

# CHRIST REPLACING THE LAW AS REVEALED IN GALATIANS

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The truth concerning justification by faith ignited the Reformation and altered the course of history. Although Martin Luther initially discovered this revelation in Romans 1:17 (“The righteous shall have life and live by faith”), it was the Epistle to the Galatians that became his favorite book and the rallying cry of the Reformation. Luther regarded this Epistle with deep affection: “The Epistle to the Galatians is my epistle. To it I am as it were in wedlock. It is my Katherine [my wife]” (*Commentary* iii). Since the Reformation the truth regarding justification by faith alone has freed innumerable believers from the bondage of justification by works. Consequently, among Reformation scholars Galatians has been acclaimed as “the cornerstone of the Protestant Reformation” (Tenney 15) as well as “the Magna Carta of Christian liberty” (Moody 118).

Although the truth concerning justification by faith is a steadfast foundation of God’s full salvation, a decided majority of believers regrettably fall short of realizing that they need to advance beyond this rudimentary matter (Heb. 6:1). The New Testament clearly teaches that God’s complete salvation in the life of His Son is “much more” than the judicial redemption accomplished by His death (Rom. 5:10); that is, God’s organic salvation far surpasses judicial redemption in both power and scope. Yet God’s full salvation is grossly neglected in the many commentaries on Galatians, which exalt justification by faith as the central theme of this Epistle. As George R. Brunk III observes,

Since the Reformation, the interpretation of Galatians has largely been dominated by mainline Protestant perspectives. The doctrine of justification by faith has been seen as the central and nearly exclusive theme...Until recent decades, even groups whose theological stance and emphases differ from the mainline Protestant genre have generally accepted this way of understanding the letter. (18)

For example, in the *Ryrie Study Bible*, Charles Caldwell Ryrie speaks of justification by faith as “the theme” of Galatians and asserts that Galatians is structured according to this theme: justification by faith is “defended” in chapters 1 and 2, “explained” in chapters 3 and 4, and “applied” in chapters 5 and 6 (1863-1864). In *Galatians: The Wondrous Grace of God*, John F. MacArthur similarly states that “the central theme of Galatians (like that of Romans) is justification by faith”; “Paul defends that doctrine (the heart of the gospel) both in its theological (chs. 3 and 4) and practical (chs. 5 and 6) ramifications” (3). Regrettably, these expositors’ preoccupation with justification by faith hinders them from seeing the focal point not only of this Epistle but also of the entire New Testament: the all-inclusive Christ, the centrality and universality of God’s economy (Col. 1:25-27; Eph. 3:8-11).

The apostle Paul was entrusted with the stewardship of the grace of God to “announce to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ as the gospel and to enlighten all that

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they may see what the economy of the mystery is" (vv. 2, 8-9). The book of Galatians was written in accordance with this commission, presenting the unsearchably rich Christ as the entire content, "the Alpha and the Omega" (Rev. 22:13), of God's mysterious economy. Galatians begins with Christ, referring to Jesus Christ as the One through whom Paul was made an apostle and from whom flow grace and peace (1:1, 3), and concludes with Christ, referring to "the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ" (6:18). The primacy of Christ Himself over justification in Galatians is indicated by the fact that in this Epistle the words *justify* and *justified* are mentioned a mere seven times, whereas *Christ* is mentioned thirty-six times. By the principle that "out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks" (Matt. 12:34), it is clear that Paul's primary burden in writing Galatians was not to simply convince his audience of the truth concerning justification by faith rather than by works but to usher them into the full revelation and experience of the untraceably rich Christ as the abounding grace, who replaces the law.

The central thought of Galatians should be understood in light of Paul's realization of Christ's primacy over everything, even justification by faith, in God's economy. Even justification is but one of the rich aspects of the experience of Christ in Galatians: Christ is the sphere of justification—we are "justified in Christ" (2:17)—and Christ is the means of justification—we are justified "through faith in Jesus Christ" and "out of faith in Christ" (v. 16). Moreover, in this Epistle Paul unveils that justification serves an organic end—that is, it is for the impartation of Christ as life into the believers (cf. John 11:25). By declaring that "the righteous one [a believer justified by God] shall have life" (Gal. 3:11), Paul implies that justification is not the goal but the procedure that qualifies the believers to receive the life-giving Spirit, the unique blessing in the New Testament. Neither is the truth that "God would justify the Gentiles out of faith" (v. 8) presented as an end in itself but has as its explicit aim the participation of the Gentiles in the blessing of the gospel announced to Abraham, which is "the promise of the Spirit" (v. 14), who is frequently identified with life in Paul's Epistles (Gal. 6:8; Rom. 8:2; 1 Cor. 15:45; 2 Cor. 3:6). Elsewhere Paul states that justification is "of life" (Rom. 5:18), indicating that justification issues in the believers' receiving Christ as life (v. 17; 8:10). Christ is therefore not only the sphere and means of justification but also its goal, for He Himself is life (John 14:6). Ultimately, justification opens the way for Christ to fulfill His purpose in coming into the world: "I have come that they may have life and may have it abundantly" (10:10; 6:33, 51). A preoccupation with justification by faith may restrict our appreciation of Christ to what He as the Redeemer has accomplished historically through His substitutionary death on the cross; seeing the revelation of the all-inclusive Christ in Galatians, however, expands our appreciation for what He as the life-giving Spirit intends to accomplish within us presently: to impart Himself as life into our entire being for the producing of the church as God's new creation.

Under this lens it is clear that the principal antithesis presented in Galatians is not that between justification by faith and justification by works but that between Christ, the center of God's New Testament economy, and the law, the basis of God's Old Testament economy. Furthermore, the Christ whom Galatians presents as the replacement of the law is not only the objective Savior but also the subjective Savior—not only the Savior on the cross but also the Savior who indwells us in resurrection (2:20). Objectively, as a man in the flesh, Christ became a curse on our behalf and redeemed us out of the curse of the law through His vicarious death for our sins that we may be justified by God (1:4; 3:13); subjectively, in our experience, Christ as the Spirit is revealed in us, lives in us, and is formed in us to fulfill the righteous requirement of the law and to make us "the righteousness of God" in Christ (2 Cor. 5:21). As the indwelling Spirit (Rom. 8:11), He enables us to live a life that is justified, approved, by God for the constitution of the church as God's corporate new creation, the one new man (Eph. 2:15; Rom. 4:25; cf. 1 Tim. 3:16).

Though only implied in Galatians, the truth that the Christ who replaces the law is the Spirit, the realization of the resurrected Christ (2 Cor. 3:17-18), is crucial for the believers'



practical experience of freedom from the law. In *God's Empowering Presence: The Holy Spirit in the Letters of Paul*, Gordon D. Fee explains that in Galatians, the Spirit is “the primary, experienced reality of Christian life” and states that “the indwelling Spirit has replaced Torah” (433, 371). Fee underscores the pivotal importance of the Spirit in Galatians:

Because of the emphasis by the Reformers on the language of “justification” and “by faith,” there has been a tendency to neglect the equally important matter of the life in the Spirit, which is the central focus of so much of the argument in this letter. (368)

**I**n harmony with this emphasis on Christ as the Spirit replacing the Old Testament law, Galatians consistently places Christ as the Spirit in opposition to the Jewish religion with its observance of the law, which depends on the flesh. Indeed, the contrast between flesh and Spirit, which is prevalent in the latter half of the Epistle, is the experiential mirror of that between the law and Christ in the first half. Tertullian spoke of Galatians as “the primary epistle against Judaism” (513), as this Epistle was written against the dark background of the Galatian believers’ desertion of the grace of Christ for the antiquated and fleshly observance of the law taught by the Judaizers. The Galatians had been called in the grace of Christ through the apostle Paul’s ministry to receive the gospel of Christ and the Spirit of God’s Son, but they had fallen under the pernicious influence of the Judaizers, who perverted the gospel of Christ and distracted the Galatians from the enjoyment of Christ as grace to the adherence to Judaism with its law and traditions.

In His wise sovereignty, however, the Lord employed this negative backdrop as the setting for the shining revelation concerning Christ as the all-inclusive replacement of the law. In Galatians Paul uniquely exalts the processed, consummated, and now indwelling and dispensing Christ—the Christ who passed through the process of incarnation, death, and resurrection to be consummated as the life-giving Spirit (1 Cor. 15:45)—so that He as the Spirit may be unveiled in us, live in us, and be fully formed in us for the building up of the church as God’s new creation, which is the household of the faith for His expression and the true Israel of God for His representation. God’s New Testament economy is to impart Himself in Christ as the life-giving Spirit into the believers’ whole being in order to unite their entire tripartite being with Christ for the producing of the corporate expression of God in Christ. The Judaizers were ignorant of this intention in the divine economy and were bewitching the Galatian believers to rebel against God’s New Testament economy and neglect their organic union with Christ through faith. This is what motivated Paul to write his Epistle to the Galatians. Paul thus labored to bring the distracted believers in Galatia from the observance of the law to the normal experience of Christ as the Spirit for the strengthening and enlargement of their organic union with Christ so that they may become God’s new creation, the one new man who bears God’s image and exercises His dominion.

### Christ Rescuing Us out of the Present Evil Age, the Jewish Religion

At the outset of Galatians, Paul presents the subject of this Epistle—Christ delivering the distracted believers from the evil religious age—in saying that Christ “gave Himself for our sins that He might rescue us out of the present evil age according to the will of our God and Father” (1:4). Here Paul does not say that Christ gave Himself for our sins to rescue us from eternal perdition, as Reformed theology might expect, but to rescue us out of the present evil age. Ephesians 2:2 refers to “the age of this world,” showing that an age is a particular section of the world, or Satan’s kingdom (John 12:31). Hence, the present evil age should be understood as the present ruinous part of the world, as a satanic system that frustrates people from enjoying God and accomplishing His purpose (1 John 2:15). The expression *present evil age* should also be interpreted by Paul’s particular understanding of evil in the context of this Epistle. In Galatians Paul portrays Judaism with its law, ordinances, and traditions as an evil substitute for Christ, which causes the

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believers to be separated from Christ, fall from grace, and be entangled with a yoke of slavery (5:1-4). Hence, Witness Lee states that "according to the context of this book, the present evil age here refers to the religious world, the religious course of the world, the Jewish religion" (*Recovery Version*, 1:4, note 2). The world is unambiguously identified with Judaism in Galatians 6:12-15. In verse 14 Paul proclaims that through the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ the world has been crucified to him and he to the world. This is directly preceded by verses 12 and 13, wherein Paul exposes the Judaizers, who compelled the Galatians to be circumcised, as those who "desire to make a good show in the flesh" and "boast" in the flesh of the Galatians to avoid being "persecuted for the cross of Christ." Then in verse 15 Paul speaks of circumcision as part of the world to which he was crucified. The present evil age in 1:4 should therefore be understood not as an age of the explicitly anti-God secular world but of the religious world as a subtly deceptive part of Satan's anti-God system. In New Testament times it was often Judaism, the religious world, that most opposed Christ and hindered people from participating in God's New Testament economy (Matt. 12:9-14; Luke 4:28-29; John 9:22; 16:2; Acts 13:43-46, 50; 14:1-2, 19; 17:1, 5-6).

Any religion, not just Judaism, can be such an evil influence on the believers. Religion refers to any way, teaching, or system used by human beings to improve their behavior, serve God, or worship God according to their natural concept or desire and apart from the living presence of Christ. Religion is a subtle enemy of Christ, for though it professes to serve and worship God, it opposes and replaces Christ, hindering the believers in Christ from enjoying and gaining Him for the fulfillment of God's purpose. The Lord Jesus even referred to Judaism as a "synagogue of Satan" (Rev. 2:9; 3:9) because it had been usurped by Satan to oppose and persecute the Lord and the apostles. In order for us to experience and be filled with Christ exclusively, we need to repudiate every aspect of religion and be emptied of all religious traditions, practices, and concepts.

Judaism was built upon the God-given law with its principal pillars: circumcision, the Sabbath, and the holy dietary regulations. The law, the base of Judaism, is "holy," "righteous," and "good" (Rom. 7:12, 16) "if one uses it lawfully" (1 Tim. 1:8). The law as God's testimony portrays, defines, and reveals God to His people (Lev. 19:2). As such, the law places many demands and requirements on fallen man, thereby leading man to "the clear knowledge of sin" (Rom. 3:20; 4:20; 5:20; 7:7-8, 13). The law also subdues sinners before God, causing them to "fall under the judgment of God" (3:19; Gal. 3:19). Further, for a period of time the law was used by God as a fold to preserve His sheep until Christ came (John 10:1, 16)—a "child-conductor unto Christ" to guard God's elect in its custody so that they might be brought to Christ in order to be justified by faith, have Christ as life, and live Him by faith (Gal. 2:20; 3:11, 23-24). Since Christ, both the end and the goal of the law (Rom. 10:4), has come, God's elect should no longer be kept under the custody of the law; instead, they should set aside the law, believe into Christ, and abide in Him to enjoy Him as grace and live Him for God's expression (John 3:16; 15:4-5; Phil. 1:19-21). Satan, however, caused God's elect to misuse the law, which became a distraction from God's economy as they tried to keep the law by their own effort to fulfill their fleshly desire of exalting and expressing themselves in self-made righteousness, which is but a worthless "soiled garment" in the eyes of God (3:9; Rom. 10:3; Isa. 64:6). By receiving the Judaizers, who taught this form of self-made righteousness under the law, the Galatian believers came under the yoke of the law, serving the law as slaves instead of partaking of Christ as grace (cf. Acts 15:1-33).

In Galatians Paul emphasizes Christ as the replacement of the law, setting the believers free from its bondage. Paul's presentation of Christ in this Epistle is thorough, encompassing His incarnation, death, and resurrection, by which He was consummated to be the life-giving Spirit so that He may enter into the believers, live in them, and be wrought into them. As the incarnated One, Christ was born of a woman and born under law to redeem those under law (4:4-5) and became the promised seed of Abraham in



whom “all the nations of the earth shall be blessed” (3:8, 16; Gen. 12:3; 22:18; Acts 3:25-26). As the crucified One, Christ gave Himself for our sins to rescue us out of the evil religious course of the world (Gal. 1:4) and was made a curse on our behalf to redeem us out of the curse of the law (3:13). As the resurrected One, Christ was raised from the dead (1:1) to become the life-giving Spirit so that God may bountifully supply the Spirit to us (1 Cor. 15:45; Phil. 1:19; Gal. 3:5). It is because the resurrected Christ is the Spirit that we can be baptized into Him, put Him on, and be in Him (vv. 27-28) and that He can be revealed in us, live in us, and be formed in us (1:16; 2:20; 4:19). Although Christ has set us free from the slavery of the law through His redeeming death and life-dispensing resurrection (5:1), we may experience this glorious freedom in grace only by contacting this Emancipator as the indwelling Spirit, for “where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom” (2 Cor. 3:17). Because of the deep-seated tendency in our fallen nature to revert to living by the law (Rom. 7:18, 22), our experience of Christ as the Emancipator who replaced the law must be strengthened, expanded, and deepened. As the crucified Redeemer, Christ has freed us from the judicial penalty for our sins by fulfilling the requirements of the law; but more significantly, as the life-giving, indwelling Spirit who is united with us to saturate our entire inner being (1 Cor. 6:17), Christ has brought us into Himself as the unique constituent of our daily walk and our inward parts so that we may no longer live by the law but by Him (Gal. 5:16, 25) and may no longer be permeated with the law but with Him (4:19).

