

*A PATRISTIC COMMENTARY*

**THE EPISTLE OF  
ST. PAUL THE APOSTLE  
*TO THE*  
GALATIANS**

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## ***THE INFLAMED HEART***

This epistle to the Galatians reveals the inflamed heart of St. Paul, as he proclaims that God had devoted him from the womb of his mother for the apostolic ministry... He has no message in his life except attracting every person to the Gospel of Christ and experiencing the power of the cross, the source of inner liberty from every weakness and sin and from the literal of the Law's rituals.

The apostle Paul enters with the children of God to Golgotha, so that they may acknowledge the true concept of liberty, which is based on love and emptying the "ego," and thus the believer lives with the spirit of his Savior, sacrificing His whole life on behalf of others.

Christian liberty is not a chance for recklessness or sin, but it is the liberty of the holy and mature person who knows his responsibility, and thus he lives as a responsible person before his God, himself and men, attaining love and holiness that the world cannot destroy.

***Fr. Tadros Y. Malaty***

# *Introduction to The Epistle of St. Paul the Apostle To The GALATIANS*

## **JESUS OUR LIBERATOR**

The epistle of St. Paul to the Galatians portrays our Savior as our Liberator. He made us free [5:1], and granted us a new concept of freedom.

That this epistle is written by St. Paul is ascertained by SS. **Ignatius of Antioch, Polycarp** and **Justin**. It is explicitly attributed to St. Paul by St. Irenaeus, and already found in the Muratorian Canon and in all the catalogues drawn by the earliest councils. Moreover the internal evidence reveals in every line the unique hand and personality of St. Paul<sup>1</sup>.

## **DATE AND OCCASION**

Scholars do not agree upon the specific identity of the Galatians, the people to whom St. Paul wrote this letter. Looking at a map of antiquity doesn't help because the map changed often<sup>2</sup>.

The Galatians by race were Celts who had settled in the center of Asia Minor during the third century B.C.

1. *The North Galatian theory* : According to this theory this letter was addressed to the Galatians by race or to churches located in the old kingdom of Galatia, i.e., in north-central part of Asia Minor [Pessinus, Ancyra and Tavium]. During St. Paul's second missionary journey (Acts 16:6) he was delayed in Galatia by sickness [4:13]. Though ill, this tireless servant of the Lord could not remain silent but kept on preaching the gospel. He succeeded in founding the Christian churches in Galatia [1:6]. According to this theory the letter was written between A.D. 53 and 57 from Ephesus or Macedonia<sup>3</sup>.

2. *The South Galatian theory*: After the death of its king, Ayntas, in 25 B.C. Rome combined this section with southern territories into one province named Galatia. Some scholars state that the epistle was actually written to the communities founded on Paul's first missionary journey in the area of Asia Minor extending from the seacoast inland like Lystra and Derbe (Acts 13, 27). This premise places the epistle among Paul's earliest writings,

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<sup>1</sup> *A New Catholic Commentary on Holy Scripture, Nelson, 1969, p. 1173.*

<sup>2</sup> *The Collegeville Bible Commentary, 1989, p. 1069.*

<sup>3</sup> *The NIV Study Bible, p.1779.*

possibly in 48 A.D., or even before, but more probably after the Council of Jerusalem, 49 or 50 A. D<sup>4</sup>.

False teachers known as Judaizers (Jewish-Christian legalists) followed St. Paul in Galatia, opposing his doctrine respecting the disregard of the ceremonial law by Gentile converts, and also calling in question his apostolic authority [1:1-12]. St. John Chrysostom says, [ Some of the Jews who believed, being held down by the prepossession of Judaism, and at the same time intoxicated by vain-glory , and desirous of obtaining for themselves the dignity of teachers, came to the Galatians, and taught them that the observances of circumcision, sabbaths, and new-moons were necessary, and that Paul in abolishing these things was not to be obeyed. For they said that Peter, James and John, the chiefs of the apostles and the companions of Christ, forbade them not... He was single, but they were many, and pillars of the church. They accused him too of acting a part; saying, that this very man who forbids circumcision observes the rite elsewhere, and preaches one way to you and another way to others<sup>5</sup>].

The chief argument was the agreed fact that the Law of Moses was divinely instituted and that Christ had said He came “not to abolish but to fulfill the Law” (Matt. 5:17). They asserted that salvation was impossible without it, and for the Gentiles salvation is available only if they first become Jews. In other words, they loaded the believers by the burden of Judaism added to the simple Gospel of Christ<sup>6</sup>. They made light of Paul’s apostolic role, holding him to be less informed than the Twelve [1:11-24]. They succeeded in disturbing and confusing the minds of the Galatians, who tended more and more to follow their teaching as a surer way of salvation. Christianity would consequently have become to them a mere sect of Judaism<sup>7</sup>.

Munck has proposed that the disturbers were not Jews but Gentile converts whose zeal led them to think that Judaism was a necessary part of the gospel. Most commentators believe that one cannot be so precise about the disturbers. It seems altogether probable that they are connected with the judaizing movement mentioned in Acts 15<sup>8</sup>.

### **ITS CHARACTERISTICS:**

1. This is a fervent epistle, written with vigor and feeling. St. Paul throws himself without reserve into the proclamation of the gospel, it has a power unique among his writings. Its chief importance is theological. In it we meet many of the weightiest themes of St. Paul’s

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<sup>4</sup> *The New American Bible*, p. 198.

<sup>5</sup> *Chapter 1*.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. *Henerieta C. Mears: What the Bible is all about, Illinois, 1987*.

<sup>7</sup> *Unger’s Survey of the Bible, 1981, p. 285*.

<sup>8</sup> *John L. McKenzie: Dict. of the Bible, 1965, p.293*.

preaching: justification by faith working through love, the new life in Christ, the responsibilities of love, the meaning of the Cross, the law of Christ the function of the Mosaic law, and walking in the Spirit<sup>9</sup>.

2. In this epistle we find St. Paul very firm, for the situation was very critical and serious, as many of the believers were turned from the simplicity of the gospel to “Judaism” as if it were necessary for salvation.

The introduction is impregnated with a vehement and lofty spirit, and this applies not only to the introduction, but also, so to speak, to the whole epistle. For always to address one’s disciples with mildness, even when they need severity is not the part of a teacher but it would be the part of a corrupter and enemy...

Paul has varied his discourse according to the needs of his disciples, at one time sharp, at another, applying mild remedies. To the Corinthians he says, “What will you? shall I come unto you with a rod, or in love, and in a spirit of meekness?” (1 Cor. 6:21) but to the Galatians he says, “O foolish Galatians.” (Gal. 3:1)<sup>10</sup>.

### **St. John Chrysostom**

3. This epistle reveals the organization and structure of the church in St. Paul’s days. Cephas (St. Peter), St. James the Lord’s brother, and St. John are named as Jerusalem apostles (1:18-19; 2:9). We read here of a church council (2:1-10), for discussing practical theological topics and organizing the mission field along ethnic lines (2:9); and of a dispute between two apostles (2:11-14)<sup>11</sup>.

4. It provides certain value data about St. Paul’s own life and ministry. Yet it is not part of St. Paul’s purpose to convey autobiographical information as such. It is only in the course of his total argument that these facts emerge<sup>12</sup>. Scholars used to divide Galatians into personal, doctrinal and practical aspects, but in fact it has one purpose: achieving practical freedom in Christ, as the true meaning of the gospel for life.

5. The concept of freedom: This epistle presents our Lord as our Liberator, and explains Christian liberty. Our Lord presents Himself as our Liberator, saying, “If the Son sets you , you will indeed be free” (John 8:36).

It is reckless to say that liberty is freedom from law. It is a revolt against God and His order, and thus our civilization will lapse into barbarism. Liberty is freedom in law, for example on entering a free public park the first thing we see is, Don’t walk on the grass, No dogs allowed, Don’t pick flowers. These laws preserve the free park. The Christian is urged

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<sup>9</sup> Victor Paul Furnish: *Interpreter’s Concise Comm.*, Abingdon Press, v. 7, p. 272.

<sup>10</sup> Chapter 1.

<sup>11</sup> 11. Victor Paul Furnish: *Interpreter’s Concise Comm.*, Abingdon Press, v. 7, p. 273.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

abandon the Law not in order to be free and led by his own spirit, but to be led by the Holy Spirit being the source of life and the director of its course (5:25).

V. P. Furnish says, [To a few commentators it has seemed more plausible that Paul's problem is with two different groups: legalists on the one hand and libertinisms on the other. Thus he is compelled to fight on two opposite fronts at once. This dilemma explains his own perplexity (2:40) and the apparent shift in emphasis from the dangers of legalism (chapters 1-4) to the dangers of libertinism (chapters 5-6)<sup>13</sup>.]

6. This epistle contains many contrasts:

a. Grace and Law [2:21]: We cannot say: "grace versus the Law," for the word 'law' in this epistle is used to mean "the legal observances<sup>14</sup>," i.e., observing the rituals of the Law in its literal way which spoils the simplicity of our faith, received by grace. Law shows us our need of grace, which means God's undeserved kindness to us, that satisfies our needs.

b. Faith and works of the Law [2:15-20]: Faith makes us receive the divine grace, while observing the works of the Law reveals our weakness. St. Paul emphasizes that true faith cannot be separated from the good works, I mean the spiritual works which are the action of the Holy Spirit in the lives of believers. Truly this letter concentrates on the faith as the source of our sanctification, but that "faith working through love" [5:6]. Practically we cannot separate true faith from good works. As an example, the thief who witnessed to Christ while he was crucified, his witness was true faith, it was also a good act, for he did better than many disciples. Witnessing in these circumstances is truly a good act of faith.

c. Fruits of the Spirit and works of the flesh [5:19-6:6]: The Spirit gives us daily victory over sin, while the flesh makes us prone to sin.

d. The cross and the world [6:14]: The cross means self-giving, while the love of the world means selfishness. Through the cross we receive an inner glory that is in contrast to the vainglorious (glory of this temporal world).

e. Other contrasts like: in sin and delivered from sin [1:4]; Another Gospel and the Gospel of Christ [1:6-9]; man-pleasure and God-pleasure [1:10]; trusting in man's reasoning and Christ's revelation [1:11; 2:14]; condemnation and justification [3:6-16]; lost in Adam and saved in Christ [3:19-22]; servants-in bondage and free sons-heirs [4:1-7]; old covenant and new covenant [4:10-31]; advancing in grace and falling from grace [5:6]; walking in the Spirit and living in the flesh [5:17,18] etc...

7. Christian life -according to this epistle -does not know extremes:

\* Liberty is realized by freedom from the bondage of the literal observance of the works of the law, but not outside the law of Christ.

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<sup>13</sup> *Ibid*, p. 277.

<sup>14</sup> *Collegeville Bible Comm.* p. 1074.

\* Christian life is personal, a close and hidden contact with God; the believer is called and chosen by God Himself, without ignoring His church life, or the communal life.

\* All believers are one in Christ, but there are those who are pillars of the church.

8. In this epistle our Lord Jesus Christ is seen as our Liberator, who came to grant us freedom and power. He is called our sin-bearer [1:4], Redeemer [3:13;4:5], a curse for sinners [3:13], the Seed [3:19; 4:4], and the Justifier [2:16; 3:24].

9. As this epistle concentrates on the grace of God that makes us free from the burden of the Mosaic Law, it reveals the work of the Holy Trinity in the life of the believer, granting him inner liberty.

The Father is called “our Father, to whom be glory forever” [1:4]. He loves us, his own children to be glorified with Him eternally. This is our liberty, that we imitate our Father, and attain a great heart to love our brothers in mankind that they may participate in our heavenly glories, i.e., He grants a universal spiritual love for all men.

The Son is our Liberator who paid His precious blood to grant us freedom from:  
sins [1:4],

this present evil age [1:4],

bondage of men-pleasing [1:10],

the curse of the law [3:13],

the bondage of the works of the law [4:19], and from

being under guardians [4:1-6].

The Son grants us participation in His crucifixion, i.e., self-giving, as our true liberty. He became a servant for our sake, in Him we desire to be slaves to God and men, by our own will.

The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of adoption and not that of bondage. He works in us to bring us to the Father in Christ as His free children. The apostle repeatedly refers to Him in this epistle<sup>15</sup>.

\* He is promised [3:14].

\* He is sent forth [4:6].

\* He ministers [3:5].

\* He is received by faith [3:2].

\* He indwells [4:6].

\* He begins a task [3:3].

\* He leads [5:18].

\* He overcomes the flesh [5:16-18].

\* He bears fruit [5:22-24].

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<sup>15</sup> *Boyd's Bible Handbook, 1983, p. 546.*

\* He gives patience [5:5].

\* He gives assurance [6:8].

Some scholars call this epistle “Luther’s book,” because he relied on it in his writings and arguments against the prevailing theology of his day, and he used to call it “my book.”

## **OUTLINE**

### **1. Introduction [1:1-10].**

a. Salutation [1-5].

b. The occasion of writing [6-10].

### **2. Personal Explanation:** Defense of his Apostolic Authority [1:11-2:14]:

a. He preaches the true gospel [1:6-11].

b. Called of God [1:12-17].

c. Participated with other apostles in the same gospel [1:18-2:10].

d. Rebuked St. Peter [2:11-21].

### **3. Doctrinal Exposition** Justified by faith [3, 4]:

a. The Galatians’ experience of the gospel [3:1-5].

b. The experience of Abraham [3:6-9].

c. The curse of the Law [3:10-14].

d. The priority of the promise [3:15-18].

e. The purpose of the Law [3:19-25].

f. Sons, not slaves [3:26-4:11].

g. Appeal to enter into freedom from Law [4:12-20].

h. The allegory of Hager and Sarah [4:21:31].

### **4. Practical Application:** Christian liberty [5, 6].

a. Its imperilment by legalism [5:1-12]

b. Its definition [5:13-15].

c. Its proper use [5:16-26].

d. Its practical manifestation [6:1-10]

e. Its relation to the cross [6:11-16].

f. Its price [6:17].

g. Its benediction [6:18].



## ONLY ONE GOSPEL

St. Paul starts his epistle with an introduction that embraces a salutation. This salutation reflects the theological thought of the whole epistle. Then he shows the occasion of its writing, exhorting them to return to the gospel of Christ and to get rid of “Judaism”, assuring the authenticity of his apostolic authority.

**1. Salutation 1-5.**

**2. Occasion of writing 6-10.**

**3. Defense of his Apostolic Authority 11-2:14.**

### 1. SALUTATION [1-5]

G. A. Lightfoot says, [The two threads which run through this epistle -the defense of the writer’s own authority, and the maintenance of the doctrine of grace-are knotted together in the opening salutation].

1. **“Paul, an apostle, not of men, neither by men, but by Jesus Christ and God the Father”[1]:** Thus from the first word he claims the fullness of the apostolic authority as he has not been commissioned by men nor received his instructions through human channels, but has been as directly and as divinely appointed by the Lord as have any of the Twelve.

❖ It was Ananias who baptized him, but it was not he who delivered him from the way of error and initiated him into the faith; but Christ Himself sent from on high that wondrous voice, whereby He enclosed him in His net...

