in regard to what is in view in Galatians and in Acts 15 especially, because what Paul was writing against, and the council in Jerusalem considered, was the *whole* Jewish way of life as contrasted to merely religious beliefs.

There was even much more though—much more that made Judaism an enemy of God. We can clearly see that it was an enemy in that they played a large role in killing Christ, and they were a constant source of persecution to the fledgling church. Now here was a major problem. From Ezra onward it

seems as though the Jews were *driven* to organize their way of life to an extreme that would prevent them from ever going into captivity again. They may have had good intentions, but to say that it got out of hand is to grossly understate what occurred.

**Romans 10:1-3** Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved. For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God.

Think of that in relation to what Jesus said about them. "Full well you have rejected the commandments of God that you might keep your own tradition." Paul is saying the same thing, only in more detail, and a little bit later, but he adds something to it. "They had a *zeal* for God, but not according to knowledge." What this does is summarize their attitude—zealous—but it also summarizes the result. They were ignorant, and they established their own righteousness.

With a great deal of zeal they went about thinking they were serving God, but all they did was produce their own set of standards. In fact, we can rightly conclude that their zeal was probably their greatest barrier to the truth. Look at the apostle Paul. Before conversion he was a Pharisee. He was a *zealous* Pharisee! In fact he was so zealous that his zeal was notorious to the first century church. The first century church was afraid of him!

If he is an example of Pharisaism, then at least we see that his zeal for Judaism drove him to consider Jesus and the church as traitors to his way of life. At the same time, it effectively prevented him from objectively examining what was being said. His mind was blinded by his zeal. It took him getting knocked down on the Damascus road to convince him otherwise. It is a good example of the miracle that takes place in our mind, even though ours is not as dramatic as his was. Now being converted, from Paul's point of view he could very effectively examine the Jews' problem.

**Exodus 18:20** And thou shalt teach them ordinances and laws, and shalt shew them the way wherein they must walk, and the work that they must do.

We are going to pick up one word in the English. It is the word "walk" that we are going to pay some attention to for a while here. In Hebrew it is the word *halakha*. Hebrew is a somewhat guttural language, so we will have to put up with my pronunciation of "walk." It transliterates to *halakha*, translated "to walk." Walk in what? Walk "in the way."

Quoting from *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible, Volume 2*, under "Judaism":

The authoritative Jewish way of life as expressed in moral law and ritual precept. It embraces the **whole** body of Jewish teaching, legislation and practices that proceeded from interpretation and reinterpretation of the laws of the Bible through an unbroken succession of generations [actually 400 or 500 years] of Jewish teachers from Ezra onward. It also included adaptations or modifications from time to time made applicable to changed conditions of life—economic, domestic, political, and social—by spiritual leaders. Although legalistic in content, the *halakha* is designed to bring all human occupations into relationship to the service of God and to establish the supremacy of the divine will as the measure of all directions and strivings of human life.

On the surface that sounds pretty good, because we should search and meditate as to how the scriptures apply to every aspect of life. However, there were a number of things wrong, the most important of which was that these interpretations were merely *human* opinions. Some of them were right on, and others were grossly off the mark. The *halakha* was **not** the Word of God.

I have mentioned to you in the past that I have in my library *The Code of Jewish Law*. This is a compilation of laws for living the Jewish way of life. I

am not exactly sure how many of these laws existed in Paul's day, but I feel reasonably certain that the majority did, though I know that the Jews continued to collect them and write them at least into some time in the third century.

I have this book in hand. It is 562 pages long, and in addition to that it has 32 pages of additional notes. For those of you who are familiar with computer programming, or whatever, this book is written in a 10-point font, which is pretty small. You would not want to read it very long as your eyes would probably be strained. It covers virtually everything that one might be confronted with in one's life.