## Christ as God’s Son Revealed in Us versus Judaism as Man’s Religion

### *God’s Pleasure Being in the Son and Not in the Law*

After contrasting Christ as the crucified Redeemer with Judaism as the present evil age (1:3-4), Paul sets up a further contrast between Christ as God’s Son and Judaism as man’s religion (v. 6—2:10). In 1:13-14 Paul recounts his former life: “You have heard of my manner of life formerly in Judaism, that I persecuted the church of God excessively and ravaged it. And I advanced in Judaism beyond many contemporaries in my race, being more abundantly a zealot for the traditions of my fathers.” Paul, as Saul of Tarsus, had been “trained at the feet of Gamaliel, according to the strictness of the law of our fathers, being zealous for God” (Acts 22:3). He had not only acquired a great deal of knowledge of the law but had also attained a high degree of righteousness in his living, because of which he attested that he had become “blameless” with respect to the standard of righteousness in the law (Phil. 3:6). However, when he was shown mercy by the Lord and received His grace (1 Tim. 1:13-16), Saul experienced a vanquishing conversion from the law to Christ—from God’s Old Testament economy to His New Testament economy. This glorious transfer took place not by man’s persuasion but by God’s own revelation of His Son in Saul: “When it pleased God, who set me apart from my mother’s womb and called me through His grace, to reveal His Son in me that I might announce Him as the gospel among the Gentiles, immediately I did not confer with flesh and blood” (Gal. 1:15-16). What pleases God is to reveal not the law but Christ His beloved Son, His unique delight (Col. 1:13; Eph. 1:6; Matt. 3:17; 17:4-5). The Son of God pleases God (John 8:29) because the Son as the second of the Trinity is the embodiment and expression of God the Father and is realized as the life-giving Spirit (Matt. 28:19; Col. 2:9; John 14:9-11; 1 Cor. 15:45; 2 Cor. 3:17). As the effulgence of God’s glory and the impress of His substance (Heb. 1:2-3), the Son declares the invisible God (John 1:18), bearing the image of God and manifesting God (Col. 1:15; 2 Cor. 4:4; 1 Tim. 3:16). God so loved the Son that, “before the foundation of the world,” that is, in eternity past, God, “according to the good pleasure of His will,” predestinated us “unto sonship” (Eph. 1:4-6), that is, for us “to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the Firstborn among many brothers” (Rom. 8:28-29). In other words, God’s good pleasure is to reproduce His beloved Son in many human beings in order to make Him the firstborn Son and to make them His many brothers as the many sons of God for an enlarged embodiment and expression of Himself in the Son (John 20:17; Heb. 2:10-11). Truly, God’s good pleasure is uniquely focused on His Son and not the law.

PAUL’S PRESENTATION OF CHRIST IN THIS EPISTLE IS THOROUGH, ENCOMPASSING HIS INCARNATION, DEATH, AND RESURRECTION, BY WHICH HE WAS CONSUMMATED TO BE THE LIFE-GIVING SPIRIT SO THAT HE MAY ENTER INTO THE BELIEVERS, LIVE IN THEM, AND BE WROUGHT INTO THEM.

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The Son of God occupies the central place in God’s eternal purpose. Since He delights in His Son, God wants His elect to love Him (“kiss the Son”) and “take refuge in Him” by believing into Him and abiding in Him (Psa. 2:12; John 3:16, 36; 14:21, 23; 15:4-5). When Peter made a foolish proposal on the Mount of Transfiguration to build tents for Moses (representing the law) and Elijah (representing the prophets) in addition to Christ, he effectively elevated Moses and Elijah to the same level as that of the Son (Matt. 17:4). But while Peter was still speaking, God intervened with a definitive exaltation of Christ the Son above the law and the prophets, referring to Him as “My Son, the Beloved, in whom I have found My delight” and instructing the disciples to “hear Him” (v. 5). Then God caused Moses and Elijah to disappear from the scene so that the disciples saw “no one except Jesus Himself alone” (v. 8; cf. Mark 9:7-8). This incident clearly unveils that in the eyes of God, the Son is superior to the law and the prophets and that we must pay our undivided attention to the living person of the Son and not to any religion or tradition. In the New Testament age, God speaks to us not in the law but in the Son (Heb. 1:2) and has called us not into the fellowship of the law but into “the fellowship of His Son” so that we may know Him, receive Him as the embodiment of the divine life, and partake of Him as our God-allotted portion, thereby becoming the sons of God in life rather than slaves under law (1 Cor. 1:2, 9; 1 John 5:11-12; John 1:12; Col. 1:12; Gal. 4:5-7). Such a Son was the unique content of Paul’s preaching (1:16; Acts 17:18; 9:20; Eph. 3:8; 1 Cor. 2:1-2). In Paul’s words, “the gospel of God,” which is the gospel of God’s New Testament economy (Rom. 1:1; 1 Tim. 1:4, 10-11), is “concerning His Son” (Rom. 1:1-3); hence, this gospel, which Paul identifies as his gospel (2:16; 16:25), is also called “the gospel of His Son” and not the gospel of the law (1:9). In God’s New Testament economy the preeminence is accorded to the Son, a living person, not to Judaism with its lifeless traditions.

### *The Son of God in the Believers Realized as the Indwelling Spirit of God’s Son in Their Human Spirit*

It is significant that God the Father revealed His Son not *to* Paul but *in* Paul (Gal. 1:16), indicating that the Son was imparted into Paul and sown into him as the seed of life (John 14:6). Thus, Paul, as with all the fellow believers and receivers of Christ, was “begotten not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God” to be a child of God (1:12-13, 3; 3:6; 1 John 5:11). In *The Interpretation of St. Paul’s Epistles to the Galatians, to the Ephesians, and to the Philippians* R. C. H. Lenski underlines the significance of the expression *in me* in Galatians 1:16: “‘In me’ is stronger than the mere dative ‘to me.’...‘In me’ is even more than ‘in my experience.’...It filled his very heart, soul, and spirit so as to abide with him forever” (57).

In Paul’s understanding, God revealing His Son in us is tantamount to the God of glory dispensing Himself in the Son into us: God “shined *in* our hearts to illuminate the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ” (2 Cor. 4:6, emphasis added). Christ the Son can enter into us and dwell in us only because in resurrection He as the last Adam was transfigured from the flesh into the “life-giving Spirit” (1 Cor. 15:45; 2 Cor. 3:17). Today in our experience the resurrected Son is realized as the indwelling Spirit of God’s Son, whom God has sent forth into our hearts (Gal. 4:6). In 3:1 Paul says that, through hearing the gospel, the believers in Galatia saw with the eyes of their heart Jesus Christ crucified, which resulted in their believing into Christ (2:16). In 3:2, however, Paul speaks of the issue of their faith in Christ as receiving “the Spirit...out of the hearing of faith.” This is because receiving Christ and receiving the Spirit are equivalent: the crucified and resurrected Christ whom we receive by believing into His name (John 1:12-13) is none other than the Spirit whom we receive by believing into Christ (7:38-39; 20:22). Accordingly, Paul declares that we, having heard the gospel of our salvation and believing in Christ, were sealed with the Holy Spirit of the promise (Eph. 1:13). The Christ whom God was pleased to reveal in us is “the Spirit” whom God “has caused to dwell in us” (James 4:5; cf. 1 Cor. 3:16; 1 John 4:13). In Romans 8:10 Paul speaks of Christ being in us, yet in the verses before and after, Paul refers to the Spirit who dwells in us (vv. 9, 11). This indicates



that in Paul's view, the Spirit who dwells in us is the very indwelling Christ (Col. 1:27). Similarly, the apostle John declares that the Lord "abides in us, by the Spirit whom He gave to us" (1 John 3:24). This declaration underscores the truth that the Lord's "dwelling in us as the Spirit is the center of the New Testament" (Lee, "Spiritual Knowledge" 460).

God's revealing of His Son in the believers is dependent upon the work of the Spirit of God in their human spirit. Since no one fully knows the Son except the Father (Matt. 11:27), only the Father, not flesh and blood (human beings), can reveal the Son to us (16:17; cf. Gal. 1:16). Yet this revelation is accomplished through the indwelling Spirit: God has revealed the deep and hidden things concerning the Son as the wisdom of God and the Lord of glory "through the Spirit," who "searches all things," even Christ as "the depths of God" (1 Cor. 1:24, 30; 2:6-10). It is the indwelling Spirit of reality (John 14:17) who "proceeds from the Father," testifies concerning the Son (15:26), and guides us into all the reality, that is, into the all-inclusive Son as the reality (16:13; 14:6). This is because the Spirit as the reality (1 John 5:6) receives and declares to us all the riches of the Son, who possesses all the Father's fullness, making these riches real to us and in us (John 16:14-15). The divine Spirit has been sent into our hearts (Gal. 4:6) and is joined to our regenerated human spirit (1 Cor. 6:17; Rom. 8:16; John 3:6; 4:24); therefore, for us to receive the revelation of God's Son in us, we need to not only turn our heart to the Lord (2 Cor. 3:14-18) but also exercise our regenerated human spirit, "a spirit of wisdom and revelation," to contact the Spirit (Eph. 1:17). For this reason, the mystery of Christ, who is the Son of the living God (Matt. 16:16), is revealed to the holy apostles and prophets "in spirit" (Eph. 3:4-5). Only spiritual men, those who walk according to their spirit (the "spirit of man") indwelt by the revealing "Spirit of God" (1 Cor. 2:11, 15; Rom. 8:4), can discern the things of the Spirit of God, that is, the unfathomably deep riches of Christ as the Son of God. Therefore, the revelation of God's Son in us involves the operation of the entire Triune God in our regenerated human spirit: God the Father reveals the Son through the Spirit who dwells in our spirit (Eph. 2:22).

God revealed His Son in Paul at his conversion; however, as both a spiritual man and a holy apostle in spirit, Paul continued to receive the revelation of God's Son throughout his Christian life (Acts 9:17; 26:16; cf. 2 Tim. 4:8; John 14:21). It was through this progressive inward revelation of the Son that Paul was fully transformed from a zealot for his ancestral traditions and a persecutor of the church into an ardent pursuer of Christ and a faithful minister of the church so that he might work together with Christ to turn God's chosen people from the darkness of Judaism to the light of Christ and from the Jewish religion under the authority of Satan to the church as the kingdom of the Son of God's love under the authority of God (1 Cor. 3:9; 15:58; 16:10; 2 Cor. 6:1; Phil. 3:12-14; Col. 1:12-13, 24-25; Acts 26:18). Further, through a subjective vision of the Son who had been wrought into him, Paul saw "the excellency of the knowledge" of Christ the Son (Phil. 3:8). On account of this surpassingly precious Christ, Paul counted all his religious attainments in Judaism as "loss" and "refuse" and aspired to not have his own righteousness, which is out of the law, but that which is through faith in Christ (vv. 4-9). The revelation of God's Son in Paul opened his inner eyes to perceive the surpassing worth of the Son, which far exceeded the excellency of the law, and impelled him to gladly forsake his zeal for the law and the righteousness in the law so that he might obtain Christ and be immersed in Christ to live out Christ as his subjective righteousness. Similarly, in the believers' experience Christ extricates them out of religion with its traditions by the revelation of Himself as the Son of God in them through the work of the indwelling Spirit. The revelation of the Son in us opens the way for Him to live in us and be formed in us so that He, instead of the law, may be daily lived out of us and be fully wrought into us.

### Christ Living in the Believers versus the Law

In Galatians the Christ who replaces the law not only is revealed in the believers but also lives in them, and our experience of this indwelling Christ is characterized by our

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THE SPIRIT.  
THE MYSTERY  
OF CHRIST,  
WHO IS THE SON  
OF THE LIVING GOD,  
IS REVEALED TO THE  
HOLY APOSTLES AND  
PROPHETS "IN SPIRIT."

IT IS OF CRUCIAL  
IMPORTANCE TO SEE  
THAT THE CRUCIFIED  
AND RESURRECTED  
CHRIST REPLACES  
THE LAW AS THE  
MEANS FOR US  
TO BE JUSTIFIED  
BOTH OBJECTIVELY  
(OUTWARDLY AND  
POSITIONALLY)  
AND SUBJECTIVELY  
(INWARDLY AND  
DISPOSITIONALLY)  
BY GOD.

participation in the grace of God and by our exercise of faith, both grace and faith being Christ Himself and versus the law. This is revealed in the apostle Paul's monumental statement in 2:20: "I am crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live in faith, the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me." Immediately before this declaration concerning the indwelling Christ, Paul says in verse 19, "I through law have died to law that I might live to God." To be dead to law indicates that since we have been "discharged from the law, having died to that in which we were held" through Christ's substitutionary death for us and our co-death with Him (Rom. 7:6; 5:8; 6:6, 8), we are no longer obligated to keep the law by the strength of the flesh. To live to God means to be obligated, responsible, to God in Christ with the goal of fulfilling His requirements and satisfying His desires (vv. 10-11; 2 Cor. 5:15). Paul's declaration *I...have died to law* (Gal. 2:19) corresponds to Paul's testimony *I am crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live* (v. 20). This indicates that the natural person who inclines to keep the law and desires to be under the law has been crucified (v. 21). Paul's expectation *I might live to God* (v. 19) corresponds to *Christ...lives in me...I...live in faith* (v. 20), showing that this natural person, the old "I," has been replaced by the indwelling Christ. It is of crucial importance to see that in Galatians 2 the crucified and resurrected Christ replaces the law as the means for us to be justified both objectively (outwardly and positionally) and subjectively (inwardly and dispositionally) by God. In verse 21 Paul says, "If righteousness is through law, then Christ has died for nothing." The death of Christ, not the law, is the unique means of obtaining righteousness before God. Such righteousness is not earned through our keeping the law; instead, it is given to us through faith in the redemptive death of Christ, which fulfilled the requirement of the holy and righteous law, so that in Him we may have objective righteousness and be justified by God positionally (1 Cor. 1:30; Gal. 2:16; Acts 13:39). Since the time of the Reformation, many believers have been clear that we are not justified out of the works of the law but rather are "justified freely by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 3:24). Ultimately, however, this justification is not only for our objective righteousness, that we may not be condemned by God, but it is to open the way for us to receive the resurrected Christ as life so that He may live in us (1:17; 5:18; 8:10). His living in us enables us to live out Christ as our subjective righteousness and be justified by God dispositionally (Phil. 1:19-21; 3:9).