Luke declares in the words, “As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate Me Barnabas and Saul” (Acts 13:2). From this passage it is manifest that the power of the Son and Spirit is one, for being commissioned by the Spirit, he says that he was commissioned by Christ<sup>16</sup>.

#### St. John Chrysostom

2. As the letter concentrates on the practical liberty in Christ he refers to it here:

I. He is appointed by our Lord Jesus Christ and the Father [1], there fore he was never subject himself to the bondage of pleasing men.

II. He refers to Jesus who was raised from the dead [1]. Christ grants us freedom from death by His resurrection. The Father who raised the Crucified Christ for our sins raises us from our sins [the source of eternal death]. Through the risen life in Christ we enjoy the sanctified body which is not subject to the bondage of carnal lusts.

His apostleship was through a call from the risen Christ; indeed he was not chosen by

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<sup>16</sup> Chapter 1.

our Lord while He was on earth but the same Lord chose him after His resurrection, as a true witness of the resurrection.

III. He refers to the present evil age [4], for our Redeemer grants us freedom from the bondage of the worldly values. According to St. Chrysostom the apostle does not complain of time itself, but of actions and circumstances. [He shows that Christ has both delivered us from our offenses, and secured us for the future... For neither of these did the law avail, but grace was sufficient for both.]

IV. He points to God as our Father [4] whose glory is eternal [5]. For liberty is realized through our adoption to Him, that we may find a place in His glorious bosom, to live with Him eternally.

❖ Thus everywhere, even in his introduction, he scatters traces of the goodness of God and we may conceive him speaking thus: “O you who were lately slaves, enemies and aliens, what right have you suddenly acquired to call God your Father? it was not the law which conferred upon you this relationship; why do you therefore desert Him who brought you so near to God, and return to your tutor?”

Not simply “the Father,” but “our Father,” which he does in order to affect them by showing that Christ has made His Father our Father<sup>17</sup>.

#### **St. John Chrysostom**

V. Christian liberty is love, therefore he speaks in the spirit of the community. He sends his salutation together with all the brethren who were with him, perhaps the whole congregation which he was serving when he was writing, or the group of companions with whom he was traveling. This is the only salutation in which he mentions this phrase, perhaps to declare that what he writes here is not his personal idea, but the church doctrine. **St. John Chrysostom** says, [Wishing therefore to remove their suspicion (that he was singular in his preaching), and to show he had many to support him in his doctrine, he has associated with himself “the brethren,” to show that what he wrote was with their accord<sup>18</sup>.]

VI. Freedom is the outcome of divine grace, the manifestation of divine love to believers, which grants inner peace, as a state of mind resulting of that love. He points to grace then to peace. **St. Chrysostom** says that the Galatians [were in danger of falling from grace therefore he prays that they may recover it again, and since they had come to be at war with God, he beseeches God to restore them to the same peace.]

VII. Through the Cross [4] we became free. For it is the one and only bridge of reconciliation between God and man. He left His glory-lit throne to liberate our sin-stained souls and grant us His righteousness, paying the price for men. No man is righteous before

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<sup>17</sup> Chapter 1.

<sup>18</sup> Chapter 1.

God. Righteousness is a divine gift which cost the Father His Son.

- ❖ “For our sins,” says the apostle; we had pierced ourselves with ten thousand evils, and had deserved the gravest punishment; and the law not only did not deliver us, but it even condemned us, making sin more manifest, without the power to release us from it, or to stay the anger of God. But the Son of God made this impossibility possible for he remitted our sins, He restored us from enmity to the condition of friends, He freely bestowed on us numberless other blessings<sup>19</sup>.

**St. John Chrysostom**

VIII. “amen” [5].

He concludes the salutation with a doxology which reveals the ever lasting character of God’s kingdom as a contrast with the present evil age.

- ❖ We never find the word “Amen” placed at the beginning of an epistle, here however, he has it in his beginning, to show that what he had already said contained a sufficient charge against the Galatians, and that his argument was complete, for a manifest offense does not require an elaborate crimination. Having spoken of the cross, resurrection, redemption from sin and security for the future, the purpose of the Father, the will of the Son, of grace and peace and His whole gift, he concludes with an ascription of praise<sup>20</sup>.

**St. John Chrysostom**

Thus, in his personal greeting the apostle declares indirectly our Christian freedom from man-pleasure, death, sin, carnal lusts, the wicked world and Satan.

*“Unto the churches of Galatia”* [2].

- ❖ Thus it appears, that the flame of wrongdoer had spread over not one or two cities merely, but the whole Galatian people. Consider too the grave indignation contained in the phrase,...he does not say “to the be loved” or “to the sanctified,” and this omission of all names of affection or respect, and this reference to them as a society merely, without the addition “churches of God,” is strongly expressive of deep concern and sorrow<sup>21</sup>.

**St. John Chrysostom**

## **2. THE OCCASION FOR WRITING [6-10]**

1. The apostle is astonished that his converts in Galatia are so quickly turning away from the gospel of free grace to another, which is not another, for it adds that the literal observances of the laws are a source of our salvation. He preaches the only one true gospel (the good news), to the circumcised and to the uncircumcised.

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<sup>19</sup> Chapter 1.

<sup>20</sup> Chapter 1.

<sup>21</sup> Chapter 1.

- ❖ He means “another” as to the conduct it prescribes, not in respect of its worship; “another” as to the discipline it teaches, not in respect of its divinity; because it is the office of Christ to call men from the law to grace<sup>22</sup>.

**Tertullian**

- ❖ They had, in fact, only introduced one or two commandments, circumcision and the observance of days, but he says that the Gospel was subverted, in order to show that a slight adulteration vitiates the whole... A want of zeal in small matters is the cause of all our calamities; and because slight errors escape fitting correction, greater ones creep in. As in the body, a neglect of wounds generates fever, mortification, and death; so in the soul, slight evils overlooked open the door to graver ones... Now you will understand why Paul calls circumcision a subversion of the gospel<sup>23</sup>.

**St. John Chrysostom**

2. The most striking feature of the opening of this letter is the absence of the apostle’s customary “thanksgiving” to God for the faith and love of his readers. Perhaps to declare that he is upset not only with the false teachers but also with his readers.

3. In contrast with Philippians 9:20-23, where he rejoices that his opponents are preaching Christ, St. Paul here shows not the least willingness to be tolerant. The Philippians’ opponents preach the true gospel even though they are insincere. These opponents, however do not preach the true gospel and -whether they are sincere or not, no matter what their personal status and credentials should be accorded no hearing.

4. “But though we, or an angel from heaven, should preach unto you any gospel other than that which we preached unto you, let him be anathema” [8,9].

- ❖ See the apostle’s wisdom; to obviate the objection that he was prompted by vainglory to applaud his own doctrine, he includes himself also in his anathema; and as they betook themselves to authority, that of James and John, he mentions angels also...

The phrase “of heaven” is purposely added, because priests are also called angels (Mal. 2:7)<sup>24</sup>.

**St. John Chrysostom**

- ❖ He mentioned himself first (in the anathema). It is by way of an example that he has expressed himself. If even he himself might not preach any other gospel, then neither might an angel<sup>25</sup>.

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<sup>22</sup> *Against Marcion*, 5:2.

<sup>23</sup> *Chapter 1*.

<sup>24</sup> *Chapter 1*.

<sup>25</sup> *Against Marcion*, 5:2.

## **Tertullian**

- ❖ There is no fellowship whatever between the words of the saints and the fancies of human invention, for the saints are the ministers of truth, preaching the king of heaven, but those who are born in the opposite direction have nothing better than to eat, and think their end is that they shall cease to be...<sup>26</sup>

St. Athanasius of Alexandria

- 5. ***“For am I now persuading men or God? or am I seeking to please men? If I were still pleasing men, I should not be a servant of Christ” [10].***

St. Paul acknowledges our Lord Jesus Christ as his Liberator from the bondage of the desire of human applause and vain-glory. By such liberty he speaks to them not to please any creature but His own Liberator and Savior.

- ❖ Granting, says he, that I might deceive you by these doctrines, could I deceive God, who knows my yet unuttered thoughts, and to please whom is my unceasing endeavor? See here the apostolic spirit, the evangelical loftiness!... For since he is compelled to justify himself to his disciples, being their teacher, he submits to it...

It is plain that I have thus written to you not from the love of rule, or to gain disciples, or to receive honor at your hands. My endeavor has been to please God, not man. Were it otherwise, I should still consort with the Jews, still persecute the church. I who have cast off my country altogether, my companions, my friends, my kindred, and all my reputation, and taken in exchange for these, persecution, enmity, strife, and daily-impending death, have signal proof that I speak not from love of human applause<sup>27</sup>.

## **St. John Chrysostom**

- ❖ The apostle says, “If I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ [10], while he says in another place, “Please all men in all things, even as I also please all men in all things” (1 Cor. 10:32, 33)... He has said he does not please men, because he was accustomed to act rightly, not with the express design of pleasing men, but of pleasing God, to the love of whom he wished to turn men’s hearts by that very thing in which he was pleasing men. Therefore he was both right in saying that he did not please men, because in that very thing he aimed at pleasing God, and right in authoritatively teaching that we ought to please men, not in order that this should be sought for as the reward of our good deeds; but because the man who would not offer himself for imitation to those whom he wished to be saved, could not please God<sup>28</sup>.

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<sup>26</sup> *Festal letters 2:7.*

<sup>27</sup> *Chapter 1.*

<sup>28</sup> *Sermon on the Mount, 2:1:3.*

**St. Augustine**

- ❖ He ceased to please men when he became Christ's servant, Christ's soldier marches on through good report and evil report (2 Cor. 6:8), the one on the right hand and the other on the left. No praise elates him, no reproaches crush him. He is not puffed up by riches, nor does he shrink into himself because of poverty. Joy and sorrow he alike despises.  
It is a monk's first virtue to despise the judgments of men<sup>29</sup>.

**St. Jerome**

- ❖ Having been wedded to Christ, do not dishonor Christ. Being perfected by the Spirit, do not make the Spirit your own equal. If I yet pleased men, says Paul, I should not be the servant of Christ... I honor Peter, But I am not called a Petrine; and Paul, but have never been called a Pauline. I cannot allow myself to be named after a man, who am born of God. So then, if it is because you believe Him to be God that you are called a Christian, may you ever be so called, and may you remain in both the name and the thing; but if you are called from Christ only because you have an affection for Him, you attribute no more to Him than other names which are given from some practice or fact<sup>30</sup>.

**St. Gregory of Nazianzen**

### **3. DEFENSE OF HIS APOSTOLIC AUTHORITY**

The Judaizers said that Paul was not a real apostle; he had not seen Jesus nor been with Him; only the twelve were real apostles, and they had said nothing about the repeal of the law by Christ. Paul had received no mission from Jesus, he was only an agent of the original apostles from whom he had learned and on whom he was dependent<sup>31</sup>. St. Paul defends his apostleship, not from any feeling of wounded pride, but for the sake of his readers, whose acceptance of his doctrine hinges upon their confidence in his apostolic position.

1. His teaching was authorized by God Himself [11-24]. Only God could have changed him from a persecutor to a preacher, in a very short time. He received his gospel directly from the Lord, condescended to reveal to him all knowledge, without any human intervention. St. Paul is quite blunt. Those who are presently daring to present a gospel different from the one he preached on his first and founding visit to these churches deserve to be abandoned, indeed, condemned by God. What he preached was the good news, no other news is good news!

- ❖ If he was asked for his proof that God Himself thus immediately revealed to him these ineffable mysteries, he would instance his former manner of life, arguing that his

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<sup>29</sup> *Ep. 52:13; 66: 6.*

<sup>30</sup> *Oration 37:17.*

<sup>31</sup> *C. Normann Bartlett: Galatians and You, 1948, p.13.*

conversion would not have been so sudden, had it not been by divine revelation<sup>32</sup>.

**St. John Chrysostom**

2. St. Paul reminds his readers of his thoroughly Jewish background, his way of life prior to his category-shattering experience on the road to Damascus. He himself had once been a foremost protagonist of the Jewish religion, which legalistic foes were trying to mix with the gospel of grace. Truly he was a persistent and thorough persecutor of Christians. He was recognized by fellow Jews as far advanced among his peers in practice as well as in zeal, but he had left it for something better. He had divinely received the revelation of grace and proclaimed it long before he saw any of the other apostles.

- ❖ This is his argument; -if my efforts against the church springs not from human motives, but from religious though mistaken zeal, why should I be actuated by vain-glory, now that I am contending for the church, and have embraced the truth? ... As soon as I passed over to the doctrines of the church I shook off my Jewish prejudices, manifesting on that side a zeal still more ardent; and this is a proof that my conversion is sincere, and that the zeal which possesses me is from above. What other inducement could I have to make such a change, and to barter honor for contempt, repose for peril, security for distress? none surely but the love of truth<sup>33</sup>.

**St. John Chrysostom**

3. Truly his conversion was on the road to Damascus while he was persecuting the Church of Christ, but Christ Himself, on behalf of his “Judaism,” called him to the divine grace while he was in his mother’s womb [15]. As God did to Jeremiah (1:5) and Isaiah (42:1), He devoted him for a special task, called him, and then revealed to him who the Son really is and His redeeming work on the Cross, so that he might preach to the non-Jewish world<sup>34</sup>.

- ❖ Why does he say, “to reveal His Son in me” [16], and not “to me?” it is to signify, that he had not only been instructed in the faith by words, but that he was richly endowed with the Spirit; -that the revelation had enlightened his whole soul, and that he had Christ speaking within him.

“That I might preach Him among the Gentiles” [16]. For not only his faith, but his election to the apostolic office proceeded from God... It was necessary to preach differently to the Jews and to the heathen<sup>35</sup>.

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<sup>32</sup> Chapter 1.

<sup>33</sup> Chapter 1.

<sup>34</sup> *Collegeville Bible Comm., p. 1071.*

<sup>35</sup> Chapter 1.

## St. John Chrysostom

**Origen** sees in the words of the apostle that God separated or devoted him since he was in his mother's womb [15] as an argument that God sends angels as guardians even before our birth<sup>36</sup>.

4. His church life: St. Paul who accepted the Gospel from Christ Himself did not ignore the Church community, as we will see in his meeting with St. Peter and other church leaders.

5. The authority behind St. Paul's gospel is shown by his rebuke of St. Peter [2:11-21]. To prove that St. Peter was not a greater apostle than him, he points out how he had openly rebuked him for being two-faced about Jewish customs when he was in Antioch.

St. Paul mentions the three meetings with St. Peter and other apostles to prove that his few contacts with them had not been for the purpose of obtaining authorization of his mission from them.

a. First meeting with him [1:18-24]: St. Paul emphasizes a kind of independence of the Jerusalem apostles, but not in individual attitude. Only after an interval of three years after his 180-degree turn from Pharisaic Judaism to preaching Jesus as Messiah, he went to Jerusalem to "get to know" Cephas [18]. He says, "Neither went I up to Jerusalem to them which were apostles before me" [17]. **St. Chrysostom** comments, [He thus speaks, not arrogantly, but to exhibit the dignity of his own commission. Because they were repeating that the apostles were before him, and were called before him, he says, "I went not up to them." Had it been needful for him to communicate with them, He, who revealed to him his commission, would have given him this injunction.]