Everything that they could possibly think of, they gathered decisions made by rabbis throughout the centuries. Out of curiosity, I looked up the Day of Atonement and what they had to say about it. I found 31 paragraphs covering all sorts of occasions that one might be confronted with on that day, and I thought that I would read a couple of them to you—two paragraphs—just to show you the kind of detail that these people in their zeal went into. Remember that on the Day of Atonement we are to afflict ourselves. Quoting from *The Code of Jewish Law*, paragraph 8:

Some authorities forbid to wear shoes on Yom Kippur, even if made of wood and not covered with leather, but shoes made with rubber or straw or cloth may be worn. [Remember this is a modern translation.] One should wear no shoes, even if it is muddy and rainy, even if one has to walk among the Gentiles. If however, walking in a muddy or wet place without shoes would cause him much pain, he may wear shoes without heels, and if the shoes have heels, he shall put the right shoe on the left foot, and the left one on the right foot, but he must remove them before entrance into the synagogue. One should take care not to touch them with the bare hands even when putting them on or taking them off so one may not be required to wash his hands.

Continuing the quote from paragraph 20:

It is advisable to smell spices several times during the day and to pronounce the prescribed benediction in order to complete the

necessary count of 100 benedictions a day. But as long as your mind has not been diverted from the previous scenting, we are not allowed to repeat the benediction because that would be a benediction uttered in vain. It is therefore necessary to allow a long interval between one inhalation and another so that there may be a diversion of mind in the meantime. It is best to smell different spices each time, even if they are of the same kind and so much the better if they are three different kinds, such as wood spices, herb spices, and mixed spices. If we are attentive to the benedictions recited by the Hazon and to those who are called up to the reading of the Torah and Moffuer, we will then be short of only 3 benedictions to complete the count to 100 and the benedictions over the spices will complete the number.

We undoubtedly find instructions of this sort to be odd to say the least, but they were *very* serious, so much so the Bible makes mention of it. They were *zealous*, but not according to knowledge. Perhaps if our nation had been devastated as theirs was, and we had had the emotional painful experience of captivity drilled into our mind, maybe we would have done exactly the same thing.

The major problem in all of this was that over the centuries the Jews gradually elevated these interpretations first to where they were *equal* with scripture, and finally to where they were *more important* than scripture.

Turn to Mark 7:3 because I just want you to see that more clearly.

**Mark 7:3** For the Pharisees, and all the Jews, except they wash their hands oft, eat not, holding the tradition of the elders.

That did not come from God's law. That came from *halakha*.

**Mark 7:13** Making the word of God of none effect through your tradition, which ye have delivered: and many such like things do ye.

Sandwiched in between that is the verse where He says that they rejected the commandments of God that they might keep their own tradition.

**Mark 7:7** Howbeit in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.

Their tradition was *halakha*—the Jewish way of life.

In addition to this, not only were they zealous in collecting these interpretations and putting them into books so that people could live this way, in their zeal they encouraged each other to live rigidly and exactly according to these interpretations. They were also zealous in proselytizing. Jesus said in Matthew 23 that they would encompass land and sea in order to gain one proselyte, and then they would make him a child of hell.

It became a major, major problem for Jesus and the church when the Jews did not have the humility to admit that many of their interpretations were wrong, **wrong, wrong**. They did not agree with God's Word, and they viewed Jesus, and then the church, as an enemy to be expunged.

It was *halakha*—the Jewish way of life which Paul, in Galatians 1:14, called "the traditions of my fathers"—that was *his religion!* That was what was in question in the book of Galatians, **not the law of God**. It was the Jewish way of life—the *halakha*—with ascetic, demon-driven Gnosticism added to it. This was the yoke that could not be borne. It was **this** that was the subject of the council in Acts 15. Of course it contained circumcision, which represented the means by which one became a Jew. The Jews in the Jerusalem area wanted the *entire* Jewish way of life imposed on the Gentile converts.

Turn to Acts 15 and we will look at verses 19 and 21. I think it is very interesting that when the council reached its conclusion it did not bother the Gentiles with any more than the four things of the law of Moses. The reason they did not write any more is given in verse 21. Let us look at it.

**Acts 15:19** Wherefore my sentence is, that we trouble not them, which from among the Gentiles are turned to God.

Why were they not going to trouble them any more?