When considering Christ and His love for them, most believers appreciate His death for them on the cross; few appreciate His living in them in resurrection and the resulting implications for their daily life. Christ gave Himself up for us not only to redeem us from the curse of the law but also to liberate us from the bondage under the law by dispensing Himself into us in His resurrection (Gal. 3:14; John 12:24; Rom. 8:10; Col. 1:27). Moreover, Christ resurrected to become the life-giving Spirit (1 Cor. 15:45) in order to enter into us and live in us. According to Galatians 2:20, Christ is not only in us but also "lives" in us. This indicates that Christ is much more than our Redeemer; He is "our life" and even our very person (Col. 3:4), for only a person can live in us and make His home in our heart (Eph. 3:17). If we allow Christ to live in us as our person in every aspect of our daily walk, He will be the reality of all the human virtues we live out in our daily life (Gal. 2:20; 5:22-24). Christ so loved us that He not only gave Himself up to die for us in His crucifixion but also gave Himself to us to live in us and for us in His resurrection (John 3:16; Eph. 5:2).

### *Christ Living in Us—a Grafted Life*

In revealing the indwelling Christ as the replacement of the law, Paul in Galatians 2:20 unveils the Christian life as a life in union with the resurrected Christ. Just as a grafted branch becomes one with the tree, so also the believers have been grafted together with Christ to become one organism, sharing the same life and the same living and growing together to bear fruit (Rom. 6:3-6; Col. 2:19). The genuine Christian life is not an exchanged life (i.e., one in which the believers are eradicated and replaced with Christ),



which would annul our union with Christ. The Christian life is a grafted life. This deep thought is marvelously presented in Paul's Epistle to the Romans. Through crucifixion the Gentile believers who were formerly wild olive branches have been cut off from Adam as a wild olive tree, and in resurrection they have been grafted into Christ as a cultivated olive tree to partake of the root of its fatness (6:6; 11:17, 20, 24; Gal. 3:27). Consequently, the believers have become branches of Christ as the true vine. As such, they may abide in Him, thereby allowing Him to abide in them for the sake of bearing fruit to the glory of the Father (John 15:1-5, 8, 16). As branches in Christ, the believers are identified with Christ both in His all-terminating death and in His all-germinating resurrection (1 Pet. 1:3). Hence, Paul proclaims in Romans 6:8 that although we "have died with Christ," we "will also live with Him." In Romans 6 Paul emphatically unveils that we are terminated through our co-death with Christ: "our old man has been crucified with Him" (v. 6); we "have been baptized into His death" (v. 3); and "we have been buried therefore with Him through baptism into His death" (v. 4). However, Paul makes it abundantly clear that in resurrection we continue to exist, albeit in a life union with Christ: "we might walk in newness of life" (v. 4); "we have grown together with Him in the likeness of his death" and "will also be in the likeness of His resurrection" (v. 5); and we are "dead to sin, but living to God in Christ Jesus" (v. 11). Far from being discarded, the believers in Christ are intimately and intrinsically joined to Christ to the extent that they coinhere with Him, He and they mutually dwelling in each other (8:1-2, 10; John 14:20).

The expression *no longer I* in Galatians 2:20 does not mean that there is no more "I," because in this verse Paul goes on to declare that Christ lives "in me" and that "I live in faith." Although it was Christ who lived, nevertheless, it was in Paul that Christ lived, and it was Paul who lived in the faith of the Son of God. That Christ lives in us does not mean that we are fully discarded so that Christ may live alone or instead of us. Rather, Christ lives with us, by us, through us, and out of us (John 14:19; 2 Cor. 13:4). This truth concerning Paul's co-living with Christ is confirmed in 1 Corinthians 7. Shortly after speaking of the believers' being joined to the Lord as one spirit in 1 Corinthians 6:17, Paul declares in 7:10, "To the married I charge, not I but the Lord." Since Paul as a spiritual man was practicing to be one spirit with the Lord, he thus had the mind of the Lord (2:15-16). When Paul charged in his spirit, the Lord charged with Paul, speaking in Paul's speaking. Therefore, although it was not Paul but the Lord who charged, nevertheless, it was Paul in oneness with the Lord who charged. This thought of Paul's union with the indwelling Christ also recalls Paul's proclamation in Colossians 3:10-11 that in the church as the new man, "there cannot be Greek and Jew, circumcision and uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free man, but Christ is all and in all." Here, Paul says not only that Christ is *all* (i.e., Christ is all the believers who constitute the new man) but also that He is *in all* (i.e., He is in all the believers, the members of the new man). In the new man there is no place, no room, for the natural person because Christ is all the members of the new man. However, the believers do not cease to exist, because Christ dwells in all of them (2 Cor. 13:5). The resurrected Christ, who lived in Paul, and the regenerated Paul, in whom Christ lived, had one life (one "inner substance") and one living (one "outward expression") (Lee, *Conclusion* 3279). The life of Christ was Paul's life (Col. 3:4), and the living of Paul was Christ's living, the living expression of Christ (Phil. 1:21).

Such a grafted life, in which the human life is joined to the divine life, was seen first in the Lord Jesus, the first God-man (Matt. 1:18, 20, 23). The Lord's human living, which serves as a model for the living of the believers as the many God-men (1 Pet. 2:21; Matt. 11:29; Eph. 4:20-21), far surpasses the living of a religious person who endeavors to keep the law by his natural life. This grafted life is encapsulated in the Lord's own words in John 6:57: "As the living Father has sent Me and I live because of the Father, so he who eats Me, he also shall live because of Me." By declaring that He lived because of the Father, the Lord revealed that He lived on account of, by, and through the Father, taking the Father as His person and the factor of His living. Further, by saying that the believers who eat Him will live because of Him, the Lord unveiled His expectation that the

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believers would likewise live on account of, by, and through Him, taking Him as their person by partaking of Him as their spiritual food. The Gospel of John reveals that although the Lord and the Father are two distinct persons, they had one life and one living, mutually indwelling each other (14:11; 10:38; 17:21). This was because the Lord Jesus denied His natural human life and lived by the Father's divine life, taking the Father as His person. The Lord did not speak His own words but the Father's (14:10, 24); He did not present His own teaching but the Father's (7:16); He did not come to do His own will but the Father's (5:30; 6:38); He did not seek His own glory but the Father's (7:18); and He did nothing from Himself but only the things that were pleasing to the Father (5:19, 30; 8:28-29). Paul's experience of the indwelling Christ was a reproduction of the Lord's experience of the indwelling Father, which He spoke of in John 14:10: "The words that I say to you I do not speak from Myself, but the Father who abides in Me does His works." The Lord's words here mirror Paul's statement in Galatians 2:20: *it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me*. Just as the Lord Jesus lived and worked not from Himself but in union with the Father who abode in the Lord and did His works (John 5:30), so also the apostle Paul lived and labored in union with the Lord who lived in him and operated in him in power (15:5; Col. 1:29; Phil. 2:13).

### *The Christ Who Lives in Us Being the Spirit versus the Law*

In Galatians Paul reveals that the indwelling Christ who replaces the law in the believers' experience is the Spirit of Christ in their regenerated human spirit. In *The Epistle to the Galatians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, F. F. Bruce, discussing Galatians 2:20, notes Paul's close identification of the resurrected Christ and the Spirit in the believers' experience of the indwelling Christ:

In Paul's general teaching, it is by the Spirit that the risen life of Christ is communicated to his people and maintained within them. It makes little practical difference whether he speaks of Christ living in them or the Spirit dwelling in them (cf. Rom. 8:10a, 11a), although the latter expression is commoner (contrariwise, although it makes little practical difference whether he speaks of them as being 'in Christ' or 'in the Spirit', it is the former expression that is commoner). Cf. [Gal.] 3:26-29; 4:6; 5:16-25. (144)

Similarly, Fee, in commenting on Galatians 2:19-20, which he considers "the essential theological thesis of the letter," underscores the indispensable role of the Spirit with regard to Christ living in the believers "in light of the theologically crucial passage in Rom 8:9-10, and especially in light of the argument of the rest of [Galatians]" (377, 374):

Paul's "but Christ lives in me" most likely is a kind of shorthand for "Christ by his Spirit lives in me"...

Paul usually thinks of believers as "in Christ," whereas "indwelling" is common language regarding the Spirit. Romans 8:9-10 (q.v.) offers the theological clue to this language: Believers are those who are not in the flesh but *in the Spirit*, inasmuch as *the Spirit of God dwells in them*. If they do not *have the Spirit of Christ*, they do not even belong to him (Christ). The final consequence of such argumentation is that *if Christ be in you*, then "the Spirit bestows life on account of [the] righteousness [given by Christ]." Here is the clear evidence that in Paul's view Christ indwells his people by his Spirit. Hence the similar point in Phil 1:19-20 (q.v.), that as a result of the Philippians' prayers Paul is given a fresh supply of *the Spirit of Jesus Christ*, and Christ himself will be magnified when Paul stands trial. Such an understanding lies behind [Galatians 2:19-20] as well. (374)

In Galatians 2:20 the apostle Paul contrasts Christ and the "I," and in 3:1-2 he proceeds to highlight the Spirit as the realization of the resurrected Christ living in us. Then, in the rest of this Epistle, Paul repeatedly contrasts the Spirit and the flesh (3:3; 4:29; 5:16-17, 19, 22; 6:8). "The Spirit is Christ and the flesh is the 'I' in our experience. From



ch. 3 to the end of the Epistle, the Spirit is Christ in our life experience. In revelation, it is Christ; in experience, it is the Spirit" (Lee, *Recovery Version*, 3:3, note 2). In chapter 5 Paul implies that the Christ who lives in us in Galatians 2:20 is the Spirit. Paul exhorts the believers to "walk by the Spirit" (5:16), which is to "live by the Spirit" (v. 25). The Greek word translated "walk" in verse 16 (περιπατεῖτε) may also be rendered "walk and live [habitually]" (Amplified Bible) or "to tread all around, to walk at large; hence, to deport oneself, move, and act in ordinary daily life, implying a common, habitual daily walk" (Lee, *Recovery Version*, v. 16, note 1)—"the walk of life" (Seesemann 944) that is "in conformity to" the Spirit (Bloomfield 291). Here, to walk by the Spirit is to live and have our being by the Spirit as the essence of our Christian life so that we may live Christ, expressing various aspects of the fruit of the Spirit (Phil. 1:19; Gal. 5:22-24). In our daily walk we should not live by ourselves but by the resurrected Christ as the life-giving Spirit, allowing the pneumatic Christ to live in us. Christ who lives in us as the Spirit is versus the law, which is related to the flesh. Underscoring a close relationship between the law and the flesh, Paul says, "The power of sin is the law" (1 Cor. 15:56), and "When we were in the flesh, the passions for sins, which acted through the law, operated in our members to bear fruit to death" (Rom. 7:5). When we try to fulfill the requirement of the law by our self-effort, we spontaneously exercise our flesh. Further, the flesh, the expression of the old Adam, opposes and lusts against the Spirit, who is the realization of the all-inclusive Christ (Gal. 5:17). Therefore, the Spirit is in contrast to the law, and a daily walk led by Christ as the Spirit in our spirit is juxtaposed with a daily walk regulated by the law in our flesh. For this reason, Paul says, "If you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law" (v. 18). Regarding this verse, Fee says, "The person who walks, lives, is led by the Spirit is not under Law; indeed, the Spirit produces the very fruit which the Law aimed at but could not produce" (370), and "As the believers walk by the Spirit..., they are subject neither to the flesh's bidding (5:16) nor to the Law's enslaving (5:18)" (423). In other words, if we walk by the Spirit, we "shall by no means fulfill the lust of the flesh" (v. 16), and the Spirit, not the law, becomes the guiding principle regulating our Christian walk. As long as we walk by the Spirit, we effortlessly enjoy the operation of the law of the Spirit of life in our regenerated spirit, which sets us free from the law of sin and of death in our flesh (Rom. 8:2). The righteous requirement of the law is fulfilled in those who walk according to their mingled spirit, the believers' human spirit regenerated by and mingled with the resurrected Christ as the Spirit (vv. 4, 16; John 3:6; 4:24). This thought is confirmed by the Lord's word in Ezekiel 36:26-27, which is not a commandment to keep the law but a promise based on the believers' spirit being indwelt by the Spirit of life: "A new spirit I will put within you...And I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and My ordinances you shall keep and do." As long as we walk according to our regenerated spirit, God will cause us to keep His holy and righteous law spontaneously (Gal. 5:16, 22-23). Thus, instead of striving to keep the law, we should live by the Spirit (v. 25).

Moreover, the indwelling Christ, who is realized as the life-giving Spirit, replaces the crucified old "I," who is inclined to keep the law and is expressed through the flesh. In Romans Paul reveals that although the crucifixion of our old man was accomplished objectively by Christ two thousand years ago (6:6), we need to experience this accomplished fact subjectively through putting to death by the Spirit the practices of our sinful body with its evil members (8:13; Col. 3:5). This is because Christ's all-terminating death is included in the all-inclusive life-giving Spirit, the Spirit of the crucified and resurrected Christ (1 Cor. 15:45b; Rom. 8:9; cf. 6:3). Likewise, in Galatians Paul unveils that even though the believers are "crucified with Christ" (2:20), they still need to experience this historical fact practically by applying the cross to their lustful flesh through the operation of the Spirit: "They who are of Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and its lusts" (5:24). The latter thought is clearly indicated by the fact that, immediately after referring to the believers' crucifying the flesh, Paul speaks of their living "by the Spirit" (v. 25). As Fee insightfully points out, "The Spirit is thus the key to effecting the realities of v. 24 (death to the flesh) and vv. 22-23 (the fruit of the Spirit) in everyday life" (457). It is only through living by the all-inclusive Spirit, who contains Christ's

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terminating death and His life-imparting resurrection, that we can execute the death of Christ upon our flesh, the expression of the old "I," and allow Christ to live in us. Therefore, we should not keep the law by the flesh but live Christ by the Spirit.

In Galatians 5:25 Paul introduces another kind of walk by the Spirit, saying, "If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit." In contrast to verse 16, the Greek verb translated "walk" (στοιχῶμεν) here means to "stand or move in a row or a line" and "has a military origin" (de Boer 372); this verb may be rendered "walk in step with" (*Berean Study Bible*). In commenting on the word *walk* in verse 25, Lee offers valuable insight into the significance of the distinction between the walk in verse 16 and that in verse 25:

Lit., walk according to rules. The Greek word means *to observe the elements, to walk according to the elements*, e.g., to walk in line, to march in military rank, to keep in step; and, derivatively, to walk in an orderly, regulated manner (cf. 6:16; Acts 21:24; Rom. 4:12 and note; Phil. 3:16 and note 4).