Before his going up to Jerusalem he went away into Arabia [17] and again returned unto Damascus [17]. "Arabia" probably means the country south of Damascus, the kingdom of the Nabataeans, rather than the district of Sinai. We have no record of what happened during these three years, but while the opinion of the Fathers is that he immediately started preaching, many now prefer to think that he devoted himself to a life of prayer and meditation<sup>37</sup>.

❖ Here observe his humility; he speaks not of his success (in Arabia), nor of whom or of how many he instructed. Yet such was his zeal immediately on his baptism, that he confounded the Jews, and so exasperated them, that they and the Greeks lay in wait for him with a view to kill him. This would not have been the case, had he not greatly added to the numbers of the faithful; since they were vanquished in doctrine, they had recourse to murder, which was a manifest sign of Paul's superiority. Of these successes, however, he

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<sup>36</sup> *Comm. on Matt., book 13:27.*

<sup>37</sup> *A New Catholic Commentary, p. 1176.*



says nothing, and so in all his discourses, his motive is not ambition, nor to be honored more highly than the apostles, nor because he is mortified at being lightly esteemed, but it is a fear lest any detriment should accrue to his mission. For he calls himself, “one born out of due time,” and, “the first of sinners,” and the last of the apostles<sup>38</sup>.”

### **St. John Chrysostom**

He visited Jerusalem to visit St. Peter [18]. There he saw St. James, the Lord’s brother and the bishop of Jerusalem. His major task was to declare that he was not working with an individual attitude, separated from the church leaders, and to persuade them that his conversion was genuine. Nothing was added to the divine revelation of St. Paul’s gospel of grace by subsequent contacts with the apostles. His apostolic authority and message were fully given by our Lord.

**St. John Chrysostom** presents the following remarks<sup>39</sup>:

I. St. Paul says that he saw St. James [19], and does not say that he had learned from him. We can also say that he went there to know St. Peter [18] and not to learn from him.

II. He honorably mentions St. James, as he adds “the Lord’s brother” [19], so free is he from all envy.

III. Throughout the transparent humility of his holy soul; his earnestness in his vindication is as great as if he had to render an account of his deeds, and was pleading for his life in a court of justice [20].

IV. He mentions his trip to evangelize the regions near his native city of Tarsus in Cilicia and around Antioch in Syria [21], to declare that his mission was to the Gentiles and that he was unwilling to build upon another man’s foundation (Rom. 15:20).

V. He says, “*And I was still unknown by face unto the churches of Judaea, but they only heard say, he that once persecuted us now preaches the faith which he once made havoc*” [22, 23]. In his modesty he mentions the fact of his persecuting the church, and in his conversion and preaching they did not admire him, nor did they applaud him or were astonished at him, but they glorified God in him [24], ascribing all to the divine grace.

They glorified God, in other words he wants to tell them that there was no enmity between him and the churches of Jewish origin. He didn’t preach them, but they rejoiced for God’s work by him in the Gentile communities. According to St. Augustine they glorified God, for they used to pray for their enemies and persecutors that He may convert them. They asked this of God, before it came to pass<sup>40</sup>.

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<sup>38</sup> Chapter 1.

<sup>39</sup> Chapter 1.

<sup>40</sup> Sermons on New Testament Lessons, 6:4.

## CHAPTER TWO

# DEFENSE OF HIS APOSTOLIC AUTHORITY

Among the proofs which St. Paul gives concerning his apostolic authority are his meetings with the apostles. Now he speaks about two other meetings.

b. Second meeting with St. Peter [2:1-10]: God prompted St. Paul to visit the Jerusalem leaders again some fourteen years after his conversion<sup>41</sup>, or perhaps after his first visit. Some scholars see that this visit is taken to be identical with the famine relief visit of Acts 11:29-30<sup>42</sup>.

This visit was different from the previous one in several respects:

I. St. Paul was accompanied by Barnabas (the Jew) and Titus (the Gentile) [1], to declare his love to all believers, whatever was their origin, and that they might credibly testify to his accusers, that the apostles found no discrepancy in his preaching, but confirmed it.

II. **St. Chrysostom** says that while the first trip was undertaken due to the apostle's desire to visit Peter, this one arose from a revelation of the Spirit. Why after fourteen years would he confer with the apostles, lest by any means he would be running or had run, in vain?

❖ If he had gone up without a , he would have committed an act of folly... I went up, he says, and communicated unto them my gospel, not that I might learn aught myself, but that I might convince these suspicious persons that I do not run in vain. The Spirit foreseeing this contention had provided that he should go up and make this communication<sup>43</sup>.

**St. John Chrysostom**

III. The meeting was not with Cephas only, but the other reputed... pillars of the Church. This meeting was not held publicly but privately [2], why?

❖ All at Jerusalem were offended, if the law was transgressed, or the use of circumcision forbidden; as James says, "You see, brother, how many thousands there are among the Jews which have believed; and they are informed of you, that you teach to forsake the law" (Acts 21:20). Since then they were offended he did not condescend to come forward publicly and declare what his preaching was, but he conferred privately with those who were of reputation...<sup>44</sup>

**St. John Chrysostom**

VI. He refers to the purpose and outcome of this visit. Its purpose was to lay before the pillar apostles the gospel which he had for seventeen years been preaching to the Gentiles.

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<sup>41</sup> *A New Catholic Commentary*, p. 1176.

<sup>42</sup> *See St. Chrysostom: Hom. in Acts 25:2. PG 60:193.*

<sup>43</sup> *Chapter 2.*

<sup>44</sup> *Chapter 2.*

He had no doubts about his teachings, but for the benefit of his converts he desired to win support from the leaders so that they would not be lost by the Judaizers (false brethren [4]).

- ❖ So great had been his desire to be approved and supported by those whom you wish on all occasions to be understood by as in alliance with Judaism<sup>45</sup>.

#### **Tertullian**

- ❖ Here arises a very important question, Who were these false brethren? If the apostles permitted circumcision at Jerusalem, why are those who enjoined it, in accordance with the apostolic sentence, to be called false brethren?

First, because there is a difference between commanding an act to be done, and allowing it after it is done...(The apostles) showed that they permitted it by way of condescension to the Jews. Whereas the purpose of the false brethren was to cast them out of grace, and reduce them under the yoke of slavery again.

The second is, that the apostles so acted in Judaea, where the law was in force, but the false brethren were everywhere, and all the Galatians were influenced by them. Whence it appears that their intention was not to build up, but entirely to pull down the gospel...

He points out their hostility by calling them spies [4]; the sole object of a spy is to obtain for himself facilities of devastation and destruction, by becoming acquainted with his adversary's position. And this is what those did, who wished to bring the disciples back to their old servitude. Hence too appears how very contrary their purpose was to that of the apostles; the latter made concessions that they might gradually extricate them from their servitude, but the former plotted to subject them to one more severe<sup>46</sup>.

#### **St. John Chrysostom**

St. Paul insists on not being subject to the false brethren, as he says, "*To whom we gave place in the way of subjection, no not for an hour*" [5].

- ❖ Observe the force and emphasis of the phrase; he says not, "by argument," but, "by subjection," for their object was not to teach good doctrines, but to subjugate and enslave them. Wherefore, says he, we yielded to the apostles [6], but not to these...

*"But from those who were reputed to be somewhat, (whatever they were, it makes no matter to me, God accepts no man's person)"* [6]. Here he not only does not defend the apostles, but even presses hard upon those holy men, for the benefit of the weak...

*"They imparted nothing to me"* [6]... the apostles did not oppose me, but our sentiments conspired and accorded. This appears from his expression, "*they gave me the right hand of fellowship*" [9]<sup>47</sup>.

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<sup>45</sup> *Against Marcion, 5:3.*

<sup>46</sup> *Chapter 2.*

<sup>47</sup> *Chapter 2.*

### **St. John Chrysostom**

The outcome of this meeting was not only that nothing was added to his gospel, but they had an agreement to divide the mission field into work with Jews and work with Gentiles. St. Paul would henceforth preach mainly in the dispersion, that is, to Gentiles (and Jews) living outside of Palestine. St. Peter and his co-workers would continue to focus their evangelizing activity in Palestine (Jerusalem) [7-9]. Notice once again how careful St. Paul has been to present himself as an apostle completely “equal” with St. Peter<sup>48</sup>, and that nothing was said about two gospels; there were two ministries of the one true gospel, which declared the unity of the church and the oneness in Christ of both Jews and Gentiles, based on the oneness of faith.

Many commentators have regarded Acts 15:1-29 as a parallel, complementary account of the Jerusalem consultation or conference.

St. Paul mentions to Titus, uncircumcised Gentile, not even the pillars of the Church “compelled” him to be circumcised [3-5]. Some interpreters hold that the emphasis here is on the word “compelled” and that Titus did in fact voluntarily agree to circumcision out of conversation for Paul’s total relationship with Jerusalem<sup>49</sup>. Titus has become a living witness to the approval accorded Paul’s gospel by the pillars of the church.

According to **St. Augustine** the right hand of fellowship given to St. Paul means [a sign of harmony, a sign of agreement, that what they had learnt from him differed in no respect from them<sup>50</sup>.]

St. Paul refers to his taking care of the poor Jews [10]. In preaching the world was divided between them, as he took the Gentiles and they the Jews, but to the sustenance of the poor among the Jews he also contributed his share (Rom. 15:25).

c. Third meeting with St. Peter [2:11-21]: It was after 50 A.D., before writing this epistle. St. Peter came to Antioch, a center of Gentile Christian activity, and mingled freely with all believers, converts from paganism as well as from Judaism. But when a (Judaizer) group arrived from Jerusalem, Peter began to withdraw from fellowship and meal sharing. St. Paul noticed that many of the Jewish Christians began to follow St. Peter’s example, therefore he faced him as an apostolic equal and rebuked him publicly. St. Paul cites his words to St. Peter [15-16], when he rebuked him, to emphasize the fact of their mutual agreement concerning justification by grace apart from observance of the Mosaic law<sup>51</sup>, and also to show that St. Peter’s conduct was not based on a fundamental change of mind about the nature and

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<sup>48</sup> *Collegeville Bible Comm.*, p. 1072-3.

<sup>49</sup> *V. P. Furnish*, p. 282.

<sup>50</sup> *Sermons on New Testament Lessons*, 51:1.

<sup>51</sup> *Unger’s Bible Handbook*, 1967, p.661.

implications of the gospel, but on his acceding hypocritically to the representations of certain men. Paul's intention in Galatians is not historical but hortatory<sup>52</sup>.

**Tertullian**<sup>53</sup>, **SS. Augustine, Cyprian, Ambrose** and **Cyril of Alexandria** see that St. Peter in his weakness did that, while SS. Jerome and John Chrysostom see that he did that to give a chance to St. Paul the apostle of the Gentiles to explain the Justification by faith without observing the works of the Law.

❖ Many, on a superficial reading of this part of the epistle, suppose that Paul accused Peter of hypocrisy. But this is not so, indeed it is not, far from it; we shall discover great wisdom, both of Paul and Peter, concealed herein for the benefit of their hearers...

The apostles, as I said before, permitted at Jerusalem, an abrupt severance from the law not being practicable; but when they came to Antioch, they no longer continued this observance, but lived indiscriminately with the believing Gentiles which thing Peter also was at that time doing. But when some came from Jerusalem who had heard the doctrine he delivered there, he no longer did so fearing to perplex them, but he changed his course, with two objects secretly in view, both to avoid offending those Jews, and to give Paul a reasonable pretext for rebuking him. For had he, having allowed circumcision when preaching at Jerusalem, changed his course at Antioch, his conduct would have appeared to those Jews to proceed from fear of Paul, and his disciples would have condemned his excess of pliancy. And this would have created no small offense; but in Paul, who was well acquainted with all the facts, his withdrawal would have raised no such suspicion, as knowing the intention with which he acted. Wherefore Paul rebukes, and Peter submits, that when the master is blamed, yet keeps silence, the disciples may more readily come over...

As Paul had yielded to the apostles at Jerusalem, so in turn they yielded to him at Antioch.

Paul's object is not to correct Peter, but his rebuke was intentionally addressed to him, though it was pointed at the disciples; and not at the Galatians alone, but also at others who labor under the same error with them<sup>54</sup>.

#### **St. John Chrysostom**

Perhaps the words of warning and instruction addressed to St. Peter have been mentioned here for the benefit of the Galatians. St. Paul describes himself as a Jew by birth [15] and then proceeds to affirm that this Jewish heritage is not itself the way of justification (cf. Phil. 2:3-11). To Jews, Gentiles were sinners because they did not share in the Jewish

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<sup>52</sup> V. P. Furnish, p. 285.

<sup>53</sup> *Against Marcion*, 5: 3.

<sup>54</sup> *Chapter 2*.

national heritage of law and covenant, But for Paul -Jews as well as Gentiles -are sinners (Rom. 3:22-23). There fore all are equally dependent on God's grace, received through faith (Rom. 3:24-25)<sup>55</sup>.

For St. Paul, sin in its most radical dimension is pride and boasting, to which both Jews (Rom. 2:17, 23) and Gentiles (1 Cor. 1:19-31) are in bondage.

The essential aspects of the new life are expressed in verses 19-21:

1. "For I through the law died to the law that I might live to God" [19]. The Christian dies to the law as he shares in Christ's crucifixion-resurrection [20], by which I attain the new life, the risen life, and thus the judgment of the law has been stripped of its power.

❖ It may be understood in another sense: the law commands all its precepts to be performed, and punishes the transgressor; therefore we are all dead to it, for no man has fulfilled it . Here observe... he says not, "the law is dead to me," but "I am dead to the law ;" the meaning of which is, that, as it is impossible for a dead corpse to obey the commandments of the law, so also is it for me who have perished by its curse, for by its word am I slain.

Having said, "I died," lest it should be objected, how then you are alive? he adds the cause of his living, and shows that when alive the law slew him, but that when dead Christ through death restored him to life<sup>56</sup>.

**St. John Chrysostom**

❖ "*For I through the law died to the law that I might live to God*" [19], that is, by the spiritual law he is dead to the carnal interpretation of the law. And we, by the law of our Lord Jesus, are dead to this law which sanctions such perfidious decrees<sup>57</sup>.

**St. Ambrose**

2. "*I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me*" [20]. Our Lord was crucified, not because He was a sinner, but to redeem sinners by His love. We, the members of His Body, have to share with Him His practical love by:

- \* our crucifixion with Him [20].
- \* our flesh is crucified [5:24].
- \* the world is crucified to us [6:14].
- \* we are crucified unto the world [6:14]

Through this crucifixion I accept Him as my resurrection and life, saying that I am

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<sup>55</sup> V. P. Furnish, p. 286.

<sup>56</sup> Chapter 2.

<sup>57</sup> Sermon against Auxentius, 24.

crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live, yet not me, but Christ in me (Col. 3:4).