**Acts 15:21** For Moses of old time hath in every city them that preach him, being read in the synagogues every sabbath day.

Do you understand what he is saying there? The Gentile converts to the Christian church were going to be attending services from time to time in the Jewish synagogue. Maybe it was the only place they could attend services. They were going to hear the law of Moses preached there. The council at Jerusalem had *no problem* at all with that! By the time we get to Galatians, the Gentiles of Galatia were being deceived into accepting this strange mixture of Gnosticism and Judaism as the religion of the New Covenant. Now these Gnostic Jews defined their relationship with God through the law. But law to them was not the same thing as law to a true God-fearing Christian.

If I say "law" to you, you will immediately think of God's law. Maybe most specifically you will think of the Ten Commandments. Maybe a little more generally you will think of the Pentateuch, or maybe even more broadly you will think of all the instruction of God, which is really what Torah includes. But if you said "law" to these people who were deceiving the Galatian Christians, they thought of *halakha*. That was what the law was to them.

This should not seem strange to you, because we have hundreds of millions of people calling themselves "Christian" who believe that the law is done away. It is part of that "if you hear something often enough" principle. You hear it so often it begins to become thought of as being true. The Jews honestly and sincerely believed that *halakha* was the law of Moses.

Just as important, though, is one more thing, and that is, that law to them [the Jews] was their means of election with God; that is, the very fact that they possessed the law, combined with the quality of their *halakha* law-keeping, was what motivated God to choose them. The effect of this was—and Paul saw right through it—that God's exercising of His sovereignty over His creation was being circumvented.

How are we called? We are called according to *the will of God* !

We are going to turn to Romans 9:16 and are going to attach this to John 6:44. We are so familiar with John 6:44—"No man comes to the Son except the spirit of the Father draw him"—that we need to get familiar with Romans 9:16.

**Romans 9:16** So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy.

Ephesians 1:5 clearly states that we are part of the church according to the will of God. So we are not where we are because we desired it, or because we willed it, or because we earned it. We are here because of God's mercy.

The Jews thought they were in the position they were in because they were so good, and because they had the law. The one *drastic* effect of this was that God's supremacy, His sovereignty over His creation, was being circumvented. The second thing was that the true way of justification was also being circumvented, because, according to them, justification became something God *owed* because one *earned* it. Therefore the Father's grace and Christ's sacrifice went right out the window and, taken from their perspective, Christ had died in vain.

Paul could see that this was nothing more than a vanity trip by these people, made in ignorance undoubtedly, but nonetheless it was completely and totally wrong. They could say, "Look how great we are that we can do these wonderful things, so that even God is indebted to us." Here is a quote from Samuel Bacchiocchi from his book, *Biblical Perspectives*, page 103:

One's status before God came to be determined by one's attitude towards the law as a document of election and not by obedience to specific commands. The law came to mean a revelation of God's electing will manifested in His covenant with Israel. Obviously, this view created a problem for the uncircumcised Gentiles because they felt excluded from the assurance of salvation provided by the covenant. This insecurity naturally led Gentiles to desire to be under law, i.e., to become full-fledged covenant members by

receiving circumcision, and Paul felt compelled to react strongly against this trend because it undermined the universality of the Gospel.

Because of these situations Paul appears in Galatians to be very **anti-law**. **First**, because of the matter of justification. Justification is achieved through Jesus Christ, *not* by our works, and **Second**, because we do not come to God through a covenant system of law. We come to God because He elects to call us. So with both of these issues, Paul had to address law. In every case, he was against it.

If you do not understand *what* he is talking about, you can hardly be anything else but led to the idea of his being **anti-law**. But brethren, you do not throw out the baby with the bath water. You do not throw out what God has graciously given for our guidance on how to live simply because a group of misguided people devised wrong concepts involving law and our relationship with Him. No, you get rid of the wrong concepts, and that is what Paul was doing in Galatians.

The remainder of Galatians 1, all the way to Galatians 2:11, is further information given by Paul to reinforce that his gospel was in complete agreement and was totally approved by those who were taught by Christ in the flesh. Let us go to Galatians 2.