Both the walk in [Gal. 6:]16 and the walk in this verse are by the Spirit and are regulated by the Spirit. The former refers to a general, daily walk; the latter, to a walk that takes God's unique goal as the direction and purpose of life, and a walk that follows the Spirit as the elementary rule, the basic principle. Such a walk is cultivated by living in the new creation (6:16 and note 2), by pursuing Christ in order to gain Him (Phil. 3:12 and notes), and by practicing the church life (Rom. 12:1-5; Eph. 4:1-16), thus fulfilling God's intention in Christ for the church. (*Recovery Version*, Gal. 5:25, note 2)

The believers' walk by the Spirit as the elementary rule stands in opposition to their walk by the law as the basic principle. In Galatians 4 Paul twice uses the Greek word στοιχεῖα (a noun form of the verb στοιχῶμεν mentioned in 5:25, translated "elements") in reference to the law: "We, when we were children, were kept in slavery under the elements of the world" (4:3), and "How is it that you turn again to the weak and poor elements, to which you desire to be enslaved yet again?" (v. 9). Both "the elements of the world," under which God's elect were kept in slavery, and "the weak and poor elements," to which the Galatians returned to be enslaved, should be understood as the elementary principles of the law, its rudimentary teachings, to which the Galatians had become subservient (v. 21) such that they began to "observe days and months and seasons and years" (v. 10). This notion is confirmed in Acts 21, where Paul was urged by James to "walk orderly, keeping the law" (v. 24), like the thousands of Jewish believers who were "zealous for the law" (v. 20). The Greek expression rendered "walk orderly" in verse 24 is στοιχῶμεν, indicating that James was beseeching Paul to take the law as his basic rule and elementary principle. Therefore, when Paul enjoins the Galatians to walk (στοιχῶμεν) by the Spirit in Galatians 5:25, he is exhorting them to no longer take the law but the Spirit as their rule, way, and principle.

### *Christ as the Spirit Living in the Believers' Spirit versus the Law*

In order to walk by the Spirit rather than by the law, the believers need to walk according to their regenerated human spirit (Rom. 8:4). For this reason, shortly after encouraging the believers to live and walk by the Spirit (Gal. 5:25), Paul speaks of "you who are spiritual" (6:1), referring to a "spiritual man" (1 Cor. 2:15), a man who lives by "the spirit of man" regenerated by "the Spirit of God" (v. 11; John 3:6; Rom. 8:16). It is only by acting and moving according to our reborn spirit that we can walk by the Spirit rather than by the law.

At the practical level of the believers' experience, their fallen flesh is versus their regenerated human spirit, just as the law is versus Christ. This is because the law is related to our flesh and depends on the effort of the flesh (7:5), while Christ as the Spirit is joined to our spirit. As Lee writes, "In order to keep the law, we must exercise our flesh, but in order to experience Christ, we must exercise our spirit. By the flesh we keep the law, but by the spirit we experience Christ" ("Various Bible Studies" 31). The experiential reality



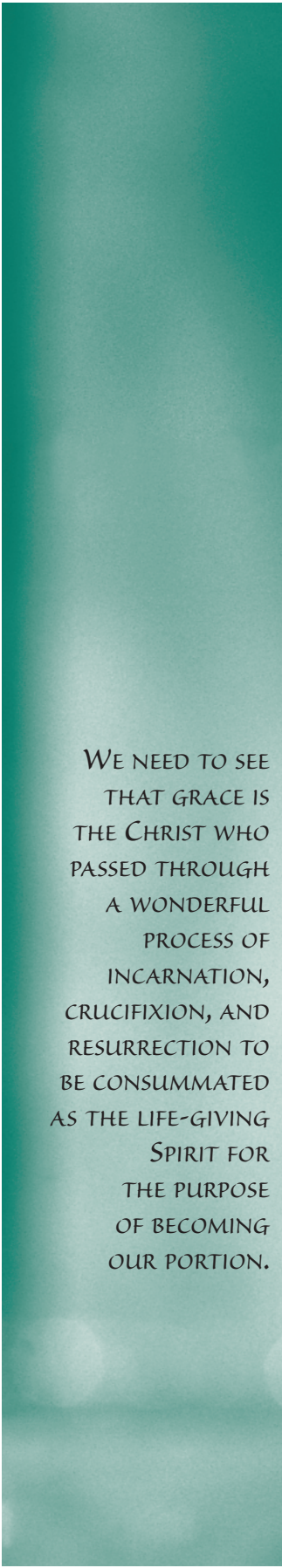
of “it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me” (Gal. 2:20) is revealed in the believers who “do not walk according to the flesh but according to the spirit” (Rom. 8:4). The flesh is the expression of the old “I,” the living out of the old man, who has been crucified (6:6; cf. 8; Col. 3:3), whereas the Spirit in our spirit is the realization of Christ in us. In a believer’s spiritual experience, for him to walk according to his flesh is for the old “I,” who desires to keep the law, to live; for him to walk according to his spirit, however, is for the resurrected Christ as the Spirit to live in him. It is small wonder that in the concluding chapter of Galatians Paul refers to the believers’ regenerated spirit not only as a spirit of meekness—a spirit saturated with the meekness of Christ to express the virtue of Christ (6:1; 2 Cor. 10:1)—but also as the repository of Christ as grace (Gal. 6:18).

If we set our mind on the flesh, minding the things of the flesh (Rom. 8:5-6), we will be bound to repeat the wretched cry of a person who tries to do good under the law by the flesh yet is held captive to the law of sin in his members (7:7-23): “It is no longer I that work it out but sin that dwells in me” (vv. 17, 20). But if we set our mind on our regenerated spirit, minding the things of the Spirit (Rom. 8:1-6), we will be able to echo Paul’s triumphant proclamation in Galatians 2:20: “It is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me.” In order for the old “I” to live no longer and in order for Christ to live in us, we should not walk according to our fallen flesh but according to our regenerated spirit. If Paul’s declaration in Galatians 2:20 would be not merely empty doctrine but spiritual reality, we must walk according to our mingled spirit, the Spirit in our spirit, thereby denying our self and allowing Christ as the Spirit to live in us in our daily life (Matt. 16:24). Therefore, we should not walk or serve in “oldness of letter,” the letter of the law, but in “newness of spirit,” our human spirit mingled with the Spirit of Christ (Rom. 7:6).

### *Christ Living in the Believers as Grace versus the Law*

The indwelling Christ who replaces the law is not only the Spirit in the believers’ spirit but also grace for their enjoyment. After referring to Christ living in him (Gal. 2:20), Paul says, “I do not nullify the grace of God” (v. 21), revealing that striving to keep the law by the flesh, which denies the indwelling Christ the opportunity to live in us, is equivalent to nullifying the grace of God. Conversely, to allow Christ to live in us is to enjoy the grace of God. This indicates that the grace of God is nothing less than Christ Himself living in the believers. This is evident by comparing two portions in Paul’s Epistles that speak of his participation in the grace of God. In Galatians 2:20-21 Paul declares, “It is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me...I do not nullify the grace of God.” However, in 1 Corinthians 15:10 Paul refers not to Christ but to grace: “His grace unto me did not turn out to be in vain, but, on the contrary, I labored...yet not I but the grace of God which is with me.” These verses unveil that the grace of God with Paul was nothing less than the indwelling Christ enabling this “least of the apostles,” “less than the least of all saints,” and “foremost” of sinners to labor more abundantly than all other apostles (v. 9; Eph. 3:8; 1 Tim. 1:15). This profound understanding of grace is confirmed in Galatians 2:8-9, where Paul refers to “He who...operated also in me” and “the grace given to me” interchangeably. The grace given to the apostle Paul was the very God in Christ who operated in him, supplying the apostle inwardly with the excellent and perfect power as the treasure in his earthen vessel (Phil. 2:13; 1 Cor. 1:24; 12:6; John 14:10; Col. 1:29; 2 Cor. 4:6-7; 12:9). This indicates that grace is much more than undeserved favor that God bestows on fallen human beings for their redemption and their initial justification (Rom. 3:24); more significantly, it is God Himself in Christ as the Spirit dispensed into the believers to be their life, power, and person so that He may live and work in them, empowering them to minister the unsearchable riches of Christ to others for the fulfillment of God’s eternal purpose (1 Cor. 15:10, 45; 2 Tim. 1:9; 2:1; Eph. 3:2, 8-11; 6:10; Phil. 4:13). Further, in speaking of “the grace of God which has been given in the churches of Macedonia” (2 Cor. 8:1), Paul does not portray this grace as material riches bestowed upon the Macedonian believers; instead, Paul unveils that grace is the resurrected Christ as the life-giving Spirit who motivated these believers to sacrifice their material riches

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OUR PORTION.

and give them to the needy saints with “liberality” and “the abundance of their joy” despite their “affliction” and “the depth of their poverty” (vv. 2-15; 9:8-11; 1 Cor. 15:10; 16:1-3). In Paul’s understanding, grace has a far greater significance than merely undeserved or outward blessing given to us by God; more intrinsically, it refers to God who gives us Himself in Christ as the Spirit to be our unique blessing, living in us for our expression of Christ and operating in us for our ministry of Christ to one another.

In Galatians Paul highlights grace by opening and concluding his Epistle with grace (1:3; 6:18) and by placing grace in sharp contrast to the law (1:3-4, 6-9; 2:21; 5:4). After greeting the churches of Galatia with grace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ (1:1-3), Paul laments that they were “so quickly removing from Him who has called you in the grace of Christ to a different gospel, which is not another gospel, only there are some who trouble you and desire to pervert the gospel of Christ” (vv. 6-7). Here *the gospel of Christ* is closely associated with, and virtually identified with, *the grace of Christ*. The Gospel of John confirms that the essence of the gospel, the glad tidings of God’s New Testament economy, is that Christ as the Word became flesh and tabernacled among us, “full of grace” (1:14), that grace “came through Jesus Christ” (v. 17), and that “of His fullness we have all received, and grace upon grace” (v. 16). Further, according to the context of Galatians, the expression *a different gospel* (1:6), to which the Galatians foolishly turned, deserting the gospel of Christ concerning His grace, refers to a heretical teaching concerning the Judaic observance of the law (3:8-10). This distorted gospel centered on the law of Moses distracts the believers from the unique gospel of Christ concerning the grace of Christ, which grace is the incarnated, crucified, and resurrected Christ as the life-giving Spirit.

If we would be brought into the reality of Paul’s declaration that we “are not under the law but under grace” (Rom. 6:14-15), we need to see that grace is the Christ who passed through a wonderful process of incarnation, crucifixion, and resurrection to be consummated as the life-giving Spirit for the purpose of becoming our portion. In accordance with this thought, Paul in Galatians 3:14 reveals that “the promise of the Spirit” (that is, the promised Spirit), who is the Spirit of grace (Heb. 10:29), is the fulfillment of “the blessing of Abraham”—the very blessing that God promised to Abraham for “all the families of the earth” and that has come to the Gentile believers in Christ (Gen. 12:3; Gal. 3:7-9, 14). This reveals that the Spirit is the unique blessing of the gospel, which was not only announced to Abraham (before the giving of the law through Moses) but also preached to the New Testament believers, who are “Abraham’s seed, heirs according to promise” (vv. 7-14, 29). In God’s New Testament economy the unique, ultimate, all-embracing blessing is the Spirit with His bountiful supply, the Spirit of superabounding grace, as the realization of the unfathomably rich Christ, who is typified by the good and spacious land promised to Abraham (Gen. 12:7; 13:15; 18:18; 26:3-4; Exo. 3:8).

This contrast between Christ as grace and the law is further developed in Galatians 4:21-31, where Paul seeks to usher the Galatian believers out of the covenant of law given to Moses into the covenant of promise given to Abraham, which eventually became the new covenant, the covenant of grace, the essence of which is Christ as the Spirit (Luke 22:20; 1 Cor. 11:25; 2 Cor. 3:6). The old covenant of the law is symbolized both by Hagar the maidservant, the concubine of Abraham, and by the earthly Jerusalem, “the Jerusalem which now is,” “bringing forth children unto slavery,” children “born according to the flesh” (Gal. 4:23-25). In contrast, the new covenant of grace is symbolized both by Sarah the free woman, the wife of Abraham, and by the heavenly Jerusalem, “the Jerusalem above,” bringing forth “children of promise,” children born according to the Spirit, unto freedom and sonship (vv. 26-31). The reality of the new covenant is the resurrected Christ as the life-giving Spirit, as indicated by 2 Corinthians 3:6, where Paul refers to “ministers of a new covenant” as ministers “of the Spirit” who gives life. Paul speaks of the Jerusalem above, the covenant of the promise, as being “our mother” (Gal. 4:26). Here “the mother symbolizes grace, by which we are born to be the children of God, who is the very source of grace”; “hence, the free woman, the covenant of promise, the Jerusalem above, and



the mother all refer to God's grace, which is the very means of our spiritual birth" (Lee, *Recovery Version*, v. 21, note 1). Just as Ishmael, the son of the maidservant born according to the flesh, mocked and persecuted Isaac, the son of the free woman born through promise (v. 30; Gen. 21:9; Heb. 10:29), so also the Judaizers, the physical descendants of Abraham according to the flesh and the children of the law, persecuted the believers in Christ, the spiritual descendants of Abraham and the children of grace (Gal. 1:7, 13; 4:29, 31; 5:10-12; 6:12; Acts 15:24). Likewise, "today's Ishmaels, those according to flesh, are persecuting the real Isaacs, the children according to the Spirit" (Lee, *Life-study* 214). Whereas the Judaizers sought to bring the Galatian believers into slavery under the law, the apostle Paul endeavored to transfer them out of slavery into the freedom of grace so that they might enjoy God's promised blessing of the all-inclusive life-giving Spirit by partaking of all the untraceable riches of Christ.