“I am crucified with Christ” [20]. St. John Chrysostom says that in these words he alludes to Baptism. By participation in Christ’s crucifixion and death one dies to the old self and is freed from the tyranny of the past, the world, and one’s own ego. And by participation in Christ’s resurrection one lives to God and is freed for a life of responsible and grateful obedience.

“***With Christ I was and am co-crucified***”: the perfect tense in Greek indicates that the state acquired by a man on the day of his justification by baptism still endures<sup>58</sup>.

“I am crucified with Christ, yet I live; nevertheless not I, but Christ lives in me.” Now our life, my brethren, truly consists in our denying all bodily things, and continuing steadfastly in those only of our Savior.

❖ For that is the true life, which a man lives in Christ; for although they are dead to the world, yet they dwell as it were in heaven, minding those things which are above, as he who was a lover of such a habitation said, “While we walk on earth, our dwelling is in heaven<sup>59</sup>.”

#### **St. Athanasius of Alexandria**

❖ The expression “I live, yet no longer I,” was the voice of one denying himself, as of one who had laid aside his own life and taken on himself the Christ, in order that He might live in him as Righteousness, and as Wisdom, and as Sanctification, and as our Peace (1 Cor. 1:30; Eph. 2:14) and as the power of God, who works all things in him<sup>60</sup>.

#### **Origen**

**Origen** states that Christ lives in us [20], therefore, when He was crucified He said to His mother concerning St. John, “Woman, behold your son,” for every one who is perfect lives no longer but Christ lives in him<sup>61</sup>.

3. The new life is lived in the flesh [20], i.e., in the world. St. Paul nowhere suggests that the Christian life requires withdrawal from the world. But it is by faith, for thus one participates in Christ’s crucifixion-resurrection, dies to the old self, and lives to God in Christ.

4. St. Paul defines the object and content of this faith as the Son of God who loved me and gave Himself for me. The crucifixion is the decisive act of self-giving love (1:4). The benefits of Christ’s passion are said to be received by faith, which each believer receives in grateful obedience to the commandment of love (5:6, 13-25; John 15:9-13). Love is total,

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<sup>58</sup> Cf. *A New Catholic Commentary*, p. 1178.

<sup>59</sup> *Paschal letters* 5:4; 7:3.

<sup>60</sup> *Comm. on Matt. book 12:25*.

<sup>61</sup> *Comm. on John, Book 1:6*.

unconditional surrender to God's will, the complete giving of oneself to others, as the instance of God's own sacrificial love on the cross effectively reveals.

### **THE ARGUMENTS OF ST. PAUL IN WORDS:**

\* the Jews saw that they are not sinners like the Gentiles [15]. They were in need of the works of the law to discover that they were sinners and in need of the Savior of sinners, while the Gentiles who do not deny that they are sinners are not in need of the law.

\* As the Jews believed in Christ the Savior of sinners, they confessed that they were sinners. In seeking the works of the law after their belief, this meant that Christ could not justify them, therefore they returned to the law to justify them. They come to the law as sinners, and Christ is the minister of sin [18]; God forbid! In other words, they declare that they discover that they are sinners through Christ, and are in need of the law to justify them.

It is worthy to note that St. Paul does not reject the Jewish tradition as a whole. Not only does he quote even in this epistle from the Jewish tradition, but also uses these quotations in confirming that not only the Gentiles but also the Jews must be justified by faith. He used them against the Judaizers themselves<sup>62</sup>, as we will see in chapters 3 and 4.

### **ST. PAUL AND CHURCH LIFE**

As we have seen St. Paul, for the advantages of his hearers, confirms that he was not a disciple of any of the apostles but he was equal to them. This does not mean that he had an individual attitude. He was called by Christ Himself, but the Lord directed him to Ananias not only to be baptized but also to learn (Acts 9:6). God enlightened his mind and his heart, and revealed to him His mysteries for the new way: preaching among the Gentiles. Even in this he also communicated with the apostles not due to doubt, but to strengthen his ministry and to defend himself from false brethren.

❖ When Christ in His own Person called and addressed Paul, although He might have opened out to him at once the way of perfection, yet He chose rather to direct him to Ananias and commanded him to learn the way of truth from him (Acts 9:6)...

He says, "And I ... communicated to them that gospel which I preach among the Gentiles, but privately to those who were of reputation, lest by any means I might run, or had run, in vain" [2]. Who then is so self-sufficient and blind as to dare to trust in his own judgment and discretion when the chosen vessel confesses that he had need of a conference with his fellow apostles. Whence we clearly see that the Lord does not Himself show the way of perfection to anyone who having the opportunity of learning despises the teaching and training of the elders, paying no need to that saying, "Ask your father, and he

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<sup>62</sup> *Collegeville Bible Comm., p. 1075.*



will show you; your elders, and they will tell you” (Deut. 32:7)<sup>63</sup>.

**Abbot Moses**

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<sup>63</sup> *Cassian, Conferences, 2: 15.*

## CHAPTER THREE

# JUSTIFIED BY FAITH

**St. John Chrysostom** starts his commentary on this chapter, saying, [Here he passes to another subject; in the former chapters he had shown himself not to be an apostle of men, nor by men, nor in want of apostolic instruction. Now having established his authority as a teacher, he proceeds to discourse more confidently, and draws a comparison between faith and law.]

A criminal is pardoned though he cannot be regarded as righteous. But justification is the act of God whereby he not only forgives us but puts Christ's righteousness to our account. He gives us a righteousness that is not our own but Christ's. God justifies the repentant sinner without justifying his sin.

### 1. THE GALATIANS' EXPERIENCE OF THE GOSPEL [3:1-5]

St. Paul started his speech concerning faith as the source of justification by referring to the experience of the Galatians themselves. He called them foolish [1], not "without cause" (Matt. 5:22). St. Chrysostom says, [For after he had shown that they rejected the faith, and made the death of Christ to be without a purpose, he introduces his reproof, which, even as it is, is less severe than they merited.]

They were called foolish because they ignored their own experience with the Savior and His redeeming action. **St. Augustine** says, [ We defend the apostle when he calls the Galatians fools, to whom he also gives the name of brethren; for he does not do it without cause<sup>64</sup>.]

a. The Crucified Christ is set forth openly before their eyes [1]. By faith they see the Crucified Christ more distinctly than many of the Jews who were in Jerusalem and involved in the literal works of the law. How foolishly now they belittle the value of faith by accepting the deceit of those Judaizers and depend on the works of the law?!

❖ He was not crucified in Galatia, but at Jerusalem, yet he says, "among you," to declare the power of faith to see events which are at a distance... By the eye of faith they saw more distinctly than some who were present as spectators...

These words convey both praise and blame; praise, for their implicit acceptance of the truth; blame, because they left Him whom they had seen stripped naked, transfixed, nailed to the cross for their sakes, and betoken themselves to the law, disregarding unshamed any of those sufferings<sup>65</sup>.

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<sup>64</sup> Our Lord's Sermon on the mount, 1:9:25.

<sup>65</sup> Chapter 3.

**St. John Chrysostom**

b. By faith and not by the works of the law they experienced the grace of the Holy Spirit [2]. They already had the great power and benefits of the Spirit in their daily life and conduct, why abandon it and go back to the law which can offer nothing of the same kind?

c. They are foolish, for they began in the Spirit, with the high, and relapsed to the low, i.e., to the works of the law concerning the flesh [3]. Usually a wise person starts with small beginnings and makes progress to higher things, but they did the contrary. **St. John Chrysostom** says, [ After gazing on the sun you seek a candle, after having strong meat you run for milk!]

d. They suffered so many things for the sake of their faith; is it in vain?! [4] You suffered much on behalf of your faith, don't be afraid of those deceivers, lest they will strip you and rob you of your crowns?!

e. By the hearing of the faith and not by the works of the law you were supplied by the Holy Spirit who worked miracles among you.

❖ Have you been vouchsafed, he says, so great a gift, and achieved such wonders, because you observed the law, or because you adhered to faith? plainly on account of faith<sup>66</sup>.

**St. John Chrysostom**

**2. THE EXPERIENCE OF ABRAHAM [3:6-9]**

It is not a new experience that through faith man is justified, but even before the law Abraham the Patriarch had the same experience. St. Paul mentions Abraham because the Jews made great account of him, and the Gentiles hope to be his children, not in flesh, but by faith. St. Paul gives the proofs that the gospel of freedom agrees with the promises of the Old Testament; he shows the full harmony and continuity of the Gospel with the doctrine of the Old Testament. The Judaizers had misunderstood the relation between Christianity and the Old Testament, so he draws out the doctrinal basis of his doctrine of liberty of the Gentiles from the Mosaic Law, by showing that they are the heirs of the promises and of the blessing given to Abraham before the Law and before circumcision<sup>67</sup>.

a. According to the Jewish tradition itself, a midrashic homily (the word "midrash" means 'explanation') says that Abraham was made right with God by faith [6] and not by legal observances.

b. By logic, true sons of Abraham, Jews and Gentiles, ought to be like him, i.e., to live by faith, so that they might share in the promises. The only true sons of Abraham are those who imitate his faith. The virtue of faith brings the Gentiles closer to Abraham than carnal

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<sup>66</sup> Chapter 3.

<sup>67</sup> *A New Catholic Commentary*, p. 1178.

descent brought the Jews. Those who rely on faith in Jesus Christ for their justification shall be blessed with the faithful Abraham<sup>68</sup>.

- ❖ That our faith was prefigured in Abraham, and that he was the patriarch of our faith, as it were, the prophet of it, the apostle has very fully taught when he says in the epistle to the Galatians [5-9]... He declared that this man was not only the prophet of faith, but also the father of those who from among the Gentiles believe in Jesus Christ, because his faith and ours are one and the same.

We are children of Abraham because of the similarity of our faith, and the promise of inheritance<sup>69</sup>.

**St. Irenaeus**

- ❖ If he who was before grace, was justified by faith, although plentiful in works, much more we. For what loss was it to him, not being under the law? None, for his faith sufficed unto righteousness.

**St. John Chrysostom**

- ❖ As they made much of their descent from Abraham, and feared lest abandoning the law, they should be considered strangers to his kin; Paul removes this fear by turning their argument against themselves, and proves that faith is especially concerned in connecting them with Abraham<sup>70</sup>.

**St. John Chrysostom**

c. The false teachers used to perplex the Galatians by saying that the law was older and faith afterwards. St. John Chrysostom says, [Now he removes this notion by showing that faith was anterior to the law; as is evident from Abraham's case, who was justified before the giving of the law.] Abraham was justified by faith fifteen years before the law of circumcision was imposed.

d. The Law-giver preached Abraham that the nations would be justified by faith [8]. If justification is realized by the works of the law God would preach him with giving the law and not by the blessing of faith.

- ❖ He Himself who gave the Law, had decreed, before He gave it, that the heathen should be justified by faith. And He says not "revealed," but "preached the gospel," to signify that the patriarch was in joy at this method of justification, and to great desire for its accomplishment<sup>71</sup>.

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<sup>68</sup> *A New Catholic Commentary*, p. 1178.

<sup>69</sup> *Adv. Haer.* 4:21:1; 4:7:2.

<sup>70</sup> *Chapter 3.*

<sup>71</sup> *Chapter 3.*

### **St. John Chrysostom**

e. Redemption from the curse of the law comes through Christ in whom the blessing of Abraham has been fulfilled [10-14]:

The Law itself (Deut. 27:26) testifies that those who seek to do it are under a curse, because it asks for doing and presupposes that righteousness is earned thereby, whereas in reality doing leads to pride in accomplishment, which is the essence of sin.

The Law cannot give righteousness, but it does bring death upon all those who do not keep it [3:10]. A curse (a sentence) is upon all who break the law, while a blessing is upon all those who live by grace. In other words, those who consider themselves righteous because of the works of law fell into the sin of pride and become under a curse, and those who are weak to fulfill all its works also are under the curse. Now, how does Christ liberate us from this curse?

We can say that through sin we became under the curse, while our Savior who is without sin became a curse for our sake [13] not by committing a sin but by being hanged on a tree, and thus he embraced us while we were under the curse and saved us from it by His grace. The crucified Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law by fulfilling in his Person all the requirements of the Law perfectly and at the same time making complete and perfect satisfaction for all the transgressions of the Jews (and mankind in general) against the Law. The Law thus satisfied has no further claims on Him nor on the rest of the human race in so far as they are united with Him by baptism<sup>72</sup>.

**St. Justin** in his dialogue with Trypho the Jew, says that all the human family was in need to be freed from the curse by the Cross. [If those who are under this law appear to be under a curse for not having observed all the requirements, how much more shall all the nations appear to be under a curse who practice idolatry, who seduce youths, and commit other crimes? If the Father of all wished His Christ for the whole human family to take upon Him the curses of all, knowing that, after He had been crucified and was dead, He would raise Him up, why do you argue about Him, who submitted to suffer these things according to the Father's will, and if He was accursed, and do not rather bewail yourselves?<sup>73</sup>]

❖ You see how he proves that they are under the curse who cleave to the law, because it is impossible to fulfill it [10,11]; next, how comes faith to have this justifying power...

The law being too weak to lead man to righteousness, an effectual remedy was provided in faith, which is the means of rendering that possible which was "impossible by the law" (Rom. 8:3)...

Christ exchanged this curse for the other, "curse is every one that hanged on a tree."

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<sup>72</sup> *A New Catholic Commentary*, p. 1175, 50.

<sup>73</sup> *Chapter 95*.

As then both he who hanged on a tree, and he who transgresses the law, is cursed, and as it was necessary for him who is about to relieve us from a curse, to be himself free from it, yet had to receive another instead of it, therefore Christ took upon Him such another, and thereby relieved us from the curse... Christ took upon Him not the curse of transgression, but the other curse, in order to remove that of others. For, “He had done no violence neither was any deceit in His mouth” (Isa. 53:9). And as by dying He rescued from death those who were dying, so by taking upon Himself the curse, He delivered them from it<sup>74</sup>.

**St. John Chrysostom**

- ❖ On hearing “Christ has become a curse for us,” and ‘He has made Him sin for us who knew no sin’ (2 Cor. 5:21), we do not simply conceive this, that the whole Christ has become a curse or sin, but that He has taken on Him the curse which lay against us (Is. 53:4; 1 Peter 2:24).
- ❖ Just as He has not Himself become a curse, but is said to have done so because He took upon Him the curse on our behalf, so also He has become flesh not by being changed into flesh, but because He assumed on our behalf living flesh, and has become Man.

He instructs the Hebrews and the Galatians to place their hopes, not in the Law, but in the Lord who had given the Law<sup>75</sup>.

**St. Athanasius of Alexandria**

- ❖ He was made sin and a curse not on His own account but on ours... Cursed He was, for He bore our curses<sup>76</sup>.

**St. Ambrose**

- ❖ How can He be sin, Who sets us free from sin; and how can He be a curse Who redeems us from the curse of the Law? it is in order that He may carry His display of humility even to this extent, and form us to that humility which is the producer of exaltation.
- ❖ For my sake He was called a curse, Who destroyed my curse... He became a new Adam to take the place of the old, just so He makes my disobedience His own as Head of the whole body<sup>77</sup>.