**Galatians 2:11-14** But when Peter was come to Antioch, I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed. 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. And the other Jews dissembled likewise with him; insomuch that Barnabas also was carried away with their dissimulation. 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?

What we have here is an example of the kind of conduct that was either a direct part of *halakha*, or what it produced. This connects directly to Peter's experience in Acts 10.

**Acts 10:24-28** And the morrow after they entered into Caesarea. And Cornelius waited for them, and had called together his kinsmen and near friends. And as Peter was coming in, Cornelius met him, and fell down at his feet, and worshipped him. But Peter took him up, saying, Stand up; I myself also am a man. And as he talked with him, he went in, and found many that were come together. And he [Peter] said unto them, Ye know how that it is an unlawful thing for a man that is a Jew to keep company, or come unto one of another nation; but God hath shewed me that I should not call any man common or unclean.

The first part of verse 28 has a direct tie to *halakha*. Peter had the vision that was given him earlier in the chapter in order to instruct him that his perception, his interpretation, was wrong. He was not supposed to call any man common or unclean simply because they had been born to some other racial group or ethnic family, other than a Jew.

Back now to Galatians 2. God's law commanded Israelites to do no such thing, as not eating with the Gentiles, or even keeping company with them. What we have here is a practice derived from Judaism. Even though Peter knew this, he still got carried away into a gross hypocrisy when the conditions were ripe, thus giving us an opportunity to learn that when Paul is condemning law in the book of Galatians, he is not condemning God's law, but laws men added, thinking they were doing God service.

Here is what happened. Peter came to Antioch for some unstated reason. Antioch was predominately a Gentile church, and while he was there he circulated freely with the Gentiles. A bit later, though, some Jews arrived, claiming they were from James. Now their presence, and possibly arguments, influenced Peter to gradually withdraw from the Gentiles. So strong was this influence that even Barnabas, Paul's traveling companion on so many of his journeys, was affected, and he withdrew too.

Can you see what was occurring? What they were doing was very effectively driving the church apart. It was erecting a wall between the Jew and the Gentile. It was influencing Jews to think they were better than Gentiles, and the Gentiles to think that they were inferior unless they were one with the Jews in submitting to the Jews' standard. The Gentiles wanted to do the right thing, and so in their childish ignorance they began to be led astray, and it was dividing the church. That standard came neither from God's law, nor from the gospel, and it was producing class distinctions in respect to persons. This came from *halakha*, and it was part of the oral law that very frequently had *nothing* in harmony with God's law.

In Matthew 5 Jesus frequently said, "You have heard it said of old time, but I say unto you..." Verse 21 is a good example.

**Matthew 5:21** Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time,  
Thou shalt not kill.

**Matthew 5:22** But I say unto you...

Here is the God who *gave* the laws in the Old Testament. But it says, "You have heard that it was *said* ." He does not say, "**written**," He says "*said* ." He is referring to the *oral* law. He is referring to that which became the *halakha*.

**Matthew 5:27** You have heard that it was said by them of old time,  
Thou shalt not commit adultery.

You see, it begins by drawing on the Word of God, but it reached conclusions in interpretations that were not correct. Eventually the interpretations that were incorrect had greater authority in their lives than the law of God which was *written* .

**Matthew 5:17-18** "Think not that I am come to destroy the law or the prophets." I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill. For verily I say unto you, till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law till all be fulfilled.

**Matthew 5:19-20** Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven."

Where did their righteousness come from? It came from keeping *halakha*! But our righteousness has to be a combination of that which is imputed—the righteousness of Jesus Christ—as well as maintained by us in keeping the law of God after conversion.

So from God's law, nothing would pass. I think what the Jews did here, at least in terms of principle upon which they drew and got into such trouble, was an uninspired interpretation or an extension of the principle of holiness or sanctification. There is no doubt that they were a sanctified people. The Bible makes that very clear.