In Galatians 5:1-4 Paul elaborates on the contrast between Christ as grace and the law. In verse 2 Paul says, "If you become circumcised, Christ will profit you nothing." For the believers in Galatia to return to the law, regarding the practice of circumcision as a condition of salvation, would have meant forsaking Christ. In verse 4 Paul identifies Christ as grace, while highlighting the stark divide between grace and law: "You have been brought to nought, separated from Christ, you who are being justified by law; you have fallen from grace." Here being *separated from Christ* is tantamount to having *fallen from grace*, indicating that grace with its surpassing riches (Eph. 2:7) is nothing less than Christ Himself with His unsearchable riches (3:8). It is erroneous to believe that for a believer in Christ to fall from grace is to lose one's eternal salvation and perish in the lake of fire for eternity. This is because the believers in Galatia had already received "eternal life" (John 3:16) and obtained "eternal salvation" (Heb. 5:9) by believing in the Lord and receiving the Spirit out of the hearing of faith (Gal. 3:2). In the context of Galatians 5, for a believer to fall from grace is to be experientially detached from Christ as the true vine (John 15:5) and thereby deprived of the divine riches afforded only to those who abide in Him. To fall from grace and thus be separated from Christ is to be defrauded of our prize: the participation in the all-inclusive Christ, the embodiment of the fullness of the Godhead, in whom we "have been made full" (Col. 2:9-10, 18). It is of note that Paul's primary concern for the Galatians was not their fall into sin, their descent into moral depravity, but their fall from grace, their loss of the enjoyment of grace. The Galatian believers' return to being justified by the law amounted to an abandonment of the indwelling Christ as the sufficient and superabounding grace (2 Cor. 12:9; Rom. 5:20). Instead of endeavoring to keep the law by the efforts of the flesh, we need to turn to and abide in Christ as the rich vine so that we can "enter into" and "stand in" grace, thereby allowing Christ to live in us continually and operate in us unhindered (v. 2; 1 Pet. 5:12).

**I**n order for us to turn from the law to Christ as grace and remain in Him to partake of His divine riches, we need to see that grace is the resurrected Christ as the life-giving Spirit living in and working through the believers. Whereas countless Christians nullify the grace of God and "receive the grace of God in vain" (2 Cor. 6:1), Paul enjoyed the grace of God as the source of divine power and supply (12:9-10), thereby causing His grace to turn out to be surpassingly effective and fruitful. This is because the apostle allowed the pneumatic Christ as grace to live and operate in him so that he might not only continually live Christ for His magnification as His faithful witness (Gal. 2:20-21; Phil. 1:19-21; Acts 1:8; Rev. 2:13) but also labor abundantly as a faithful steward in God's house, "abounding in the work of the Lord," the work to build up the church as the temple of God and the Body of Christ (1 Cor. 3:9-17; 4:1-2; 9:17; 12:12, 17; 14:4; 15:58; Acts 14:26-27). It was by "the grace of God" that Paul "fulfilled" his "work" as an apostle, testifying of "the things that God had done with" him through his abundant labor and fruitful ministry (vv. 26-27; Gal. 1:1; cf. Rom. 1:5). The apostle Paul's life and labor were "not in vain" in the Lord as grace but profitable for the fulfillment of God's eternal economy (1 Cor. 9:1-2; 15:58; Phil. 1:22). Conversely, if we fail to partake of Christ as grace living and operating in us, even our ethical living in accordance with biblical teachings

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and our work in service to God will be but vain religious activities, for we will “profit nothing” in the eyes of God (1 Cor. 13:2-3). What truly pleases God and accomplishes God’s eternal purpose is not a moral life or diligent service; instead, it is our walk and work rooted in and empowered by Christ as the grace of life (2 Tim. 2:1; 1 Pet. 3:7), that is, our conducting ourselves in the grace of God (2 Cor. 1:12) and our laboring according to His operation which operates in us in power (Col. 1:29).

Regrettably, a great majority of believers today know grace mostly in vain words or as an abstract doctrine; few know “the grace of God in truth” (v. 6)—that is, know this grace experientially in its reality—by contacting Christ as the divine Spirit in their regenerated human spirit. Because grace is the resurrected Christ as the life-giving Spirit, this Spirit is fittingly spoken of as “the Spirit of grace” (Heb. 10:29). In Paul’s mind “the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ” with “the love of God” is imparted into us through “the fellowship of the Holy Spirit” for our enjoyment (2 Cor. 13:14). As the fellowship, the transmission, of the Lord as grace with God as love, the Spirit guides us into the reality of the Lord as the abounding grace of eternal life (John 3:15; 14:6; 16:13; 2 Cor. 4:15; 9:8). In order for us to “receive the abundance of grace” (Rom. 5:17), we need to “receive the Spirit” whom God “bountifully supplies” to us (Gal. 3:2, 5), just as, according to the Gospel of John, in order for us to receive of the Lord’s fullness “grace upon grace” (1:16), we need to “receive” “the Spirit” of the glorified Jesus as our spiritual drink, drinking Him as our spiritual beverage (7:37-39; 20:22; cf. 1 Cor. 10:4; 12:13). Therefore, a believer who is “full of the Spirit” (Acts 6:3) is “full of grace” (v. 8).

Furthermore, in order to continually receive Christ as grace, the believers must learn to walk according to their regenerated spirit. The Lord as the Spirit of grace is “joined to” the believers’ spirit as “one spirit,” forming a mingled spirit: the believers’ human spirit born of and indwelt by Christ as the life-giving Spirit (John 3:6; Rom. 8:16; 1 Cor. 6:17). Hence, the believers’ participation in grace is utterly dependent upon the exercise of their mingled spirit. It is little wonder that Paul concludes his Epistle to the Galatians by highlighting the believers’ mingled spirit as the locus of the Lord’s grace: “The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit” (6:18). In Paul’s view, “the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,” which equals “the bountiful supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ” (Phil. 1:19), the Spirit supplied to us bountifully by God (Gal. 3:5), is realized only in our mingled spirit. So paramount is the mingled spirit as the focal point of God’s new covenant of grace (2 Cor. 3:6; Eph. 3:2) that in 2 Timothy 4:22 Paul concludes his written ministry by identifying the Lord with grace and pointing to the believers’ mingled spirit as the unique location of the Lord as grace: “The Lord be with your spirit. Grace be with you.” This last verse of the apostle’s last Epistle emphatically reveals that grace is nothing less than the Lord Himself who is the Spirit joined to our regenerated human spirit (2 Cor. 3:17-18). Since our mingled spirit is the only place where we can partake of the pneumatic Christ as grace, it is by turning to and remaining in our mingled spirit that we may “come forward...to the throne of grace” to “find grace” for timely help and to “have grace” to serve God well-pleasingly “in newness of spirit and not in oldness of letter” (Heb. 4:12, 16; 12:28; Rom. 7:6). Instead of attempting to fulfill the requirements of the law by exerting the effort of the flesh, we should enjoy the Lord’s living and working in us as the surpassing grace of God by walking according to our mingled spirit, our human spirit joined to the Lord as the Spirit of grace (2 Cor. 9:14).

### *Christ Living in the Believers as Their Faith versus the Law*

Christ living in us is made possible not only through our enjoyment of grace but also through our exercise of faith. In Galatians 2:20, after speaking of Christ living in him, Paul says, “The life which I now in the flesh I live in faith, the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me.” In this verse the Greek word translated “I live” is ζῶ, a verb derived from the same root as the noun ζωῇ, which in the New Testament refers to the spiritual, eternal, and indestructible life of God, which is Christ



Himself (John 3:16; 14:6; Heb. 7:16). According to Paul's words in Galatians 2:20, for Christ to live in us is for us to live Him as the divine life (Phil. 1:21), and to live Christ as this eternal life is to live "in faith, the faith of the Son of God," the One who both embodies and dispenses life (Gal. 3:11; John 1:4; 5:21). The genitive phrase *the faith of the Son of God* may be considered an expression of apposition, in which the faith equals the Son of God, just as the appositional expression *the love of God* (2 Cor. 13:14) implies that love and God are one, that is, that "God is love" (1 John 4:8, 16). Abraham's faith did not issue forth from his own natural capacity or endeavoring to trust in God but from the God of glory who appeared to Abraham, radiating Himself into this erstwhile idol worshipper to become his believing ability (Acts 7:2; Josh. 24:2; Heb. 11:8-9). Likewise, when the beloved Son of God as the Lord of glory and the effulgence of God's glory appears to us and is revealed in us through the proper preaching of the gospel (Acts 26:16; 1 Cor. 2:8; Heb. 1:3; Gal. 1:15-16), "the illumination of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God," shines on us and into our heart (2 Cor. 4:3-6) so that the Son may infuse Himself into us to be joined to us in order to become the very faith by which we believe in Him (Gal. 2:16; Rom. 3:22). It is by living in such faith, the Son of God as our faith, that we live Christ as the divine life, allowing Christ to live in us. Christ as the Spirit enters into the believers and lives within them not by their keeping of the law but by their faith in the crucified and resurrected Christ, the Son of the living God, that is, by this shining Christ revealed in them and imparted into them to be their faith.

Paul could live in faith because he deeply appreciated the Son of God, who loved him and gave Himself up for him (Gal. 2:20). This indicates that faith is the appreciation of Christ that springs up within us in response to the manifestation of His glorious person and excellent work (John 6:44; 12:32; 14:21; Heb. 2:9; 1 Pet. 1:19; 2:4, 6). We can live in faith, the faith of the Son of God, denying ourselves and letting Christ live in us (Rom. 3:22) only when we are constrained by the love of Christ, who not only died for us to accomplish redemption but also has been raised to be the life-giving Spirit for the impartation of His divine life into us (2 Cor. 5:14-15).

**I**n Galatians faith is repeatedly set in contrast with law in relation to justification and receiving the Spirit as the blessing of Abraham. "The law is not of faith" (3:12), and "a man is not justified out of works of law, but through faith in Jesus Christ" (2:16). "They who are of faith are blessed with believing Abraham" (3:9), while "as many as are of the works of law are under a curse" (v. 10). We receive the Spirit, whom God "bountifully supplies" to us, "out of the hearing of faith" and not "out of the works of law" (vv. 2, 5). "Christ has redeemed us out of the curse of the law" so that "we might receive the promise of the Spirit," the blessing of Abraham, "through faith" (vv. 13-14). Hence, it is not out of the works of the law but out of faith in the crucified and glorified Christ that we are justified by God and partake of the bountiful and immeasurable Spirit as the all-inclusive blessing of the New Testament (John 3:34). The law, the basic principle according to which God dealt with His people in the Old Testament, has been replaced by faith, the basic principle according to which God deals with His people in the New Testament. Today we should not be keepers of the law but believers in Christ who continually receive the bountiful Spirit.

In Galatians 3:22-25 Paul unveils the superiority of Christ as faith over the law by speaking of the law as "our child-conductor unto Christ that we might be justified out of faith" (v. 24). Just as a custodian guards an underage child and conducts him to the schoolmaster, so also the law was used by God as a child-conductor to watch over His elect and keep them in custody until the coming of Christ, so that they might be justified by faith and enjoy the Spirit as the blessing promised by God: "Before faith came we were guarded under law, being shut up unto the faith which was to be revealed" (v. 23). Since faith in Christ has now been revealed, we no longer need to remain under the law (v. 25). Instead, by faith we should believe into Christ and be baptized into Christ, thereby entering into an organic union with Him, so that we may abide in Him to enjoy the Spirit.

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In Galatians 3 Paul ties faith as the replacement of the law with Christ Himself. In verse 23 Paul says that “before faith came we were guarded under law, being shut up unto the faith which was to be revealed.” Yet in verse 19 Paul speaks of the coming of the seed of Abraham, which is Christ (v. 16). This affirms that the coming of faith is the coming of Christ as the seed.

Moreover, Paul identifies faith with Christ as the life-giving Spirit in Galatians 5:5: “We by the Spirit out of faith eagerly await the hope of righteousness.” Here *by the Spirit* is in contrast to *by the flesh* (3:3), just as *out of the hearing of faith* is in contrast to *out of the works of law* (v. 2). Lee perceptively notes that in 5:5 “*the Spirit* and *faith* are in apposition”; “the Spirit is the faith, and the faith is the Spirit” (*Elders’ Training* 64). This truth is confirmed in Acts 6:5, where Luke—whose writing reflects Paul’s views, given his history as one of Paul’s faithful companions and co-workers until Paul’s martyrdom (Philem. 24; 2 Tim. 4:11)—portrays Stephen as “a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit.” This verse implies Paul’s thought that the measure of our faith, our capacity to believe, is proportional to the measure of the Spirit imparted into us; the more Christ as the Spirit we have, the more faith we have. In Bruce’s words, “to live by faith...is tantamount to ‘living by the Spirit’ ( [Gal.] 5:25)” (145). In other words, for the believers to “walk by faith” (2 Cor. 5:7) is for them to “walk by the Spirit” (Gal. 5:25). In Paul’s understanding, in our experience faith is nothing less than Christ as the Spirit who has been dispensed into us and united with us.

Paul associates faith not only with the divine Spirit but also with the believers’ regenerated spirit. In 2 Corinthians 4:13 Paul speaks of “having the same spirit of faith.” Commenting on the word *spirit* in this verse, Henry Alford says, “Not *distinctly* the *Holy Spirit*,—but still not merely a *human disposition*: the indwelling Holy Spirit penetrates and characterizes the whole renewed man” (269). In *Word Studies in the New Testament* Marvin R. Vincent agrees: “*Spirit* of faith: not distinctly the Holy Spirit, nor, on the other hand, a human faculty or disposition, but blending both” (313). The spirit of faith is our human spirit joined to and mingled with the life-giving Spirit, who is the reality of Christ as the Author and Perfecter of our faith (1 Cor. 6:17; 15:45b; Heb. 12:2). Lee goes so far as to equate the believers’ faith with their mingled spirit: “The phrase *spirit of faith* places *the spirit* in apposition to *faith*. Faith is of the spirit. Therefore, the spirit of faith is faith. Our faith is just the mingled spirit” (*Elders’ Training* 45). “Faith in Jesus Christ,” through which we “have believed into Christ” (Gal. 2:16; 3:22), refers to “the bond of union with the risen Christ” (Bruce 145). Since our mingled spirit, our human spirit mingled with the Lord Spirit, is the reality of our subjective union with the Lord (1 Cor. 6:17; John 3:6; Rom. 8:16), our mingled spirit may be said to be our faith. Therefore, if we would participate in the bountiful supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ out of the hearing of faith in a practical way, we need to exercise our mingled spirit, our spirit of faith. By walking according to our regenerated spirit day after day, we may live in faith, the faith of the Son of God, and live Christ as the divine life, letting Him live in us continually (v. 4). Faith replaces the law in our subjective experience only when we walk and live by the Spirit in our spirit (Gal. 5:16, 25).