**St. Gregory of Nazianzen**

- ❖ It was that He became obedient, even He Who “took our infirmities and bare our sickness” (cf. Matt. 8:17), healing the disobedience, that by His stripes He might heal our wound, and by His own death do away with the common death of all men,-then it was that for our sakes He was made obedient, even as He became “sin” and “a curse” by reason of

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<sup>74</sup> Chapter 3.

<sup>75</sup> *Four Discourses against the Arians*, 2:47; *Ep. 59 ad Epictetum*, 8; *De Synodis*, 45.

<sup>76</sup> *Of the Christian Faith*, 5,14, 178.

<sup>77</sup> *Oration 37:1; The Fourth Theological Oration*, 5.

dispensation on our behalf, not being so by nature, but by becoming so in His love for man<sup>78</sup>.

**St. Gregory of Nyssa**

By the law we became under the curse, while by the grace of Christ we are delivered from it.

Grace usually reveals what God has done for us [1 Cor. 15:3,4], while Law reveals what He demands of us [Exod. 20:1-7].

Grace gives us life and power that we might obey [John 14:23] and be holy [Rom.6:14-22], while Law demands the perfect obedience and holiness [Deut. 6:24, 25] or death [James 2:10].

Grace almost reveals God's love for us [John 3:16], while the Law almost commands us to love God [Matt. 22:37].

Through grace the divine blessings are announced [Gal. 3:4], while under the Law the curse was pronounced [Gal. 3:10].

Grace grants us freedom in Christ [Gal. 5:1], while under the Law we were slaves to sin [Gal. 4:1-3].

Grace is the power of God [Rom. 1:16], while the Law is the strength of sin [1 Cor. 15:56].

By grace we attained adoption to the Father [Gal. 4], while the Law shuts man out of God's presence [Exod. 19: 12-24].

Grace reveals the very image of good things, while the Law has a shadow of good things to come [Heb. 10:1].

f. By the seed of Abraham (Jesus Christ) the blessing would come upon the Gentiles [14] (Gen. 22:18; 26:4).

g. After giving many arguments founded on the Jewish tradition and the holy scripture the apostle uses a human example, saying, "Brethren, I speak after the manner of men; though it be but a man's covenant, yet when it has been confirmed, no one makes it void or adds thereto" [15]. In other words the human covenants must be respected by not missing or adding any new condition. Now He made a covenant with Abraham 430 years before receiving the law. It didn't refer to the observance of the works of the law, but to faith. If this condition is added afterwards, it means that the divine covenant has been abused.

The law was received after God's promise not to disannul the promise but to pave the way to faith. If the works of the law are the source of salvation Abraham would not receive a promise of the blessing by his seed, but rather by receiving the law.

❖ By the figure of the permanency of a human covenant he was defending the divine

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<sup>78</sup> *Against Eunomius 2:11.*

testament<sup>79</sup>.

**Tertullian**

***“Brethren, I speak after the manner of men; though it be but a man’s covenant, yet when it has been confirmed, no one makes it void or adds thereto” [15].***

❖ Hence he says, “Brethren...;” above he had called them “foolish,” now he calls them “brethren,” at once chiding and encouraging them...

If a man, says he makes a covenant, does anyone dare to come afterwards and overturn or subjoin ought to it? for this is the meaning of “adds thereto.” Much less then when God makes a covenant; and with whom did God make a covenant?...

Thus God made a covenant with Abraham, promising that in his seed the blessing should come upon the heathen; and this blessing the law cannot turn aside...

It was promised Abraham that by his seed the heathen should be blessed; and his seed according to the flesh is Christ [16-18]<sup>80</sup>.

**St. John Chrysostom**

God made his promise to Abraham and his offspring about 430 years before He gave the Law to Moses. The promise which preceded the Law has been fulfilled in Jesus, the offspring of Abraham. Number 430 is mentioned at the Palestinian Targum (on Exod. 12:40), that is a paraphrase of the scripture heard in synagogue services at the time of St. Paul.

**St. Augustine** says that Abraham had a promise not only of Christ, the seed of Abraham who blesses the nations [16], but also of His Body, the Church of Christ [29]. [For if the seed of Abraham can only be understood of Christ; but this seed of Abraham we also are; therefore This Whole, that is the Head and the Body, is One Christ<sup>81</sup>.]

## **THE PURPOSE OF THE LAW [19-25]**

The question opening this section has been raised by the course of St. Paul’s own argument, which has so far suggested a purely negative evaluation of the law and its works (Rom. 7:27-25). St. Paul rejects the notion that the law is contrary to God’s promises. He holds, rather, that its function is to define a person’s legal standing before God. Therefore, it is incapable of effecting righteousness and transform one’s relationship to God.

The tenure of the literal observances of the law as an effective instrument of God’s plan is limited -until faith should be revealed and Christ came.

❖ A mediator is not a mediator of one [20], and God is one, not divided among the Persons in Whom we have been taught to believe (for the Godhead in the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit is one), the Lord, therefore, becomes a mediator once for all betwixt God and

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<sup>79</sup> *Against Marcion, 5:4.*

<sup>80</sup> *Chapter 3.*

<sup>81</sup> *Sermons on N. T. Lessons, 94:5.*



men, binding man to the Deity by Himself<sup>82</sup>.

**St. Gregory of Nyssa**

**What then is the purpose of the Mosaic Law [19]?**

Christ can save only sinners. Grace cannot begin until the law has proven that we are guilty, as the epistle to the Romans shows each of us. The Law could only “shut up all under sin” [22], as in a prison. Then Christ came to grant us freedom and offer us His righteousness.

The law is spiritual, but it has no redemptive power or a power to justify. It is intended to demonstrate to fallen mankind the incurable sinfulness of the old Adam’s nature. It reveals to a person his sin, blindness, and contempt of God, and that he is under God’s wrath. Thus, it drives us to Christ by showing us our need of the Savior and Physician.

- ❖ The law was not given to heal the infirm, but to discover and to manifest them... They received the law, which they were not able to fulfill; they learnt in what disease they were, and they implored the Physician’s aid; they wished to be cured because they came to know they were in distress, which they would not have known if they had not been unable to fulfill the law which had been given<sup>83</sup>.

**St. Augustine**

As long as the person thinks he is innocent, he is proud and despises the grace of God. The law tames this pride and lays it bare, it is the good teacher (*pedagogue*) whose task it was to convince the proud and to take children to school, make sure they paid attention, to discipline them when necessary, and to see to their moral and physical safety. This pedagogue was entrusted with taking children through the streets to their schoolmaster, and trained them to find pleasure in accepting the good tidings (the Gospel) and Christian experience. His work appropriates to childhood until the believer arrives to spiritual adulthood in Christ [3:25-29], Who grants him the skill of self-discipline and self-restraint. God restored our hearts by putting the iron needle of law at first, then He draws a lifelong thread of gospel love and peace and joy. In Christ all of God’s promises of grace would be fully realized.

- ❖ He (Paul) has said that the law was our pedagogue (to bring us) to Christ Jesus... For the law never hindered them from believing in the Son of God; nay but it even exhorted them so to do, saying that men can be saved in no other way from the old wound of the serpent than by believing in Him who, in the likeness of sinful flesh, is lifted up from the earth upon the tree of martyrdom, and draws all things to Himself (John 12:32; 3:14) and raises the dead<sup>84</sup>.

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<sup>82</sup> *Against Eunomius* 2:12.

<sup>83</sup> *Sermons on N. T. Lessons* 75: 2.

<sup>84</sup> *Adv. Haer.* 4:2:5.

### **St. Irenaeus**

- ❖ As the Jews were not even conscious of their own sins, and consequently did not even desire remission; the law was given to probe their wounds, that they might long for a physician...

Now the tutor (law) is not opposed to the Preceptor, but co-operates with him, ridding the youth from all vice, and having all leisure to fit him for receiving instructions from his preceptor. But when the youth's habits are formed, then the tutor leaves him, as Paul says.

The law then, as it was our tutor, and we were kept shut up under it, is not the adversary but the fellow-worker of grace, but if when grace is come, it continues to hold us down, it becomes an adversary; for it confines those who ought to go forward to grace, then it is the destruction of our salvation<sup>85</sup>.

### **St. John Chrysostom**

- ❖ For the God of the two Testaments is One, Who in the Old Testament foretold the Christ Who appeared in the New; Who by the Law and the Prophets led us to Christ's school... And if ever you hear any of the heretics speaking evil of the Law or the Prophets, answer in the sound of the Savior's voice, saying Jesus came not to destroy the Law, but to fulfill it (Matt. 5:17)<sup>86</sup>.

### **St. Cyril of Jerusalem**

**St. Athanasius** reads in the words of St. Paul here that the Law given to the Jews as a tutor, was involved in the faith of Christ, but they misunderstood it, and could not touch the truth we possess which the Law contains, because they were conformed to the letter, and did not submit to the spirit<sup>87</sup>.

Dom B. Orchard says that for St. Paul there are three stages in the religious life of the world from the time of Abraham, the founder of the Jewish race:

1. From Abraham to Moses: during which justification came through faith in God's promises, without any positive law properly so-called (circumcision being only of God's covenant with Abraham, Gen. 17:11).

2. From Moses to Christ: during which justification came through faith in the promises, but with the obligation besides of keeping the Law positively given on Sinai (faith not Law, justifying).

3. Since Christ: justifying by faith in Him and at the time by observance of the Gospel (which is much more than a new and improved edition of Judaism)<sup>88</sup>.

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<sup>85</sup> Chapter 3.

<sup>86</sup> *Catech. Lect. 4:33.*

<sup>87</sup> *Festival letters, 19:2.*

<sup>88</sup> *A New Catholic Commentary., p. 1174.*

## **SONS, NOT SLAVES [26-29]**

The law paved the way to the faith, and as a tutor brings us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith [24]. Now what is the role of faith in our life? It leads us to perfect manhood [25], for we are all sons of God through faith in Jesus Christ [26]. Justification (*dikaiosune*), which means for St. Paul the passage from the state of enmity with God resulting from original and actual sin to the state of sonship in which we possess the divine life of Christ in our selves, is always the free gift of God to us in virtue of the gift of faith<sup>89</sup>.

“**Adoption**” is a Roman legal word and means “the placing of a son” in a son’s legal position. Christ came to ransom us so that we would be no longer slaves under the law but would possess all the privileges of full-grown sons and heirs. We call our God, “**Abba, Father**” [4:6].

❖ We are no longer under a tutor [25], “for you are all sons of God” [26]. Wonderful! see how mighty is the power of faith, and how he unfolds as he proceeds! Before, he showed that it made them sons of the patriarch...; now he proves that they are sons of God also... Then, when he has said this great and wonderful thing, he names also the mode of their adoption. “For as many of you as were baptized into Christ, did put on Christ” [27]... If Christ be the Son of God, and you have put on Him, you who have the Son within you, and are fashioned after His pattern, have been brought into one kindred and nature with Him<sup>90</sup>.

**St. John Chrysostom**

❖ Though Scripture testifies that our Lord Jesus Christ is the only Son of God, it says, that the brethren and coheirs whom He has vouchsafed to have, are made so by kind of adoption through divine grace<sup>91</sup>.

**St. Augustine**

❖ “Abba” is in Hebrew exactly what “*Pater*” is in Latin... Just as the phrase, “Abba, Father,” contains the idea of the two races, the Israelites and the Gentiles, the word “Father,” used alone, points to the one flock which these two constitute<sup>92</sup>.

**St. Augustine**

## **PUT ON CHRIST**

❖ Let no spot or wrinkle defile the pure robe of immortality; but keep holiness in all your members, as having put on Christ.” For,” it is said, “as many of you as have been baptized into Christ, have put on Christ.” Wherefore let all your members be holy as becomes their

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<sup>89</sup> *A New Catholic Commentary*, p. 1174.

<sup>90</sup> *Chapter 3*.

<sup>91</sup> *Sermons on New Testament Lessons 1:28*.

<sup>92</sup> *The Harmony of the Gospels, 3:4*.

investment in a raiment of holiness and light<sup>93</sup>.

**St. Basil the Great**

- ❖ By water and Spirit we have put on Christ, though we did not perceive His glory<sup>94</sup>.

**St. Isaac the Syrian**

- ❖ Having been baptized into Christ, and put on Christ, you have been made conformable to the Son of God<sup>95</sup>.

**St. Cyril of Jerusalem**

## **ONENESS IN CHRIST**

The inclusiveness of the gospel is illustrated by references to baptism. It is the consequence of the act of faith, and the newly baptized are as it were clothed with Christ (Rom. 13:4; Eph. 4:24), even more since they are one with Him, participate in His crucifixion and enjoy the new life with Him (2:20). Since baptism unites all persons with Christ (1 Cor. 12:13) it unites them with one another, for all are brethren “for whom Christ died” (1 Cor. 8:11; Rom. 14:15). All who believe without distinction, have one Lord (Rom. 10:12-13; Eph. 2:11-22; Col. 3:11)<sup>96</sup>.

Through baptism we put on Christ [27] who unites all the members -the sons of God- in Him. “There can be neither Jew nor Greek, there can be neither bond nor free, there can be no male and female: for you all are one in Christ Jesus” [28]. we all become one, have the same inheritance which God promised Abraham. “And if you are Christ’s, then are you Abraham’s seed, heirs according to promise” [29].

- ❖ This is the purpose of the great mystery for us. This is the purpose of God for us Who was made man and became poor (2 Cor. 8:9), to raise our flesh (Rom. 8:11), and recover His image (1 Cor. 15:49), and remodel man (Col. 3:11), that we might all be made one in Christ He who was perfectly made in all of us all that He Himself is, that we might no longer be male and female, barbarian Scythian, bond or free, but might bear in ourselves only the stamp of God, by Whom and for Whom we were made, and have so far received our form and model from Him, that we are recognized by it alone<sup>97</sup>.

**St. Gregory of Nazianzen**

**St. Gregory of Nyssa** states that the creation of our nature is in a sense twofold: one made like to God which sin spoiled and our Lord renewed and one divided according to this

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<sup>93</sup> *Ep.* 292.

<sup>94</sup> *Hom.* 64.

<sup>95</sup> *On the Mysteries, Lect. 1:1.*

<sup>96</sup> *Furnish, p.* 291-292.

<sup>97</sup> *Panegyric on his Brother S. Caesarius.*

distinction (male and female)<sup>98</sup>.

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<sup>98</sup> *On the Making of Man* 7, 8.

## CHAPTER FOUR

# SONS AND HEIR

The word “heir” is used in 3:29 and 4:7 according to Palestinian custom. A father would appoint a guardian for his son in his will who in the event of the father’s death would administer the son’s inheritance until he came of age. From this perspective, the son, even if entitled to enormous wealth, is no better than a slave. A person apart from Christ, living under the law, is like a minor for whom the inheritance is only prospective. Such a person is no better than a slave, not free to inherit what has been promised. St. Paul avoids saying that people without Christ are slaves to the law.

St. Paul explains how the Son of God became the Son of man as He was born of a woman so that we, the sons of men, might become sons of God.

❖ For “**God sent forth His Son,**” says Paul, not made of man and a woman, but “**made of a woman**” [4] only, that is of a virgin... For He who makes souls virgin, was born of a virgin<sup>99</sup>.