**Deuteronomy 7:6-7** "For you are a *holy* people unto the Lord your God." [Holy means sanctified—set apart.] "The Lord your God has chosen you to be a *special* people unto Himself above all people that are on the face of the earth. The Lord did **not** set His love upon you nor choose you *because* you were more in number than any people, for you were the fewest of all people."

That is just another way of saying "I did not choose you because you were great and good, but because the Lord loved you and because He would keep the oath which He had sworn to your fathers, as the Lord brought you out with a mighty hand and redeemed you out of the house of bondmen, from the hand of Pharaoh, king of Egypt."

You see, they extrapolated on that principle and got themselves into trouble in their zeal. God's Word makes it *very* clear that there is *one law* for the home-born Israelite and for the stranger. You can see that stated in Exodus 12:49. All are judged against the same standard, by the same law. It is against the righteousness of God that we are judged, and so we can come to

understand, that in one sense, there is only *one* class of people on earth—*sinners* ; sinners in need of deliverance from bondage to Satan and to sin.

In I Corinthians 1 we have the New Testament equivalent of what God just said there in Deuteronomy 7.

**I Corinthians 1:26-30** For ye see your calling brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, and many mighty, not many noble are called But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: That no flesh should glory in his presence. But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.

In the church, there is one class of people: rescued sinners who are justified and are by grace through faith under the blood of Jesus Christ. That takes us right back to Galatians 3. As part of Paul's argument, he says in verse 26:

**Galatians 3:26-29** For you [meaning Jew and Gentile] are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus, for as many of you have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ, there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male or female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus, and if you be Christ's, then are you Abraham's seed and heirs according to the promise.

**Galatians 2:15-16** We who are Jews by nature, and not sinners of the Gentiles, 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.

There is *no* way anybody, once we have sinned, even one time, can earn right standing with God, because justification is an act of God by which **He**

declares a person acceptable before Him, because Christ has borne the sinner's sin. It is right here that Protestantism jumps the track and declares faith and works mutually exclusive. With their explanation they leave one with a distinct understanding that works are of no avail at all, and that all one has to do is believe.

Galatians 2:16 is not saying that. That is something that they have read into it. Let us look at a verse that threw one Protestant reformer into a snit. He could not get around it, and so because he could not get around, it he called the book of James "strawy," or as we would say in modern words, "an epistle of straw."

**James 2:21** Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar?

Now wait a minute! Paul just said we are not justified by works. Are we going to have James and Paul duke it out somewhere, and the one who gets in the best punches wins?

**James 2:21-24** Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar? Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect" And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God. Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only.

Either that is true—if it is going to stand—and if it is true, Galatians 2:16 is wrong. If Galatians 2:16 is right, then James 2:24 has to be wrong. The only alternative is that we do not properly understand what one or the other is saying. Since Jesus said in John 10:35 that the scripture cannot be broken, these scriptures compliment one another, and the interpretation of one or both of them is **wrong** when the conclusion is reached that one is justified by faith **only**.

The truth of the matter, which we are going to see, is that the interpretation of Galatians 2:16 is the one that is wrong in most cases. So let us go back

there. The faith that is mentioned in either one of those verses is given without qualification as to when the faith is used. It is a little clearer in terms of justification in Galatians 2:16, but it does not say in James 2:24 whether it is justification or sanctification, but it seems to be a little bit more weighted toward sanctification.

It is simply stated in both of them that "faith," at any time during a Christian's calling and conversion, "without works is dead." That is James 2:24. Whether for justification or sanctification, it matters not. "Faith, without works, is dead." I think a conclusion can begin to be thought about, that maybe works indeed may play a part in a person's justification.

Let me frame this in another way. Does repentance play a part in God's forgiveness of our sins, and thus justification? Now repentance is not merely feeling sorrow and crying out to God. That can be shown clearly from II Corinthians 7, but repentance also includes with it a change of mind, and at the very least, the *beginning* of turning to God in obedience. God saves us from our sins, not *in* our sins. There is a difference there, and what this is beginning to indicate is that there may be a measure of works involved in Galatians 2:16.