### Christ Formed in the Believers versus the Law

In Galatians the indwelling Christ who stands in variance to the law is not only the One who is revealed in the believers and lives in them but also the One who is being formed in them. Galatians 4, which speaks of Christ being formed in the believers (v. 19), presents two cases of Christ as the Spirit versus the law, both of which highlight the believers’ status as sons of God. In verses 1 through 7 Paul speaks of the Spirit of sonship versus the custody of the law, and in verses 21 through 31 he speaks of the children according to the Spirit produced through the Spirit operating through grace versus the children according to the flesh produced through the flesh in coordination with the law. God’s elect were shut up under the custody of the law (3:23). However, God sent forth His Son, born of



a woman and born under law, in order to redeem God's elect from the custody of the law so that they might receive the sonship and become the sons of God (4:4-5). Through Christ's resurrection God sent forth the Spirit of His Son into the believers' hearts, thereby imparting the divine life into them so that they might become God's sons in reality (v. 6; John 14:26; 15:26). Consequently, a believer is "no longer a slave" to works under law "but a son" in life under grace and "an heir...through God" to inherit the Spirit as God's promised blessing (Gal. 4:7; 3:14). Hence, the believers should not return to slavery under the custody of the law but should remain in the sonship of God to enjoy their freedom in Christ and the bountiful supply of the Spirit (2:4; 5:1, 13; Phil. 1:19). The believers' participation in this sonship encompasses their birth and maturity in the divine life, both of which depend on their experience of Christ as the Spirit of God's Son and have nothing to do with the law. In order for us to participate in the divine sonship in full, just as we have begun our Christian life by being born of the Spirit out of the hearing of faith and not out of the works of the law (Gal. 3:3; John 3:6), so also we need to be perfected by the Spirit, that is, grow in the divine life unto maturity by continually receiving the bountiful supply of the Spirit out of the hearing of faith and not out of the works of law (Gal. 3:2, 5). The former refers to our instantaneous regeneration through the revelation of God's Son in us, whereas the latter refers to our lifelong transformation issuing in the formation of Christ in us.

**T**he context for Paul's discourse regarding the formation of Christ in the believers was his personal history among the Galatians. Although he labored to usher them into the grace of Christ through the gospel of Christ, they deviated from this gospel under the influence of the Judaizers, desiring to be under the law and observing the Jewish rituals (4:9-11). Fearing that his labor upon them would be rendered vain, Paul tells them the goal of his labor: "My children, with whom I travail again in birth until Christ is formed in you" (v. 19). Since Paul was a fellow worker of God whose purpose and good pleasure embodied and expressed the purpose and good pleasure of God (1 Cor. 3:9; 2 Cor. 6:1; Eph. 1:5, 9; 3:11; Phil. 2:13; Rom. 10:1; 2 Tim. 3:10), his burden to see Christ formed in the saints surely reflected God's heart's desire to have many sons who are saturated with Christ, the Son of God, in their inward parts for His corporate expression (Rom. 8:29; 1 Tim. 3:16). Paul was willing to pay a high price to minister Christ with His unsearchable riches to God's chosen people to bring forth Christ in them so that Christ would increase within them for the producing and growth of His mystical Body, the church (Rom. 15:16; Col. 2:19; Eph. 1:22-23). Whereas many Christian workers may be pre-occupied with outward matters, such as gaining a large following, the goal of the apostle Paul's labor was decidedly inward and organic, singularly focused on the formation of the pneumatic Christ within the believers for the constitution and building up of His organic Body (3:17; 4:13, 16).

### *Christ Formed in the Believers—Christ Making His Home in Their Hearts*

In Galatians 4 Paul, while exposing the Judaizers as those who shut out the Galatians from the gospel of grace (vv. 9, 17), likens himself to a travailing mother. He first labored to help the Galatians to be regenerated, announcing the gospel to them, so that Christ might be born in them (v. 13). Then, because the Galatians were deceived by the Judaizers, departing from the gospel of Christ to a different gospel (1:6-7), Paul labored yet again, travailing in birth so that Christ might be formed, fully matured, in these believers (4:19).

In *The Life of God in the Soul of Man* Henry Scougal indicates that the believers should be rescued from "this forced and artificial religion," which is "commonly heavy and languid" and "cold and spiritless" (33); they should be ushered into "a real participation [in God's] nature" in order to "have 'God dwelling in their souls, and Christ formed within them'" (34-35). By reading Scougal's book, George Whitefield came to see a life-changing revelation that the quintessence of the Christian life is "a vital union with the Son of God, Christ formed in the heart" (755); in Whitefield's words, this "truth of God" constituted

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“a ray of divine life” that “did then break in upon [his] poor soul” (755). The goal of the believers is not conformity to the law in letters but the formation of Christ in the believers’ heart through the development of their organic union with Christ. Lenski underscores the formation of Christ in the believers as an expression of a profoundly inward experience when he comments on the Greek word translated “formed” (μορφωθῆ) in Galatians 4:19:

The verb itself is expressive, for μορφῇ is always the form which expresses the essence, the inner reality; it is never a mask or an assumed form which one may lay aside. All that Christ really is Paul is at great labor and pains to have formed in the hearts of the Galatians. (230)

The apostle Paul travailed for the formation of Christ in the Galatians both for their deliverance from the observance of the ordinances of the law and for the maturation of their sonship to fulfill their God-ordained destiny and God’s eternal purpose. On the one hand, because Christ, who is the Son of God and “Heir of all things,” has been born into us (Heb. 1:2; John 16:15), we also are sons and heirs of God, “heirs according to promise” and “heirs according to the hope of eternal life” (Gal. 4:7; 3:26-29; Eph. 3:6; Titus 3:7). On the other hand, Christ still needs to be formed in us so that we may mature in the sonship of God and fully inherit the Spirit (Gal. 3:14, 29; Eph. 1:13-14). Apart from Christ being formed in us, we are immature in the divine sonship and are deficient in our enjoyment of the blessing of the gospel. The *Amplified Bible* translates the Greek word μορφωθῆ (“formed”) in Galatians 4:19 “completely and permanently formed,” and Lenski supplies this additional meaning: “‘be completely formed in you,’ i.e., so that no Judaistic ceremonialism will ever affect them, that they will ever be immune” (230). In other words, Paul hoped that Christ would be so thoroughly constituted into the Galatians that He would truly become everything to them in their very being, leaving no room within them for anything other than Christ Himself. The complete formation of Christ in the believers requires us to allow Christ to spread into every part of our soul until He occupies our entire inner being and even becomes our very mind, emotion, and will (1 Cor. 2:16; 4:19; 16:7, 24; Phil. 1:8; 2:5, 13). It is only when Christ fully makes His home in our hearts, possessing all the ground within us (Eph. 3:17), that we will be the reality of the new man, where “there cannot be” “circumcision,” those who observe Jewish religious rituals, or “uncircumcision,” those who do not care for the Jewish religion, but “Christ is all and in all” (Col. 3:4, 10-11).

### *The Role of the Spirit in the Formation of Christ in the Believers*

Christ’s being formed in us is dependent on the operation of the indwelling Spirit, who is the reality of the resurrected Christ. In interpreting the clause *Christ is formed in you* in Galatians 4:19, Lenski asserts that “the unnamed agent in the passive...is really the Spirit” (230). Echoing this thought, Robert Govett writes that while “*Moses*...cannot form *Christ* in the believer,” “the Holy Spirit forms the character of the sons of God into the likeness of Christ by Christ’s dwelling in our hearts” (140-141). This recalls the truth that the believers in Corinth became “a letter of Christ,” an organic expression of Christ written in the “tablets” of their “hearts,” because they were “inscribed,” saturated, with “the Spirit of the living God” (2 Cor. 3:3). In order for Christ to be fully formed in us, we need to continually receive the Spirit’s bountiful supply of life until He permeates our inward parts, thereby producing the image, the form, of Christ within us.

Christ being born into us corresponds to our beginning by the Spirit of God’s Son, who regenerates us with the life of God to make us children of promise “born according to the Spirit” (John 3:6; Rom. 8:16; Gal. 3:3; 4:6-7, 28-29), whereas Christ being formed in us corresponds to our being perfected by the Spirit, who transforms us and matures us in the divine life to make us full-grown sons of God (3:3; 2 Cor. 3:18; Rom. 8:14). If Christ would be formed in us, we must not be perfected by the flesh, that is, by the works of law (Gal. 3:2-3). Instead, we must be perfected by the Spirit, continually receiving the bountiful supply of the all-inclusive life-giving Spirit (vv. 3, 5; Phil. 1:19) so that we may be “transformed into” the image of the resurrected and glorified



Christ through the inward work of “the Lord Spirit” and be conformed to the image of Christ as the firstborn Son of God through the inner operation of “the law of the Spirit of life” (2 Cor. 3:17-18; Rom. 8:2, 29; 12:2).

In Galatians the Spirit’s indispensable role in the formation of Christ in the believers is indicated by Paul’s expression “the law of Christ” (6:2). The law of Christ is commonly interpreted as the law of love in view of Galatians 5:14, which says, “The whole law is fulfilled in one word, in this, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’” For instance, in his commentary on Galatians MacArthur says, “The law of Christ is the law of love, which fulfills all the rest of God’s law” (*MacArthur New Testament Commentary* 180). Although this interpretation of the law of Christ is correct, it is outward and superficial; more intrinsically, this law refers to “the law of the Spirit of life,” which is the spontaneous power and function of Christ realized as the Spirit (Rom. 8:2; 1 Cor. 9:21; 2 Cor. 3:17). Every life has a law and is a law, and the law of a certain kind of life shapes that life into its characteristic form as the life grows. Just as the law of the apple life spontaneously bears fruit in the form of apples, so also the law of the Spirit of life conforms the believers to the image, the form, of Christ, the firstborn Son of God, as their standard model, thereby making them His mass reproduction so that they may be the same as He is in life, nature, constitution, and expression but not in the Godhead (Rom. 8:29). For example, one aspect of the fruit of the Spirit is the divine attribute of love (Gal. 5:22), indicating that love is an issue and expression of the indwelling Spirit of life, who Himself is the source and substance of love (Rom. 15:30; cf. 2 Tim. 1:7). For this reason, elsewhere Paul elucidates that our enjoyment of the divine love issues forth from the Spirit: “the love of God has been poured out in our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us” (Rom. 5:5), and “the love of God” is transmitted to us through “the fellowship of the Holy Spirit” (2 Cor. 13:14). While the law of Moses is the outward law of letters that places demands on us, the law of Christ, “a far higher and better law” (Alford 357), is the inner law of life that supplies us with the riches of the divine life, enabling us to effortlessly express the attributes of God and thus fulfill the requirement of the law. Although we must not be lawless (cf. Gal. 5:13), we should not try to fulfill the law of Moses by our own effort; instead, we should “fulfill the law of Christ” (6:2) by walking by the Spirit, allowing the law of the Spirit of life to work in us without hindrance. Consequently, this inner law of life will organically shape us into the form of God’s Son so that we may “bear the image” of Christ as the heavenly man in resurrection and be “glorified with Him” and “be like Him” at His second coming (1 Cor. 15:49; Rom. 8:17; 1 John 3:2).

### *The Fruit of the Spirit—the Expression of Christ Formed in the Believers*

The issue of the formation of Christ within us through the inner operation of the law of Christ, the law of the Spirit of life, is that Christ will be expressed through us as the fruit of the Spirit. In Galatians Paul sets the fruit of the Spirit in antithesis to the works of the flesh. In Fee’s mind, Paul’s expression *the works of the flesh* in Galatians “is almost certainly a deliberate association with the repeated ‘by *works* of Torah,’ which occurs in the earlier part of this letter” (440-441). John Bunyan goes so far as to identify the works of the flesh with the works of the law:

The works of the law are none other but the best sort of the works of the flesh...It is proper to call the works of the law the works of the flesh,...because they are done by that self-same nature in and out of which comes all those things that are more grossly so called, (Ga. v. 19, 20,—to wit, from the corrupt fountain of fallen man’s polluted nature. (308)

The fruit of the Spirit, the expression of Christ formed in the believers, is set in sharp contrast to the works of the flesh, which are related to the works of the law, the works carried out by the efforts of the flesh to fulfill the requirements of the law.

In Paul’s view, the fruit of the Spirit is the expression of the very Christ who has been

THE OUTWARD LAW OF LETTERS PLACES DEMANDS ON US, BUT THE LAW OF CHRIST IS THE INNER LAW OF LIFE THAT SUPPLIES US WITH THE RICHES OF THE DIVINE LIFE, ENABLING US TO EFFORTLESSLY EXPRESS THE ATTRIBUTES OF GOD AND THUS FULFILL THE REQUIREMENT OF THE LAW.

THE LAW CAN  
ONLY DEMAND AND  
CONDEMN. THE LAW  
COULD NOT GIVE LIFE  
PRECISELY BECAUSE  
IT LACKED SPIRIT,  
THE ONE ESSENTIAL  
INGREDIENT FOR LIFE.  
CONSEQUENTLY, THE  
LAW CANNOT FULFILL  
ITS RIGHTEOUS  
REQUIREMENT FOR  
THE PRODUCING OF  
RIGHTEOUSNESS IN  
THE BELIEVERS.

formed in the believers and is “nothing less than the practical reproduction of the character (and therefore the conduct) of Christ in the lives of his people” (Bruce 257). Shortly after enjoining the believers to walk by the Spirit (v. 16), Paul says, “The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, self-control; against such things there is no law” (vv. 22-23). The items mentioned here should be understood as the characteristics of Christ, which were not only referred to and manifested in His human living on earth but also spoken of by the apostles and lived out of them.<sup>1</sup> As a case in point, Paul expressed the meekness of Christ (2 Cor. 10:1) because he walked according to his “spirit of meekness” (Gal. 6:1), his human spirit joined to the Spirit of Christ, who is “meek and lowly in heart” (Phil. 1:19; Rom. 8:9; Matt. 11:29). Paul’s word that “there is no law” against the aspects of the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:23) is quite significant, because it means that “the fruit of the Spirit is not under the control of the law” (Nee 481). While the law condemns what is evil, these attributes of the fruit of the Spirit, unlike the works of the flesh, are not evil but virtuous. As Fee points out,

After all, the Law exists because people are evil, not because they are good; it exists “against” sin, not “against” virtue. [Paul] therefore almost certainly intends that “when these virtues are evident in one’s life because of the presence of the Spirit, Torah is an irrelevancy.” There is no need of Torah to say, “you shall not kill,” to people who by the Spirit are loving one another. (453)

In this sense, the law as a principle that regulates human conduct is replaced by the indwelling Christ as the Spirit, by whom we may live and walk. We need to constantly walk by the Spirit so that we may unceasingly receive the rich supply of the Spirit, thereby spontaneously bearing the fruit of the Spirit, the organic manifestation of the pneumatic Christ who is formed in us.