### St. Cyril of Jerusalem

The “**fullness of time**” [4] is synonymous with the date set by the Father. It expresses the purpose fullness of God’s sending the Son in fulfillment of the promise made to Abraham [3:14]. This is the strongest statement of the incarnation in St. Paul’s letters, made so by added phrases born of woman, born under the law. The emphasis here is on the twofold purpose of Christ’s coming: first, to redeem people from bondage; second, to make possible their adoption as sons.

Here and in Rom. 8:14-17, 23 the apostle connects adoption with the gift of the Spirit, by whom one is enabled to place full confidence in and pledge total commitment to God the Father.

We are not sons by nature, but the Son who is in us; and again, God is not our Father by nature, but of that Word in us, in whom and because of whom we “cry, Abba, Father”...

The Father calls them sons, in whomsoever He sees His own Son.

The Son in us, calling upon His own Father, causes Him to be named our Father also. Surely in whose hearts the Son is not, of them neither can God be called Father.

We are sons and gods because of the Word in us, so we shall be in the Son and in the Father, and we shall be accounted to have become one in the Son and in the Father, because that Spirit is in the Father.

The Spirit of the Word in us names through us His own Father as ours<sup>100</sup>.

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**St. Athanasius of Alexandria**

❖ It is we that cry, but in Him (the Spirit of the Son), that is, by His shedding abroad love in our hearts, without which who so cries in vain<sup>101</sup>.

**St. Augustine**

That God is thus addressed “Abba! Father!” [6] in both Aramic and Greek suggests a fixed liturgical form, perhaps the introductory words of a prayer offered by the newly baptized convert expressing the new access to God found in Christ. The apostle uses the Aramic and the Greek at the same time to show that God is the Father of the Jews and the Gentiles, and that grace works in the life of the Gentiles to attain the adoption to God by baptism without need of the circumcision.

As free sons of God and heirs they must not only leave idolatry [8], but even in their conversion, to be involved in what is suitable for them, in spiritual things and not in lower things:

1. He reminds them of their previous position when they were slaves, as they worshiped idols, but now they are sons of God. They have to know their Father and to be known by Him. “But now, that you have come to know God, or rather to be known of God” [9].

St. Gregory of Nyssa states that they accepted false gods as their fathers instead of the Father [8].

Men revolted from God and “served them which by nature were no gods” [cf. 8], and though being the children of God became attached to an evil father falsely so called<sup>102</sup>.

**St. Gregory of Nyssa**

“Be known by God” [9] is a description of the Christian life. The knowledge of God about which St. Paul speaks is love of God, a response to God’s knowledge, i.e., love, of us (1 Cor. 8:2-3). We know God as our Father, through unity with the Son in the merit of His redeeming blood, and to be steadfast in this unity. We are known to Him as His own righteous children.

The Lord knows them that are His, means that on account of their good works (in Christ). He receives them into intimate communion with Him<sup>103</sup>.

**St. Basil the Great**

2. He asks them to be involved in the freedom of the sons and not in the works of the law as slaves. “How turn you back again to the weak and beggarly rudiments whereunto you desire to be in bondage over again. You observe days, and months, and seasons and years” [9,

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<sup>101</sup>

<sup>102</sup>

<sup>103</sup>

10]. God draws them to Himself, how they do give Him their backs and get involved to be interested in these literal matters?

We do not keep the festival as observers of days, knowing that the apostle reproves those who do so, in those words which he spoke; “ You observe days...” But rather do we consider the day solemn because of the feast; so that all of us, who serve God in every place, may together in our prayers be well-pleasing to God. For the blessed Paul, announcing the nearness of gladness like this, did not announce days, but the Lord, for whose sake we keep the feast, saying, “Christ, our Passover, is sacrificed” (1 Cor. 5:7); so that we all, contemplating the eternity of the Word, may draw near to do Him service.

The feast is not on account of the days; but for the Lord’s sake, who then suffered for us. We celebrate it, for “our Passover, Christ, is sacrificed” Even as Moses, when teaching Israel not to consider the feast as pertaining to the days, but to the Lord, said, “It is the Lord’s Passover” (Exod. 12:11)<sup>104</sup>.

#### **St. Athanasius of Alexandria**

3. By giving their back to God they lose their salvation and the apostle in his love grieves. His labor upon them which costs him sweat and pain was in vain, and he loses his crown. “I am afraid of you, lest by any means I have bestowed labor upon you in vain.”

Observe the tender compassion of the apostle. they were shaken and he trembles and fears... By saying “lest” he both in spires alarm and encourages good hope... I am in fear, but not in despair<sup>105</sup>.

#### **St. John Chrysostom**

### **PRACTICAL FREEDOM OF SONS [12-20]**

After dealing with the topic of “Justification by the faith working through love” from many aspects, he offers a personal experience, not only in his life but in their own, especially mutual love that springs from their sincere faith.

a. He would have the Galatians follow his example and forsake bondage to the law for a new freedom in Christ. As St. Paul renounces the supposed advantages of Judaism to preach the gospel to the Gentiles, so now he asks them to renounce the supposed advantages of false teaching to become as he is in Christ.

“I beseech you, brethren, be as I am, for I am as you are” [12] This is addressed to his Jewish disciples, and he brings his own example forward, to induce them thereby to abandon their old customs... Therefore gaze on me; I too was once in your state of mind, especially so; I had a burning zeal for the law; yet afterwards I feared not to abandon the law, to withdraw

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<sup>104</sup>

<sup>105</sup>



from that rule of life. And this you know full well how obstinately I clung to Judaism, and how with yet greater force let it go. He does well to place this in order: for most men, though they are given a thousand reasons, and those just ones, are more readily influenced by that which is like their own case, and more firmly hold to that which they see done by others<sup>106</sup>.

**St. John Chrysostom**

He shows that they were deceived by false brethren, but they have no personal hatred against him, as he says, “You have not injured me at all” [12].

Observe how he again addresses them by a title of honor, which was a reminder more over of the doctrine of grace...after giving them a deep cut, he pours in this encouragement like oil; and, showing that his words were not words of hate or enmity, he reminds them of the love which they had evinced toward him, mixing his self-vindication with praises. Therefore he says, “you have not injured me at all”...

“You know that because of an infirmity of the flesh I preached the gospel to you at first. And my trial which was in my flesh you did not despise or reject, but you received me as an angel of God, even as Christ Jesus” [13, 14]...

But for you, not only have you not injured me, but you have shown me great and inexpressible kindness, and it is impossible that one who has been treated with such attention should speak thus from any malevolent motive. My language then cannot be caused by ill-will; it follows, that it proceeds from affection and solicitude...

Observe his spiritual skill; in the midst of his self-vindication, he again appeals to their feelings by showing what he had suffered for their sakes...

Was it not then absurd of them to receive him as an angel of God, when he was persecuted and driven about, and then not to receive him when pressing on them what was fitting?<sup>107</sup>

**St. John Chrysostom**

Here [15, 16] he shows perplexity and amazement, and desires to learn of them the reason for their change. Who, says he, has deceived you, and caused a difference in your disposition towards me? Are you not the same who attended and ministered to me, counting me more precious than your own eyes? what then has happened?... You ought on this very account to pay me increased honor and attention; instead of which I am become your enemy, because I tell you the truth, “-for I can find no other reason but this<sup>108</sup>”.

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<sup>106</sup>

<sup>107</sup>

<sup>108</sup>

**St. John Chrysostom**

His testimony that the Galatians would have given him their own eyes indicates the depth of their former affection for him and the extent of their initial commitment to his gospel. Some think that verse 15 hints at Paul having some disease of the eyes.

The relationship between the apostle and the Galatians is changed now. St. Paul's mention of his travail suggests he is like a mother to them, even though finally he speaks of Christ's being formed in them. The thought is that the new birth effects such a radical transformation of one whole being that it is no longer that person who lives but Christ who lives in him [2:20].

After showing sincere mutual love between him and them, as true children of God, who have attained freedom and love, he tells them about his inner desire to visit them, to see how much he loves them, as a parent who willingly suffers much not only to raise them as begotten children of God but also to help them grow up.

Here [18] he hints that his absence had been the cause of this, and that the true blessing was for disciples who hold right opinions not only in the presence but also in the absence of their master... He resembles a mother trembling for her children. "Until Christ be formed in you" [19]. Behold his paternal tenderness, behold this despondency worthy of an Apostle...

Observe his warnings [20], his inability to refrain himself, and to conceal his feelings; in the nature of love; nor is he satisfied with words, but desires to be present with them, and so, as he says, to change his voice, that is, to change to lamentation, to shed tears, to turn every thing into mourning. For he could not by letter show his tears or cries of grief, and therefore he ardently desires to be present with them<sup>109</sup>.

**St. John Chrysostom**

Flattery is always insidious, crafty, and smooth. And the flatterer is well described by philosophers "a pleasant enemy." Truth is bitter, of gloomy visage and wrinkled brow, and distasteful to those who are rebuked<sup>110</sup>.

**St. Jerome**

**THE ALLEGORY OF HAGAR AND SARAH [21-31]**

He returns again to Abraham, not in the way of repetition, but, in as much as the Patriarch's fame was great among the Jews... Having previously shown that the Galatians were sons of Abraham, now, in that the Patriarch's sons were not of equal dignity, one being a bondwoman, the other a freewoman, he shows that they were not only his sons, but sons in

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<sup>109</sup>

<sup>110</sup>

the same sense as he that was free born and noble. Such is the power of faith<sup>111</sup>.

**St. John Chrysostom**

Abraham and his seed:

\* Natural descendants -as the dusts of the earth (Gen. 13:16)

\* Spiritual descendants -as the stars of heaven (Gen. 22:17, Gal 3:26,29).

In rabbinical fashion he makes the account of Abraham's two wives an allegory (Gen. 16:15; 21:1-21).

1. Sarah was a free woman and her son Isaac was born through promise -a word used earlier to refer to the gospel [3:8, 14, 16-18]. Hagar was a slave and her son was born according to the flesh (nature).

Be free, therefore, and free yourself from every kind of destructive slavery. For unless you become free, you cannot be a worker for Christ; for that kingdom in the heavenly Jerusalem which is free does not accept children of slavery. The children of a free mother are themselves free (Rom. 8:15), and are not enslaved to the world in anything [23]<sup>112</sup>.

John the Solitary

2. St. Paul extends the allegory identifying the two women with two different covenants or dispensations, presumably an "old" and a "new."

Sarah was a symbol of grace, while Hagar of the Law.

Christianity had a noble birth, being sprung, as the mystery of the allegory indicates, from the son of Abraham who was born of the free woman; whereas from the son of the bond maid came the legal bondage of Judaism<sup>113</sup>.

**Tertullian**

3. Sarah symbolizes the church, Hagar represents the synagogue.

4. Sarah was a figure of life according to the Spirit, while Hagar the flesh.

5. Sarah refers to the heavenly Jerusalem, the home and mother of Christians who rejoice in the freedom of the Gospel. Hagar the earthly one. The new Jerusalem offers far more than the old. Freedom offers far more than slavery, and the gospel more than the law<sup>114</sup>.

6. Sarah had free sons and heirs, while Hagar had slaves.

7. Ishmael did not enjoy the blessings of a son in Abraham's house but was left out in the cold although he was the firstborn; Isaac was called. Thus we are heirs of a spiritual promise.

8. The Hebrew text of Gen. 21:9 states simply that Ishmael was playing with Isaac.

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<sup>111</sup>

<sup>112</sup>

<sup>113</sup>

<sup>114</sup>

But in the rabbinical commentary Genesis Rabbah, the Hebrew word translated as “playing, joking, laughing” is taken in a bad sense. The tradition then says this: “And Ishmael took a bow and arrows and started shooting them in the direction of Isaac, making it appear as if he was joking.” St. Paul applies this tradition to the experience of the Galatians from the Judaizers.

Isaac, born not according to the order of nature, nor the law of marriage, nor the power of the flesh, was yet truly his own son. He was the issue of bodies that were dead, and of a womb that was dead; his conception was not by the flesh, nor his birth by the seed, for the womb was dead both through age and barrenness but the Word of God fashioned Him. Not so in the case of the bondman; He came by virtue of the laws of nature, and after the manner of marriage. Nevertheless, he that was not according to the flesh was more honorable than he that was born after the flesh.

Who is this who before was “barren,” and “desolate?” Clearly it is the Church of the Gentiles, that was before deprived of the knowledge of God? Who is “she which has the husband?” plainly the Synagogue. Yet the barren woman surpassed her in the number of her children, for the other embraces one nation, but the children of the Church have filled the country of the Greeks and of the barbarians, the earth the sea, the whole habitable world. Observe how Sarah by acts, and the Prophet by words, have described the events about to befall . Observe too, that he whom Isaiah called barren, Paul has proved to have many children, which also happened typically in the case of Sarah. For she too, although barren, became the mother of a numerous progeny. This however does not suffice Paul, but he carefully follows out the mode whereby the barren woman became a mother, that in this particular likewise the type might harmonize with the truth. Wherefore he adds, “Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are children of promise” [28]...

He intends the Church; for she knew not God, but as soon as she knew Him, she surpassed the fruitful synagogue<sup>115</sup>.

St. John Chrysostom

1. Catech. Lect. 12:31.
2. Four Discourses against the Arians, 2:58, 59; 4: 22; 2:25,24; De Decretis, 31.
3. Sermons on N. T. Lessons 21:29.
4. Against Eunomius 2:8, 12:1.
5. Ep. 235:3.
6. Festival Letters, 3:1; 6: 2.
7. Chapter 4.
8. Chapter 4.

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9. Chapter 4.
10. Chapter 4.
11. Chapter 4.
12. Against the Pelagians 1:26.
13. Chapter 4.
14. Sebastian Brock: The Syriac Fathers on Prayer and Spiritual Life, Michigan, 1987,  
p. 89.
15. Against Marcion 5:4.
16. Furnish, p. 295.
17. Chapter 4.

## CHRISTIAN LIBERTY

### CHRISTIAN LIBERTY: ITS IMPERILMENT BY LEGALISM [1-12]

One's decision about circumcision has broad implications. To accept circumcision, in principle, is to place oneself under the jurisdiction of the whole law in its literal dress. Christian liberty is an outgrowth of salvation by grace and is realized by the believer in and through our Lord Jesus Christ [4:3-5]. Through grace we attained freedom from the yoke of the Mosaic Law in its literal dress; but it does not mean freedom to break the Law or to commit sins. Christ is not sheriff, but He is the Lamb of God who takes away the world's sins (John 1:29). Through grace, the believer becomes "inlawed to Christ" and is initiated and delighted into "the law of Christ" [6:2]. As a Spirit-indwelt and Spirit-empowered son [4:1-7] has the inner desire and power to live out the moral law of God. Under the New Covenant of grace, the Holy Spirit works in the new nature of the believer, making him willing to obey God's will and to comply with his moral law (Heb. 10:16).