Let us now understand Galatians 2:16 a little bit better. Galatians 2:16 does not say in the Greek exactly what it says in the English. It sheds light on our understanding of relationship between faith and works when we understand it as it is written in the Greek. If you want to, you can research this out in *The Interlinear Bible* by Jay Green, or *The Emphatic Diaglott* that the Jehovah Witnesses hold the copyright to, and you couple that with *The Complete Word Study Dictionary* by Spiros Zodhiates.

The phrase in question here is: "A man is not justified by works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ." Here is what it says in the Greek. "A man is not justified by works of law, *except through faith* in Jesus Christ." Did you catch that? There is a very different significance there.

"Except through" points to the *means* by which justification is accomplished without nullifying or cancelling out the importance of works. The verse is not saying that works are of no avail, or are unimportant. It *is* saying that

works without faith in the blood of Jesus Christ is of **no** avail. Do you *understand* that? It is saying that works *without* faith in Jesus Christ [are of no avail]. Works, coupled *with* faith in Jesus Christ, are just fine. But all the works in the world, if they are not coupled with faith in Jesus Christ, are of absolutely no **avail!**

I want this to be very clear, because, in a way, we are confronting exactly the same problem as we saw in the book of Colossians where those people were leaving Jesus Christ out of the picture. All of these peoples' strict law keeping was not being done in reference to God through our Savior Jesus Christ. As a result, it was absolutely no good. It earned them absolutely *nothing*. It was totally ineffective. It did not impress God one bit! We will begin to see why a little bit later, even before we leave the chapter. But we will not have the time to do that now.

That makes Galatians 2:16 **perfectly** complimentary with James 2:21-24. "Faith without works is dead." Living faith and works go together in terms of justification or sanctification, like bread and butter if the works are combined with faith in Jesus Christ. Faith and works are **not** contradictory, but complimentary, if Christ is part of the mix. A man is not justified by works of law except through faith in Jesus Christ.

There is one more factor that needs to be added to this, and that is a quote from *Expositors Commentary*, Volume 10, Page 449 on Galatians 2:16.

It is important to note that the article is not present in the phrase 'observing law'. [Apparently that 'observing law' appears in the NIV or 'works of law' as it appears in the KJV] This means that Paul's emphasis is not on the Jewish law, and then, the law of Moses.

Do you see what the commentator did there? He is confusing Jewish law with the law of Moses, but at the same time he is giving a truth. The emphasis was not on the Jewish law, the law of Moses at all, though it includes it. But rather the emphasis was on **any** system of attempting to please God by good deeds. Works of law are deeds of men. The introduction of the **article** into the KJV, RSV, and the NIV text is a defect in these versions.

Paul is saying that any law keeping—it did not matter if it was Gnostic law, *halakha*, or whether it was really the law of God, the Ten Commandments—if it is not connected to faith in Jesus Christ, it accomplishes nothing in terms of justification. Even keeping the Ten Commandments must be coupled with faith in Jesus Christ. Paul is not saying you do away with law. He is tying the two of them together, and they are good *if* the faith in Jesus Christ is part of the mix. Perhaps this verse then will make a great deal more sense to you.

We will conclude on this in Romans 2:13, where it says (parenthetical statement)

**Romans 2:13** (For not the hearers of the law are **just** before God, but the doers of the law **shall be justified**.)

Law keeping alone will not justify them, but God expects that someone who has faith in Christ is going to keep His law. Therefore it is good to do that, because works are evidence of what one has faith in. Without works God would never be sure.

I want to go to one more verse in Galatians. Turn to Galatians 6:12-13. I said earlier in the sermon that I was going to show you that the people in Galatians were not keeping God's law either. Just as in Jesus' day, these people were not keeping God's law either, but they *were* trying to get people in Galatia to keep *halakha*.

**Galatians 6:12-13** As many as desire to make a fair shew in the flesh, they constrain you to be circumcised; only lest they should suffer persecution for the cross of Christ. For neither they themselves who are circumcised keep the law; but desire to have you circumcised, that they may glory in your flesh.

Just as in Jesus' day, these people were not keeping God's law either. But they were trying to get people in Galatia to keep *halakha*.