### *Christ as Righteousness Being Formed in the Believers*

A crucial aspect of the formation of Christ within us is righteousness, which Paul considers an important item of the fruit of the Spirit (Rom. 14:17; Eph. 5:9; Phil. 1:11, 19). In the Bible Christ is spoken of as not only “the righteous One” (Acts 3:14) but also our righteousness (Jer. 33:16; 1 Cor. 1:30). Fee states that Galatians unveils “Paul’s deep conviction of the failure of Torah to effect righteousness, both as right standing with God and as behavior that conforms to the character of God” (421). On the one hand, through our faith in Christ, we are once and for all justified before God through His redemption, having obtained Christ as our objective righteousness apart from the works of the law (Gal. 2:17; Rom. 3:24, 26, 28; 1 Cor. 1:30). On the other hand, in our daily walk we need to be filled with the pneumatic Christ as the righteous One so that we may live Him as our surpassing subjective righteousness (Matt. 5:20). The apostle Paul was constituted with this Christ, lived and magnified Him, and aspired to be found in Him by faithfully abiding in Him (Phil. 1:19-21; 3:9; 4:13; John 15:4-5). This enabled the apostle to testify that he did not have his “own righteousness which is out of the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is out of God and based on faith” (Phil. 3:9). Paul’s “own righteousness” refers to that which originated from his own effort to keep the law (v. 6), in contrast with the righteousness through his faith in Christ—Christ Himself, the embodiment of God, lived out of him to be his righteousness through his organic union with Him. In Galatians Paul underscores the inability of the law to produce true righteousness in our daily life: “righteousness” is not “through law” unless Christ had died for nothing (2:21); “if a law had been given which was able to give life, righteousness would have indeed been of law” (3:21). The latter verse clearly indicates that genuine righteousness is the issue of the impartation of life into the believers. Since in the law there is no life but only commandments, the law can only demand and condemn (cf. Rom. 7:10). In Fee’s words, the law could not give life “precisely because it lacked Spirit, the one essential ingredient for life” (397). Consequently, the law cannot fulfill its righteous requirement for the producing of righteousness in the believers (8:3-4). In



contrast, life is in Christ and is Christ Himself (John 1:4); in incarnation He came to give us life (6:33, 35, 51; 10:10), and in resurrection He became “the Spirit who gives life” (6:63; 1 Cor. 15:45b). The close association of the Spirit with life is evidenced in the expression of *the Spirit reap eternal life* in Galatians 6:8, which indicates that eternal life is of the Spirit and is the Spirit Himself. Through regeneration the life-dispensing Spirit is joined to the believers’ human spirit, forming the mingled spirit (1 Cor. 6:17), which spirit “is life because of righteousness” (Rom. 8:10). When we walk according to our mingled spirit, the righteous requirement of the law is spontaneously fulfilled in us through the operation of the law of the Spirit of life (vv. 2, 4).

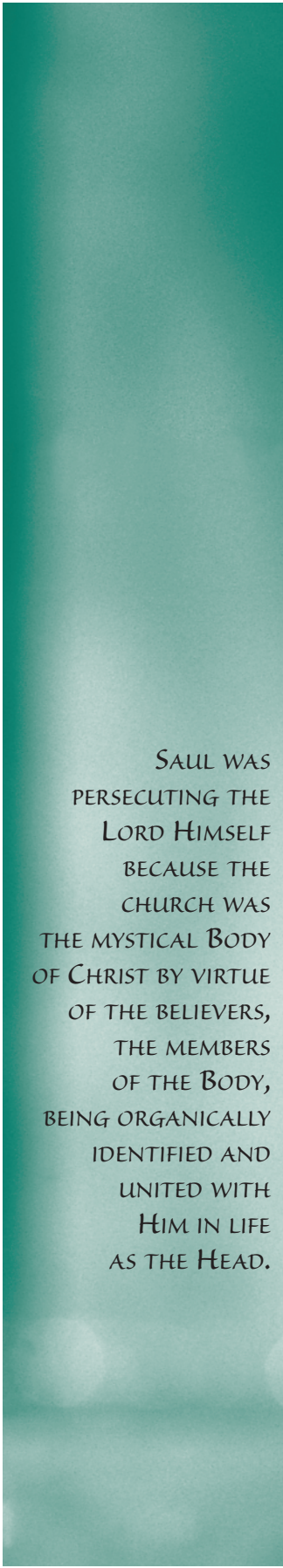
In 2 Corinthians 3 Paul unveils righteousness as the very expression of God in Christ as the issue of the dispensing of the life-giving Spirit. After speaking of the ministers of the Spirit who “gives life” in verse 6, Paul goes on to speak of “the ministry of the Spirit” that is “in glory” in verse 8 and refers to “the ministry of righteousness” that “abounds with glory” in verse 9. This indicates that the ministry of the life-giving Spirit into the believers is the ministry of righteousness that issues in righteousness, which is the glorious expression of Christ as the image of God in the believers (4:4; Col. 1:15; Heb. 1:3). In 2 Corinthians 3 Paul contrasts ministers of “the letter” that “kills” with ministers of “the Spirit” that “gives life” (v. 6). The letter, the written code of the law, lacks the power of the divine life to meet its demands; moreover, it kills man because of fallen man’s inability to fulfill the righteous demands of the law (Rom. 7:9-11; 8:3). As Fee states, “The problem with Torah is that [it] was not accompanied by Spirit; therefore it became death-dealing, not life-giving” (398). This recalls the Lord’s own words that although we may “search the Scriptures,” we will not “have life” unless we come to Him (John 5:39-40); if we try to adhere to the commandments and ordinances presented in the Scriptures but neglect to contact the Lord Jesus as the life-giving Spirit, we will receive not life but dead knowledge. Fee points out,

It is not the Law itself that is “letter”; the Law is holy and good and even πνευματικός [spiritual] (Rom 7:12, 14). But the Law as specific demands requiring obedience is merely letter; and its time is past because it was incapable of bringing life and righteousness—of the real kind. (306)

In contrast to the killing letter, the life-giving Spirit imparts Christ as righteousness into us so that we may be “constituted righteous” (Rom. 5:19) and thus constitutionally “become the righteousness of God in Him” (2 Cor. 5:21). By giving life, “the Spirit ‘fulfills’ Torah by doing ‘what Torah could not do’”; in other words, the Spirit “has replaced Torah by effecting, and thus fulfilling, the righteousness found in Torah” (Fee 398, 418). In order for Christ as righteousness to be constituted into us, we must not care for the killing letter but for the life-giving Spirit. Instead of endeavoring to keep the lifeless and impotent law by our natural life, we need to receive the bountiful supply of the life-giving Spirit by walking according to our mingled spirit so that Christ as righteousness may be formed in us.

Christ being formed in us is equivalent to our growing in the divine life unto maturity (Heb. 5:14; 6:1; 1 Cor. 2:6; Phil. 3:15); when Christ is completely formed in us, we will be fully mature in the divine life. Each of us needs to allow Christ to grow in us, thereby filling all our inward parts and gaining all the ground within us, until corporately “we all arrive...at a full-grown man,” a mature universal new man, and “at the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ,” which fullness is the Body of Christ (Eph. 1:23; 2:15; 4:13). The reality of the church as the new man, the Body of Christ, is the totality of the believers who have Christ formed in them. This “one new man” fulfills God’s original purpose in the creation of man in His image and according to His likeness—that a corporate man would receive God in Christ as life and be filled with Him to express Him in His divine attributes (2:15; 4:24; Gen. 1:26; 2:9; Acts 3:14). If we would participate in the accomplishment of God’s eternal purpose, we should not sow unto our own flesh by endeavoring to keep the law and thereby have the works of the law, lest we reap corruption of the flesh; instead, we should sow unto the Spirit by taking the Spirit as our goal so that

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ACCORDING TO OUR  
MINGLED SPIRIT  
SO THAT CHRIST AS  
RIGHTEOUSNESS MAY  
BE FORMED IN US.



SAUL WAS  
PERSECUTING THE  
LORD HIMSELF  
BECAUSE THE  
CHURCH WAS  
THE MYSTICAL BODY  
OF CHRIST BY VIRTUE  
OF THE BELIEVERS,  
THE MEMBERS  
OF THE BODY,  
BEING ORGANICALLY  
IDENTIFIED AND  
UNITED WITH  
HIM IN LIFE  
AS THE HEAD.

we may reap eternal life of the Spirit, causing us to bring forth the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 6:8). Whereas the works of the law are the issue of human effort in the flesh, the fruit of the Spirit is the issue of the divine supply of life in the Spirit of Jesus Christ. The consummate issue of our walking by the Spirit and the eternal harvest of our sowing unto the Spirit is the Jerusalem above (4:26), the “New Jerusalem,” the city of life composed of the chosen, predestinated, redeemed, regenerated, transformed, and glorified sons of God, in whom Christ, the firstborn Son of God, is fully formed (Rev. 21:2, 7; 22:1-2).

### **The Church as the New Creation versus Judaism as Part of the Old Creation**

In Galatians Judaism is set in contrast not only to the incarnated, crucified, and resurrected Christ as the Spirit but also to the church as His Body, the corporate new man. At the beginning of this Epistle Paul asserts that it was “according to the will of our God” that Christ rescued us out of the present evil age (1:4). In Romans Paul speaks of the “will of God” (12:2) in connection with the “one Body in Christ” (v. 5), unveiling that the will of God is to impart Christ as “the Spirit of life” into the believers’ spirit, soul, and body for the constitution of the church as the Body of Christ.<sup>2</sup> Similarly, in Galatians Paul discloses God’s will to unite the believers with Christ as the Spirit for the producing of the church. Christ was made a curse on our behalf and redeemed us out of the curse of the law so that through faith in Christ we might inherit the blessing of Abraham by receiving the promised Spirit, who is none other than the reality of the resurrected Christ (3:13-14). The issue of the believers’ participation in Christ as the life-giving Spirit, as the blessing of Abraham, is the church as the new creation—the one new man, the one Body of Christ (6:15; Eph. 1:22-23; 2:15-16). Ultimately, Christ gave Himself for our sins in order to bring us out of the fold of Judaism into the church as the flock of God. This universal church is the one new man composed of both the Jewish believers and the Gentile believers (John 10:1-16) for the fulfillment of God’s great will to have a corporate new man for His expression and representation (Gen. 1:26). In Galatians the Jewish religion with its law stands in opposition to the processed and consummated Christ as the Spirit and the church as the corporate new creation.

**I**n Galatians 1 Paul further contrasts the Jewish religion with the church when he states that he, as a prominent and zealous Judaizer, “ravaged” not only the faith as the gospel (v. 23) but also “the church of God,” persecuting it excessively (v. 13). The church of God is composed of all “the called saints” (1 Cor. 1:2), all the believers in Christ as the members of the Body of Christ.<sup>3</sup> At Paul’s conversion the resurrected and ascended Lord Jesus opened Paul’s eyes to see the true nature of the church as the Body of Christ: when Saul was persecuting the church composed of the believers in Christ, he was, in actuality, persecuting the Lord Himself because the church was the mystical Body of Christ by virtue of the believers, the members of the Body, being organically identified and united with Him in life as the Head through their faith in Him.<sup>4</sup> In contrast to Judaism, the nature of the church is not a religion or organization in the old creation but a living organism constituted with Christ as the new creation—the organic Body of Christ. Paul’s former religion not only prevented him from seeing and entering into the church as the Body of Christ through an organic union with Christ but also led him to persecute the church excessively. This is a fulfillment of Christ’s prophecy in John 15:18—16:4. Judaism as the religious world “hated” and “persecuted” the incarnated Christ as the Master. Likewise, Judaism would hate and persecute the believers in Christ as His slaves, regarding its killing of the believers as a service offered to God (16:2). This indicates that the Jewish religion is at enmity with both Christ and the church, His organic Body.

### **The Church as a New Creation, the One New Man**

Paul further develops the contrast between Judaism and the church in Galatians 6:12-16. In verses 12 and 13 Paul denounces the Judaizers for making a display in the flesh and avoiding persecution by compelling the Galatians to be circumcised, and in verse 14 Paul



testifies that he had been crucified to the world, referring to Judaism. As Brunk notes, “One part of the world to which one dies with Christ is the Law-oriented world, which defines social reality in terms of who is circumcised and who is not” (295). In verse 15 Paul says, “For neither is circumcision anything nor uncircumcision, but a new creation is what matters.” The word *for* at the beginning of this verse implies that the verse explains the significance of the religious world in the immediately preceding verse. Since circumcision is one of the crucial pillars upon which Judaism is upheld, the new creation is at odds with Judaism, the evil religious world, with its law. What matters to God and, by extension, what should matter to us are not ordinances of the law, whose letter kills (2 Cor. 3:6), but the new creation, composed of believers who are constituted with Christ as the life-giving Spirit (v. 17; 5:17).

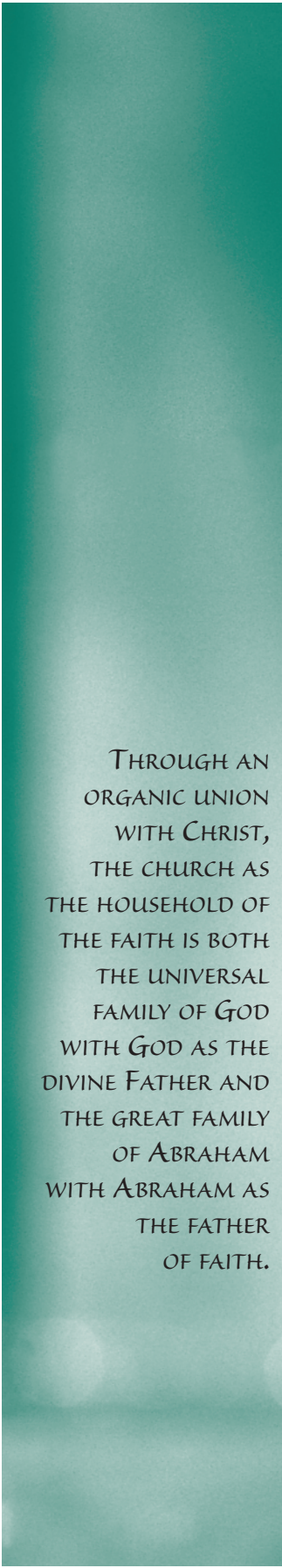
In Paul’s mind, the new creation in Galatians 6:15 refers to the church as the one new man, the corporate expression of Christ produced through the believers’ union with Him in the divine life. In 2 Corinthians 5:17 Paul unveils that what constitutes a believer a new creation is not his compliance with ordinances or rituals but his organic union with Christ: “If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation.” Albert Barnes, commenting on “a new creation” in Galatians 6:15, underscores the organic significance of a believer being a new creation:

*But a new creature.* The fact that a man is created anew, or born again, constitutes the real difference between him and other men. This is what Christ requires; this is the distinction which he designs to make. It is not by conformity to certain rites and customs that a man is to be accepted; it is not by elevated rank, or by wealth, or beauty, or blood; it is not by the colour of the complexion; but the grand inquiry is, whether a man is born again, and is in fact a new creature in Christ Jesus. (397)

**W**e are God’s new creation exclusively by believing into Christ, thereby entering into an organic union with Him and becoming one with Him in life and nature (1 John 5:11-12; 2 Pet. 1:4). This implies that Christ, the embodiment of God, is the unique element that makes us the new creation. The old creation is an empty vessel that has yet to contain God, whereas the new creation is a vessel that possesses God as its content (Rom. 9:21, 23; 2 Cor. 4:7). In brief, the old creation is separate from the Creator, while the new creation is united with the Creator (though never attaining to the Creator’s status). In order for us to fully become God’s new creation, we need to be daily renewed by having God in Christ wrought into every part of our tripartite being (v. 16; Rom. 12:2). In Galatians 3:27-28 Paul speaks of our putting on *Christ* (versus putting on the law), where “there cannot be Jew nor Greek, there cannot be slave nor free man, there cannot be male and female.” In Colossians 3:10-11 Paul speaks of our putting on *the new man*, where “there cannot be Greek and Jew, circumcision and uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free man, but Christ is all and in all.” Comparing these two portions of the Word proves that putting on Christ, the sole constituent and person of the new man, is equivalent to putting on the new man. The manifestation of the reality of the new man as the corporate new creation of God is utterly dependent on the believers’ being fully constituted with Christ in their entire being through the progressive development of their organic union with Christ, which spreads from their regenerated spirit into their soul and body.<sup>5</sup> Paul’s deep burden in writing to the Galatians was not merely to rescue them from the evil Jewish religion; more positively, he desired to shepherd them into a life of Christ being constituted within them so that they might become God’s new creation in full (Gal. 1:16; 2:20; 4:19; 5:25). Such a new creation of God as the matchless masterpiece of God in Christ is immeasurably superior to Judaism, a man-made religion, as part of the old creation (Eph. 2:10, 15).