The believer realizes, too, that he will be judged for his works as a prelude to heaven. He must constantly keep in mind that his very freedom has brought him into total subjection to Christ, whose bond servant he is and whom he must always obey (Rom. 12:1). This is a paradox. But the Christian discovers that he enjoys his greatest liberty when he is most completely enslaved to our Lord Jesus Christ<sup>116</sup>.

"Standfast therefore in the liberty by which Christ made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage" [1].

Observe in how many ways he leads them away from the error of Judaism; by showing, first, that it was the extreme of folly of those, who had become free instead of slaves, to desire to become slaves instead of free; secondly, that they would be convicted of neglect and ingratitude to their Benefactor, in despising Him who had delivered them, and loving him who had enslaved them...; thirdly by the word, "stand fast," he indicates their vacillation.

**St. John Chrysostom**

"that if you receive circumcision, Christ will profit you nothing" [2]

"Behold, I Paul say unto you, "which is the expression of one who has confidence in what he asserts..."

He that is circumcised is circumcised for fear of the law, and he who fears the law, distrusts the power of grace, and he who distrusts can receive no benefit from that which is

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<sup>116</sup>

distrusted...

If one may say what seems a paradox, such an one believes neither Christ nor the law, but stands between them, desiring to benefit both by one and the other, whereas he will reap fruit from neither...<sup>117</sup>

**St. John Chrysostom**

The parts of the law are linked one to the other... In the case of the Law, if you take upon you a small portion of it, and submit to the yoke, you draw down upon yourself its whole domination...

For example; Circumcision has sacrifice connected with it, and the observance of days; sacrifice again has the observance both of day and of place and involves the details of endless purifications including a perfect swarm of manifold observances...

If then you are circumcised, but not on the eighth day, or on the eighth day, but no sacrifice is offered, or a sacrifice is offered, but not in the prescribed place, or in the prescribed place, but not the accustomed objects, or if the accustomed objects, but not you be unclean, or if clean yet not purified by proper rules, every thing is frustrated. Wherefore he says, "that he is a debater to the whole Law"<sup>118</sup>.

If the law is needed, it is so as a whole, not in a part, not in one commandment only; and if as a whole, the righteousness which is by faith is little by little shut out. If you keep the Sabbath, why not also be circumcised? and if circumcised, why not also offer sacrifices? If the law is to be observed, it must be observed as a whole, or not at all<sup>119</sup>.

**St. John Chrysostom**

He at length declares the danger of the severest punishment [4]. When a man recurs to the Law, which cannot save him, and falls from grace, what remains but an inexorable retribution, the Law being powerless, and grace rejecting him?<sup>120</sup>

St. John Chrysostom

**DO WE BREAK THE LAW IN FAITH?**

We do not break the law, even its rituals. For example the sacrifices are fulfilled in the unique self-sacrifice of Christ, which is offered on behalf of all believers. The circumcision has been realized spiritually in a perfect way in baptism. The Sabbath is observed spiritually as all our days are a Sabbath (rest) in Christ.

We understand all the more that we ought to observe a Sabbath from all "servile

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work” always, and not only every seventh day, but through all time<sup>121</sup>.

**Tertullian**

“For we through the Spirit by faith wait for the hope of righteousness” [5]. We need none of those legal observances, he says; faith suffices to obtain for us the Spirit, and by Him righteousness, and many and great benefits<sup>122</sup>.

**St. John Chrysostom**

What is the meaning of “fallen from grace” [4]?

1. It means abandoning the true gospel of grace, when a believer depends on his self-righteousness or observes the Mosaic law in its literal dress as a source of salvation and righteousness.

2. When a believer despises grace by sowing in the flesh his carnal desires, he reaps moral weakness instead of the fruit of the Holy Spirit. We have to honor the divine grace.

## **FAITH WORKING THROUGH LOVE**

Faith in Christ, the Liberator, is that which is “working through love” [6]. It is possible that here St. Paul has in mind the mutual love between God and man. Man is made active by God’s love, to which he responds and gives expression to it by obeying the commandment of love<sup>123</sup>.

Observe the great boldness with which he now encounters them ; Let him that has put on Christ, he says, no longer be careful about such matter [6]... What is the meaning of “working through love?” Here he gives them a hard blow, by showing that this error had crept in because the love of Christ had not been rooted within them. For to believe is not all that is required, but also to abide in love. It is as if he had said, Had you loved Christ as you ought, you would not have deserted to bondage, nor abandoned Him who redeemed you, nor treated with contumely Him who gave you freedom. He wishes too by these words to correct their course of life<sup>124</sup>.

St. John Chrysostom

That faith distinguishes us from the faith of devils (Jas. 2:19),and from the infamous and abandoned conduct of men...

Take away faith, and all you believe perishes, take away charity, and all you do perishes. For it is the province of faith to believe, of charity to do.

Not the hearers of the law are just before God (Rom. 2:13). But because “the doers of the law shall be justified,” and, “faith working through love,” it says, “Great peace have they

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<sup>121</sup>

<sup>122</sup>

<sup>123</sup>

<sup>124</sup>



who love Your law, and nothing is an offense to them.”

I do not exhort you to have faith, but love. For you cannot have love without faith; the love I mean of God and your neighbor; whence can it come without faith? How does he love God, who does not believe on God? How does the fool love God, “who says in his heart, there is no God”? (Ps. 53:10). It is possible that you may believe that Christ has come and not love Christ. But it is not possible that you should love Christ, and yet say that Christ has not come<sup>125</sup>.

**St. Augustine**

## **OBEDIENCE IN LOVE**

Obedience [7-12] in love is also described as obedience to the “truth” of the gospel, from which the apostle fears his readers are being distracted<sup>126</sup>.

He who called you [8], called you not to such fluctuations, he did not lay down a L, that you should judaize<sup>127</sup>.

St. John Chrysostom

“A little leaven leavens the whole lump” [7]. And thus this slight error, he says, if not corrected, will have power (as the leaven has with the lump) to lead you into complete Judaism<sup>128</sup>.

St. John Chrysostom

Every where he connects complaint with his praises; here [10] is as he had said, I know my disciples, I know your readiness to be set right. I have good hopes, partly because of the Lord who suffers nothing, however trivial, to perish, partly because of you who are quickly to recover yourself. At the same time he exhorts them to use diligence on their own parts, it not being possible to obtain aid from God, if our own efforts are not contributed...

Not only by words of encouragement, but by uttering a curse or a prophecy against their teachers, he applies to them an incentive. And observe that he never mentions the name of these plotters, that they might not become more shameless<sup>129</sup>.

**St. John Chrysostom**

“But I, brethren, if I still preach circumcision, why am I still persecuted?” [11]... “If I still preach circumcision, why am I still persecuted? for this is the only charge which they of the Jewish descent have to bring against me. Had I permitted them to receive the faith, still retaining the customs of their fathers, neither believers nor nonbelievers would have laid

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<sup>125</sup>

<sup>126</sup>

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<sup>128</sup>

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snare for me, seeing that none of their own usages were disturbed. What then! did he not preach circumcision? did he not circumcise Timothy? Truly he did. How then can he say, "I preach it not?" Here observe his accuracy; he says not, "I do not perform circumcision," but, "I preach it not," that is, I do not bid men so to believe. Do not therefore consider it any confirmation of your doctrine, for though I circumcised, I did not preach circumcision...

When they brought Stephen before the council, they said not that this man adores the Crucified, but that he speaks "against this holy place and the Law" (Acts 6:13). And it was of this they accused Jesus, that he broke the Law. Wherefore Paul says, If Circumcision be conceded, the strife you are involved in is appeased; here after there is no enmity to the Cross and our preaching remains...

He calls it the offense of the Cross, because it was enjoined by the doctrine of the Cross; and it was this which principally offended the Jews, and hindered their reception of the Cross, namely, the command to abandon the usages of their fathers<sup>130</sup>.

**St. John Chrysostom**

Observe how bitterly he speaks here [12] against their deceivers. At the outset he directed his charge against those who were deceived, and called them foolish, once and again. Now, having sufficiently corrected and instructed them, he turns to their deceivers...

And he says well "that unsettle you." For they had compelled them to abandon their own fatherland, their liberty, and their heavenly kindred, and to seek an alien and foreign one; they had cast them out of Jerusalem which is above and free, and compelled them to wander forth as captives and emigrants<sup>131</sup>.

**St. John Chrysostom**

## **FREEDOM AND LIBERTINISM [13-15]**

The danger that freedom from legal observances may lead believers into excesses of other kinds can only be guarded against by the practice of Christian charity. The gospel of grace guards against recklessness [13-15]. Freedom is not to be confused with libertinism. Freedom from the legalism of life under the law does not mean release from responsibility. Instead it constitutes a summons to the greater responsibilities of life under grace. The gospel asks more, not less; for though it prescribes only one requirement -love-that one is unqualified and its implications cannot be specified in advance<sup>132</sup>.

"For you, brethren, were called for freedom; only use not your freedom for an occasion to the flesh" [13]...

For the bonds of the Law are broken, and I say this not that our standard may be

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<sup>130</sup>

<sup>131</sup>

<sup>132</sup>

lowered, but that it may be exalted...

Thus Paul says that Christ has removed the yoke from you, not that you may prance and kick, but that though without the yoke you may proceed at a well-measured pace and next he shows the mode whereby this may be reeffected; and what is this mode? he says, "But through love be servants one to another" [13]<sup>133</sup>.

**St. John Chrysostom**

## **THE PROPER USE OF LIBERTY [16-26]**

We abuse our liberty:

1. By lack of love [13-15]: Where freedom is not exercised in love, it leads to mutual destruction, the tragedy and violence of which are graphically portrayed in verse 15<sup>134</sup>. The whole Law can be summed up in this one command: "Love others as you love your self."

2. By obeying the flesh (5:15): Just as love is the proper content of freedom, so the Spirit is its proper context, that which gives power and guidance<sup>135</sup>. We think that grace leads us to live as we please and do as we like. Grace leads us to live joyfully as God pleases and like what He likes. The apostle confirms that the purpose of the Mosaic Law was to drive men to Christ for both salvation and practical holiness of life. He also presents the human responsibility in experiential sanctification, saying: "Walk by the Spirit" [16]. We have the choice to walk by the power of the Spirit or to accomplish "the works of the flesh" [5:9-21]. In the competition for a person's life the desires of the Spirit are opposed by the desires of the flesh (Rom. 8:4).

He that loves his neighbor as he ought, declines to be servant to him more humbly than any servant...

When the yoke of the Law was taken off them that they might not caper off and away, another was laid on, that of love, stronger then the former, yet far lighter and more pleasant; and, to point out the way to obey it, he adds; "For the whole Law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; You shall love your neighbor as yourself" [14]...

He says, "If you wish to fulfill it, do not be circumcised, for it is fulfilled not in circumcision but in love." Observe how he cannot forget his grief, but constantly touches upon what troubled him, even when launched into his moral discourse<sup>136</sup>.

**St. John Chrysostom**

3. By unclean living [16-26]: Christ has given the Holy Spirit to make us free from evil works, especially carnal lusts [19-21]. Through freedom, let the Holy Spirit rule your life,

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<sup>133</sup>

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whose fruit is placed over against the works of the flesh. This fruit (in singular) is the full harvest of righteousness in Christ, revealed in our life and our relation -

\* Towards God: love, joy, peace.

\* Towards others: patience, kindness, goodness.

\* Towards oneself: faith, gentleness, self-control.

If we live in Christ (John 15) we will be free to bear fruit from God. Are we showing the cluster of fruit in our lives?

“But if you bite and devour one another, beware lest you be consumed by one another!” [15].

This is the language of apprehension and warning, not of condemnation... To bite is to satisfy the feeding of anger, but to devour is a proof of the most savage ferocity...

For strife and dissensions are the ruin and destruction of those who introduce them as well, and eats out every thing worse then a moth does.

“But I say, Walk by the spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of flesh” [16]... Having spoken of the cause of the disease, he likewise mentions the remedy which confers health...

He says, “Walk by the spirit and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh”. Here some make the charge that the Apostle has divided man into two parts... But this is not so, most certainly; for by” the flesh,” he does not mean the body; if he did, what would be the sense of the clause immediately following, “for it lusts,” he says, “against the spirit?”...

He is wont to call the flesh, not the natural but the depraved will, as when he says, But you are not in the flesh, but in the spirit,” (Rom. 8:8,9.) and again, “They that are in the flesh cannot please God”...

What then is his meaning? it is the earthly mind, slothful and careless, that he here calls the flesh, and this is not an accusation against the body, but a charge against the slothful soul. The flesh is an instrument, and no one feels aversion and hatred to an instrument, but to him who abuses it...

In his expression, “the flesh lusts against the spirit,” he means two mental states. For these are opposed to each other, namely virtue and vice, not the soul and the body...

He refers to the contest of bad and good principles. To will and not to will belongs to the soul; wherefore he says, “these are contrary the one to the other,” that you may not suffer the soul to proceed in its evil desires...

He who has attained an exalted excellence from an inner impulse, has no occasion to need a schoolmaster, nor does any one, if he is a philosopher, require a grammarian. Why then do you so degrade yourselves, as now to listen to the Law, having previously given yourselves to the Spirit?...

Answer me now, You that accuse your own flesh, and suppose that this is said of it as

of an enemy and adversary. Let it be allowed that adultery and fornication proceed, as you assert, from the flesh; yet hatred, variance, emulations, strife, heresies, and witchcraft, these arise merely from a depraved moral choice. And so it is with the others also, for how can they belong to the flesh? you observe that he is not here speaking of the flesh, but of earthly thoughts, which trail upon the ground...

“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy peace...” [22]...

You observe throughout that his discourse does not relate to the substance of the flesh, but to the moral choice, which is or is not vicious...

The soul, which by the Spirit has attained to excellence, does not need the admonitions of the Law. Here too he completely and firmly casts out the Law, not as bad, but as inferior to the philosophy given by the Spirit...

He does not mean that they had destroyed their flesh, otherwise how were they going to live?...

“If we live by the Spirit, by the spirit let us also walk,”... “Let us walk, “that is, let us content with the power of the spirit, and seek no help from the Law<sup>137</sup>.”

**St. John Chrysostom**

❖ He has set forth this struggle before us. In this battle we are occupied, if we are in flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh<sup>138</sup>.

**St. Augustine**

❖ When this war shall be over, and all concupiscence shall have been changed into charity, nothing shall remain in the body to oppose the Spirit, nothing to be tamed, nothing to be bridled, nothing to be trodden down, but the whole shall go on through concord unto righteousness, and the will of God will be done in heaven and earth<sup>139</sup>.

**St. Augustine**

## **THE WORD “FLESH”**

❖ We find that the word flesh is used in the holy Scripture with many different meanings,

\* for sometimes it stands for the whole man (John 1:14)...

\* Sometimes it stands for sinful and carnal men (Gen. 6:3)...

\* Sometimes it is used for sins themselves (Rom. 8:9)...

\* Sometimes it stands for consanguinity and relationship (1 Cor 15:50)...

The word here stands simply for a sinful man<sup>140</sup>.

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<sup>137</sup>

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**Abbot Daniel**

- ❖ The body that is mingled with sin finds rest in the works of the flesh; but the Spirit of God finds repose in His own fruit<sup>26</sup>.

**St. Isaac the Syrian**

- ❖ In the wicked, sin reigns over the soul, being settled as on its own throne in this mortal body so that the soul obeys the lusts thereof (Rom. 6:12)...<sup>141</sup>

**Origen**

## **FLESH AND THE WORKS OF THE FLESH**

So long as we are held down by this frail body, so long as we have our treasure in earthen vessels (2 Cor. 4:7); so long as the flesh lusts against the Spirit and the Spirit against the flesh, there can be no sure victory<sup>142</sup>.

St. Jerome

“Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God” (1 Cor. 15:50)... Since in the word flesh we are enjoined to put off, not the substance, but the works of the flesh, therefore in the use of the same word the kingdom of God is denied to the works of the flesh, not the substance thereof. For it is not that which is condemned in which evil is done, but only the evil which is done in it. To administer poison is a crime, but the cup in which it is given is not guilty. So the body is the vessel of the works of the flesh, whilst the soul which is within it mixes the poison of a wicked act<sup>29</sup>.

**Tertullian**

It is worthy to notice the difference between the body and the flesh, for the body is a good creation and a divine gift. It is not just a vessel or a dwelling place of the soul, for human being is a unity, and has no dualism: body and soul. What he thinks, says, acts or even feels is his work as a human being. The body and the soul work together and have the same responsibility and recompense. The Alexandrian Fathers -perhaps except Origen-had a sanctified view of the body<sup>30</sup>.

The harmonious mechanism of the body contributes to understanding, which leads to goodness of nature...

- ❖ He who in the body has devoted himself to a good life, is being sent on the state of immortality<sup>143</sup>.

**St. Clement of Alexandria**

(The Holy Spirit) constantly urges them (the believers) to give exertion to body and soul in order that both alike, being equally sanctified, should equally become worthy heirs of

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<sup>141</sup>

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eternal life.

He kindles in it (the soul) zeal for complete purification both of itself and of the body, that the two may be one in purity. For this is the aim of the teaching and guidance of the Holy Spirit -to purify them completely and bring them back to their original state, in which they were before the fall, by destroying in them all adulterations introduced by the devil's envy, so that nothing of the enemy should remain therein.

In this way the whole of the body becomes accustomed to every good and, submitting to the power of the Holy Spirit, gradually changes. In the end it begins to participate, in a certain measure, in the qualities of the spiritual body, which it is to receive at the resurrection of the just<sup>144</sup>.

**St. Anthony the Great**

### **THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT**

He has no fruit who has not Christ...

Do not wonder at what follows, when charity leads the way<sup>145</sup>.

St. Augustine

It is not His will that the grace we have received should be unprofitable; but He requires us to take pains to render Him His own fruits, as the blessed Paul says [22]<sup>34</sup>.

**St. Athanasius of Alexandria**

1. Unger's Survey of the Bible, p. 290.
2. Chapter 5.
3. Chapter 5.
4. Chapter 2.
5. Chapter 5
6. An answer to the Jews, 4.
7. Chapter 5.
8. Furnish, p. 297.
9. Chapter 5.
10. Sermons on N.T. Lessons, 3:11; 311; 40:8.
11. Furnish, p. 297.
12. Chapter 5.
13. Chapter 5.
14. Chapter 5.
15. Chapter 5.
16. Chapter 5.

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<sup>144</sup>

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17. Furnish, p.298.
18. Chapter 5.
19. Furnish, p. 298.
20. Furnish, p. 298.
21. Chapter 5.
22. Chapter 5.
23. Sermons on New Testament Lessons 78:6.
24. Sermons on N. T. Lessons 6:8.
25. Cassian, Conferences, 4:10.
26. Hom. 48.
27. Comm. on Matt. book 14:3.
28. Ep. 22:4.
29. Against Marcion, 5:10.
30. Our book "The Divine Providence," Alexandria 1990, p. 35.
31. Stromata 4:4.
32. Epistle 1, Philokalia 16, 17, 20.
33. Sermons on N. T. Lessons 39:1.
34. Festival letters 6:5.

#### CHAPTER LIBERTY AND PRACTICAL LOVE

#### CHAPTER Chapter 6

The law of Christ is love, revealed practically in His cross (1 Cor. 9:21-23). By participating in it we are crucified of our self and of the world.

1. Gentleness towards weak persons [1]: "Brethren, even if a man be overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual such a one" [1]. Here we notice the following remarks:

\* As he asks them to be very gentle towards weak persons he calls them brethren.

\* He does not say, "a man who commits a trespass," but "be overtaken," that is, if he is carried away, and we will lose him. We are in of him as a member of the same body.

\* He says, "You who are strong," for in helping others we have to take care that we are strong in Christ so that we ourselves may not fall down together with the weak.

❖ For a weak man will never support a weak man, nor can one who is suffering in the same way, bear or cure one in feeble health, but one who is himself not subject to infirmity brings remedies to one in weak health. For it is rightly said to him, "Physician, heal your self" (Luke 4:23)<sup>1</sup>.



**Abbot Joseph**

- ❖ The beginning of divine wisdom is clemency and gentleness, which arise from greatness of soul and the bearing of the infirmities of men. For he says, “let the strong bear the infirmities of the weak” (cf. Rom. 15:1)<sup>146</sup> ...

**St. Isaac the Syrian**

\* **St. Chrysostom** states, [He does not say “in meekness,” but “in a spirit of meekness,” signifying thereby that this is acceptable to the Spirit, and that to be able to administer correction with mildness is a spiritual gift<sup>3</sup>.]

\* The apostle gives a reason for kindness, “looking to yourself, lest you also be tempted.”

\* Bear you one another’s burdens [2]:

- ❖ It being impossible for man to be without failings, he exhorts them not to scrutinize severely the offenses of others, but even to bear their failings, that their own may in turn be borne by others. As, in the building of a house, all the stones hold not the same position, but one is fitted for a corner not for the foundation, another for the foundations, and not for the corner, so too is it in the body of the church<sup>4</sup>.

**ST. John Chrysostom**

2. Humbleness in our conduct with others: “For if a man thinks himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself [3].

Here again he reflects on their arrogance. He that thinks himself to be something is nothing, and exhibits at the outset a proof of his worthlessness by such a disposition.

“But let each man prove his own work” [4]. Here he shows that we ought to be critics of our own lives, and this not lightly, but carefully to weigh our actions; as for example, if you have performed a good deed, consider whether it was not from vain glory, or through necessity, or malevolence, or with hypocrisy, or from some other human motive...

“And then shall he have his glorying in regard of himself alone and not of his neighbor” [4]... Boasting is sense less, but if you will, do not boast against your neighbor, as the Pharisee did...

He corrects the boaster, so that he may no more entertain high thoughts of himself, by bringing to his remembrance his own errors, and pressing upon his conscience the idea of a burden, and of being heavily laden [5]<sup>147</sup>.

**ST. John Chrysostom**

3. Sowing to the Spirit: “A man will always reap just the kind of crop he sows” [7]. If

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we sow to the Spirit, we will reap a spiritual harvest. If we sow to the flesh (our own sinful desires), we will reap moral weakness [6:7-8]. We must sow the seed of our life in the soil of the Spirit, not the soil of the flesh.

Christian work is not buying and selling but sowing and reaping, we are to plant the living Word.

The harvest will not be according to how much we know but how much we sow. We may have a large supply of seed in the hollow of the mind, but unless it is planted in suitable soil it will bear no harvest. Sow the seed of thoughts in word and deeds, God's Word always brings forth seed after its kind.

He that sows unto his own flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that sows unto the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap eternal life... He that plants in the flesh, wantonness, drunkenness, or inordinate desire, shall reap the fruits of these things. And what are these fruits? Punishment, retribution, shame, derision, destruction... But the fruits of the Spirit are of a nature not similar but contrary in all respects to these. For consider, have you sown almsgiving? the treasures of heaven and eternal glory await you; have you sown temperance? honor and reward, and the applause of angels, and a crown from the Judge awaits you<sup>148</sup>.

**ST. John Chrysostom**

4. Persevere in universal charity [9, 10]:

❖ He makes his discourse general, and opens the door of this charitable zeal to all; nay, he carries it to such a height, as to command us to show mercy both to Jews and Greeks, in the proper gradation indeed, but still to show mercy. And what is this gravitation? it consists in bestowing greater care upon the faithful... He sets them free from the narrow-mindedness of the Jews<sup>149</sup>.

**ST. John Chrysostom**

5. Sincere and spiritual love: St. Paul wrote the whole letter by his own hand [11] as a proof of his great sincerity. In his other letters he himself only dictated and another wrote (Rom. 16:22). It is generally held by modern commentators that at this point, St. Paul adds the concluding words with his hand. He draws attention to the large letters he makes, perhaps because he was handicapped by defective eye sight. There is no reference in Greek texts to a large or small hand but there is a passage of some interest in the biography of a Coptic saint. It relates that St. Symphronius, as a small boy, learned first the "small hand" and six months later the "large hand;" which certainly suggests that in Coptic, very similar to Greek, the large hand was more difficult<sup>150</sup>.

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<sup>148</sup>

<sup>149</sup>

<sup>150</sup>

False teachers desire to make a fair show in the flesh, by compelling them to be circumcised [12], instead of boasting of the cross [14]. They did not behave this way out of respect to God; but to boast. This procedure is not founded in piety, all this is done through human ambition; in order that the unbelievers may be gratified by the mutilation of the faithful, they choose to offend God that they may please men.

False teachers ignore the glory of the cross while the apostle says, “But far be it from me to glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ” [14].

What is the boast of the cross? That Christ for my sake took on Him the form of a slave, the enemy, the unfeeling one; yea He so loved me as to give Himself up to a curse for me. What can be comparable to this!...

Let us then not be ashamed of His unspeakable tenderness; He was not ashamed of being crucified for your sake, and shall you be ashamed to confess His infinite solicitude? It is as if a prison who had not been ashamed of his king, should after that king had come to the prison and himself loosed of the chains, become ashamed of him on that account. Yet this would be the height of madness, for this very fact would be an especial ground for boasting<sup>151</sup>.

**ST. John Chrysostom**

6. To be crucified unto the world [14]:

❖ What he here calls the world is not the heaven nor the earth, but the affairs of life, the praise of men, retinues, glory, wealth, and all such things as have a show of splendor. To me these things are dead... And I am dead to them, neither do they captivate nor overcome me, for they are dead once for all, nor can I desire them, for I too am dead to them. Nothing can be more blessed than this putting to death, for it is the foundation of the blessed life<sup>152</sup>.

**ST. John Chrysostom**

❖ Let us hear the declaration which Ezekiel the so called “son of man” (2:1) makes concerning the virtue of him who is to be the true son of man, the Christian, “I will take you,” he says, “from among the heathen... then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and you shall be clean from all your filthiness... a new heart also will I give you and a new spirit” (36:24-26)... Wherefore the song also which we sing is a new song (rev. 14:3), and putting off the old man (Eph. 4:22) we walk not in the oldness of the letter but in the newness of the spirit (Rom. 7:6). This is the new stone wherein the new name is written,

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<sup>151</sup>

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“which no man knows saving he that receives it” (Rev. 2:17)<sup>153</sup>.

**St. Jerome**

- ❖ For he, who was able to make himself known by miracles so many and so great, says, “God forbid that I should glory in anything else, than in the Cross of Christ.” And to the Corinthians he says that the word of the Cross is “the power of God to them that are in a state of salvation” (cf. 1 Cor. 1:18). To the Ephesians, more over, he describes by the figure of the Cross the power that contand holds together the universe<sup>154</sup>.

**St. Gregory of Nyssa**

- ❖ If any one is ashamed of the cross of Christ, he is ashamed of the dispensation on account of which these powers were triumphed over (Col. 2:15)<sup>155</sup>.

**Origen**

- ❖ For wondrous indeed it was, that one who was blind from his birth should receive sight in Siloam, but what is this compared with the blind of the whole world?... The glory of the cross led those who were blind through ignorance into light, loosed all who were held fast by sin, and ransomed the whole world of mankind<sup>156</sup>.

**St. Cyril of Jerusalem**

He calls the Church in general “the Israel of God<sup>157</sup>.”

7. Bearing the marks (stigma) of Jesus: The apostle asks that nobody troubles him for he bears the stigma of our Lord Jesus Christ [17].

St. Paul bore in his body the slave marks of our Lord Jesus. He says that he bore them and not he had them, for he looks like a man priding himself on trophies and royal ensigns.

These were marks of:

1. Ownership: “I belong to Him.” The Greek word “stigma” means a brand, a mark, sometimes burnt into the face, body, or arm of a slave or a soldier. The reference is probably to the scars of his apostolic sufferings (2 Cor. 6:4-10; 11:23-29).

2. Devotion: He works on behalf of others.

3. Commission.

4. Perhaps the marks of the ill-treatment he had already received from the Galatians.

- ❖ These signs reveal the sincerity of the apostle. St. Chrysostom says on behalf of the apostle, [More clearly by those wounds than by any argument, than by any language, do I vindicate myself. For these wounds utter a voice louder than a trumpet against my opponents, and against those who say that I play the hypocrite in my teaching, and speak

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<sup>153</sup>

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what may please men. For no one who saw a soldier retiring from the battle bathed in blood and with a thousand wounds, would dare to accuse him of cowardice and treachery, seeing that he bears on his body the proofs of his valor, and so ought you, he says to judge of me<sup>158</sup>.

**St. John Chrysostom**

## CONCLUSION

For a final time he repeats his criticism of the Judaizers who continue to pressure the Galatians to be circumcised for failing themselves to obey the entire Torah. St. Paul's boast and pride is in the redemption wrought by the passion and death of our Lord Jesus. He has rejected a way of life measured by external observances of the Law and has been created afresh.

His final lines are as terse as the salutation of this letter. His body already shows the physical effects of his labors and sufferings in the ministry (2 Cor. 11:23-25). He pleads with the Galatians not to add any more by troubling him<sup>17</sup>.

***“The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit, brethren. Amen” [18].***

❖ By this last word he has sealed all that preceded it. He says not merely, “with you,” as elsewhere, but “with your spirit,” thus withdrawing them from carnal things, and displaying throughout the beneficence of God, and reminding them of the grace which they enjoyed, whereby he was able to recall them from all judaizing errors<sup>159</sup>.

**St. John Chrysostom**

1. Cassian, Conferences, 16:23.
2. Hom. 51.
3. Chapter 6.
3. Chapter 6.
4. Chapter 6.
5. Chapter 6.
6. Chapter 6.
7. Chapter 6.
8. A New Catholic Comm., p.118. W. Till, Koptische Heiligen-und Martyrer legenden, Orientalia Christiana Analecta, 102, Roma, 1935, vol. 1, p.57.
9. Chapter 6.
10. Chapter 6.
11. Ep. 69:7.

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<sup>158</sup>

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12. Against Eunomius 5:3.
13. Comm on Matt., book 12:18.
14. Catech. Lect. 13:1.
15. A Catholic Comm., p. 1180.
16. Chapter 6.
17. Collegeville Bible ., p. 1079.
18. Chapter6.

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