Although quite a few commentators interpret the new creation in Galatians 6:15 to mean an individual believer as a new creature, the new creation is properly understood as the “one new man” in Ephesians 2:15, the church as the Body of Christ (v. 16; 1:22-23).

IT IS NOT BY  
CONFORMITY TO  
CERTAIN RITES  
AND CUSTOMS  
THAT A MAN IS  
TO BE ACCEPTED;  
IT IS NOT BY  
ELEVATED RANK,  
OR BY WEALTH, OR  
BEAUTY, OR BLOOD;  
BUT WHETHER A  
MAN IS BORN AGAIN,  
AND IS IN FACT  
A NEW CREATURE  
IN CHRIST JESUS.



THROUGH AN  
ORGANIC UNION  
WITH CHRIST,  
THE CHURCH AS  
THE HOUSEHOLD OF  
THE FAITH IS BOTH  
THE UNIVERSAL  
FAMILY OF GOD  
WITH GOD AS THE  
DIVINE FATHER AND  
THE GREAT FAMILY  
OF ABRAHAM  
WITH ABRAHAM AS  
THE FATHER  
OF FAITH.

Both the new creation in Galatians and the new man in Ephesians issue from the operation of the cross and the believers' union with Christ. According to Galatians 6:14-15, what enables the believers to live in the new creation is their separation from the world by the cross of Christ, that is, by their being crucified to the religious system of Judaism, represented here by circumcision. In consonance with this revelation, Paul makes it clear in verse 15 that in the new creation there is no distinction between circumcision and uncircumcision. Likewise, according to Ephesians 2:14-15, the creation of the new man required Christ to abolish in His flesh the law of the commandments in ordinances, thereby breaking down the middle wall of partition, the enmity, between the circumcision (the Jews) and the uncircumcision (the Gentiles). Further, according to Galatians 3:26-27, the new creation is composed of the believers who are "sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus" and "were baptized into Christ" and "have put on Christ." By faith and baptism into Christ, we have been immersed into and are organically united with Christ the Son so that we may be not only many sons of God but also "one in Christ Jesus," in whom there exists no distinction between races and nationalities (Jew and Greek), social classes (slave and free man), or genders (male and female) (v. 28). As such a corporate, divine sonship, the new creation is the church as the new man, where there is no distinction based on race and nationality (Greek and Jew), religion (circumcision and uncircumcision), culture (barbarian and Scythian), or social rank (slave and free man), for in this one new man "Christ is all and in all" (Col. 3:10-11). The distinctions in the old creation among the believers as members of the new man are nullified not only because all these persons were terminated on the cross but, even more, because they have been constituted with Christ, the centrality and the universality in the new man. This thought is echoed in Paul's declaration that Christ created the Jewish believers and the Gentile believers "in Himself into one new man" (Eph. 2:15), which Paul identifies as "one Body" (v. 16). In verse 15 the Greek word translated "in" (ἐν) can also have an elemental significance, indicating that Christ, who is the divine life, was not only the sphere in which the one new man, the one Body of Christ, was created but also the element with which the new man was created. This suggests that the universal new man, the church as the unique Body of Christ (1:22-23), is wholly constituted with Christ as the divine essence. Therefore, in Galatians the church as the new creation is not simply the totality of all the believers in Christ; more intrinsically, it is the aggregate of the Christ who is revealed in the believers, lives in them, and is formed in them. Such a new creation as the enlargement and expression of Christ in the believers is not only incomparably greater than, but also incompatible with, the Jewish religion as a component of the old creation.

### *The Church as the Household of the Faith*

In Galatians the church as God's corporate new creation in Christ is revealed as "the household of the faith" (6:10), which is versus the followers of the law. The church as the household of the faith is "the household of God" (Eph. 2:19) composed of the "children of promise" who are "born according to the Spirit" (Gal. 4:23, 28-29), that is, the "sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus" (3:26), who are also "sons of Abraham" through faith in Christ and not through works of law (vv. 7, 26). All the believers as the members of Christ (1 Cor. 6:15) are the sons of God by being in union with Christ as the Son of God (Gal. 1:16; 4:4; 3:26) and are the sons of Abraham by being in union with Christ as the seed of Abraham (vv. 16, 29). In other words, through an organic union with Christ, the church as the household of the faith is both the universal family of God with God as the divine Father (1:3) and the great family of Abraham with Abraham as the father of faith (Rom. 4:16). The household of the faith, the family of faith composed of the believers in Christ who belong to the New Testament economy, stands in contradistinction to the Judaizers, followers of the law who belong to the Old Testament economy. Since the law cannot give the life of God (Gal. 3:21), the followers of the law do not have the divine life required to belong to the household of God. In contrast, the faith, the New Testament economy of God, imparts God in Christ as life into us and produces us as members of the family of faith. The believers are sons in life under grace



who are perfected by the Spirit out of the hearing of faith, unlike the Judaizers, who are slaves to works under law to be perfected by the flesh out of the works of law (vv. 2-3; 4:7). The household of the faith, which is composed of the believers as both “sons of the living God” and sons of Abraham (Rom. 9:26; Hosea 1:10), is “the house of God, which is the church of the living God” as the enlarged expression of God in Christ (1 Tim. 3:15). As such, it is unequivocally superior to the Judaizers, who are lifeless people of the law and the children of the law under the slavery of the law (Gal. 2:4; 4:25, 29-31).

### *The Church as the Israel of God*

In Galatians Paul unveils that the church as the new creation is not only the household of the faith for God’s image and expression but also the Israel of God to represent God and exercise His dominion (Gen. 1:26). Immediately after speaking of the new creation in Galatians 6:15, Paul says in verse 16, “And as many walk by this rule, peace be upon them and mercy, even upon the Israel of God.” Some commentators hold a narrow understanding of *the Israel of God* as exclusively denoting Jewish believers. For instance, Ryrie notes that the Israel of God refers to “Christian Jews, those who are both the physical and spiritual seed of Abraham” and that “the church is not equated with the new Israel of God” (1874). MacArthur agrees, saying in his commentary that “the Israel of God refers to Jewish believers in Jesus Christ, to those who are spiritual as well as physical descendants of Abraham (Gal. 3:7) and are heirs of promise rather than of law (v. 18)” (210). However, given both the immediate context of verse 16 and the broader context of the entire Epistle, it is decidedly more logical to understand the Israel of God as the church rather than as only Jewish believers. Verse 16 begins with the conjunction *and*, linking the Israel of God in 6:16 to the new creation in verse 15, which is the church as the new man, where there exists no distinction between circumcision and uncircumcision. Alford supports this view, asserting that *the Israel of God* does not refer to “the Israel after the flesh” but “the Israel of God, described [in] ch. iii, 28, 29,” which verses speak of the believers who are “in Christ” and “of Christ” as “Abraham’s seed” (360). Thomas R. Schreiner similarly writes, “When [Paul] speaks of ‘the Israel of God’ at the conclusion of the letter, where he rehearses the major themes of the letter, he is driving home the point that believers in Christ, members of the new creation, are the true Israel” (382). Likewise, Geoff Ziegler, commenting on the significance of the Israel of God, says, “What defines the people of God is Jesus Christ, the true son of Abraham and Son of God. All those who are in him by faith are the true heirs of God’s promises. Whether Jew or Gentile by descent, in Christ all believers comprise the true ‘Israel of God.’”

Justin Martyr’s *The Dialogue of S. Justin Martyr with Trypho the Jew*, believed to be written between A.D. 155 and 160, is one of the earliest documents that equates the church with “the true spiritual Israel” (85). Martin Luther and John Calvin not only echo this truth but also acknowledge Paul’s benediction of peace upon the Israel of God as a provocation to the Judaizers, who are excluded from the genuine Israel of God. Luther writes, commenting concerning the expression *upon the Israel of God*,

Here Paul attacks the false apostles and the Jews, who boasted about their fathers, their election, the Law, etc. (Rom. 9:4-5). It is as though he were saying: “The Israel of God are not the physical descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel but those who, with Abraham the believer (3:9), believe in the promises of God now disclosed in Christ, whether they are Jews or Gentiles.” (*Luther’s Works* 142)

Calvin similarly says,

This is an indirect ridicule of the vain-boasting of the false apostles, who vaunted of being the descendants of Abraham according to the flesh. There are two classes who bear this name, a pretended Israel, which appears to be so in the sight of men,—and the Israel of God. Circumcision was a disguise before men, but regeneration is a truth before God. In

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a word, he gives the appellation of *the Israel of God* to those whom he formerly denominated the children of Abraham by faith [Gal.], and thus includes all believers, whether Jews or Gentiles, who are united into one church. (166-167)

In Paul's understanding, the Israel of God refers to the church as the household of the faith, which includes all the Jewish and Gentile believers in Christ, all of whom are true sons of Abraham (Gal. 3:7), the corporate seed of Abraham (v. 29), and have been spiritually circumcised by Christ's crucifixion.<sup>6</sup> The church as the new creation, the new man, constitutes the real Israel, the Israel of God in the Spirit (Rom. 9:6), for every believer in Christ, a member of the Body of Christ, is "a Jew who is one inwardly" (2:29; 12:4-5; Eph. 5:30).

However, even among the expositors who correctly equate the Israel of God with the church, few point out the spiritual significance of this crucial aspect of the church: the church is the corporate representation of God's authority for the carrying out of His administration. The Hebrew word *Israel* means "one who struggles with God" or "a prince of God."<sup>7</sup> The believers who constitute the Israel of God are typified by Jacob, who was renamed and transformed into a prince of God and a victor (Gen. 32:28; 35:10) and who matured and vicariously reigned and exercised the dominion of God through his son Joseph, "lord of all Egypt" and "ruler over all the land of Egypt" (41:39-44; 44:8; 45:9, 26). In accordance with this truth, if we would live as the true Israel of God, we need to be transformed and matured in the divine life (2 Cor. 3:18; Heb. 6:1) so that we may reign in life over sin, death, and the world, more than conquer in all environmental sufferings, stand against the stratagems of the devil, fight against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenlies, and experience the God of peace crushing Satan under our feet.<sup>8</sup> In Galatians 6:16 Paul indicates that in order for the believers to become "the Israel of God" in practicality, they need to "walk by this rule." The same Greek root for *walk* (στοιχέω) is used both in this verse and in 5:25, which says, "Walk by the Spirit," indicating that to walk "by this rule" is to walk "by the Spirit." Certainly, walking by the Spirit as our basic principle includes many other experiences of the Spirit, such as sowing unto the Spirit to reap eternal life rather than sowing unto our flesh to reap corruption (6:8). If the believers walk merely by the law with its ordinances as their way and rule, their walk will be the same as that of those who are Jews outwardly, that is, the Israel of God in the flesh. It is only by sowing unto the Spirit and thus walking by the Spirit as the basic principle of God's New Testament economy that we can walk by the rule of the new creation and live as the Israel of God in reality, thereby executing God's authority as kings reigning in the kingdom of God (Rom. 14:17).

The eternal culmination of the believers' experience of the indwelling Christ through their walk by the Spirit is the New Jerusalem (Rev. 21:2; 3:12). The New Jerusalem, the holy city, is the ultimate consummation of the new creation, the corporate new man who expresses God's glorious image as the household of the faith, the household of God, and exercises His uncontested dominion as the Israel of God. This is because the constituents of the holy city are not only sons of God who express "the glory of God" (21:7, 11) but also kings who "reign forever and ever," executing God's authority over the nations (vv. 23-24; 22:5). The consummate issue of the progressive development of the believers' organic union with Christ—who is revealed in them, lives in them, and is formed in them—is the New Jerusalem, the glorious expression and unchallenged representation of the Triune God.

### Aspects of Judaized Christianity

The continuing relevance of Paul's Epistle to the Galatians lies in the need for the modern-day believers to be rescued from the present evil age into the experience of the indwelling Christ as the life-giving Spirit for the producing of the church as the new creation. Whereas the present evil age from which the Galatians needed to be extricated was the Jewish religion, in our time the believers need to be saved from organized Christianity,



which has been systematized into a degraded religion akin to Judaism. Today's Christianity has been Judaized in at least four main aspects.

### *Earthly Promises and Blessings*

First, as in Judaism, a preoccupation with earthly blessings has pervaded Christianity. Not a few so-called Christian preachers peddle the false "gospel" of prosperity, promising, as does Markus Bishop, "a life of abundance," financial prosperity, as "the *perfect* will of God" for the believers' life and even that which was "bought and paid for by Jesus Christ" for the believers (18, 24, 43, 55). In *The Laws of Prosperity* Kenneth Copeland echoes this line of thought in his commentary on Galatians 3:13-14:

Jesus bore the curse of the law in our behalf...Consequently, there is no reason for you to live under the curse of the law, no reason for you to live in poverty of any kind...

Since God's covenant has been established and prosperity is a provision of this covenant, you need to realize that prosperity belongs to you *now!*...You *must* realize that it is God's will for you to prosper. (48)

In *Redeemed from Poverty, Sickness, and Spiritual Death* Kenneth E. Hagin similarly says,

"That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ...And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise" [Gal. 3:14, 29].

Abraham's blessing is ours!...

The first thing God promised Abraham was that He was going to make him rich.

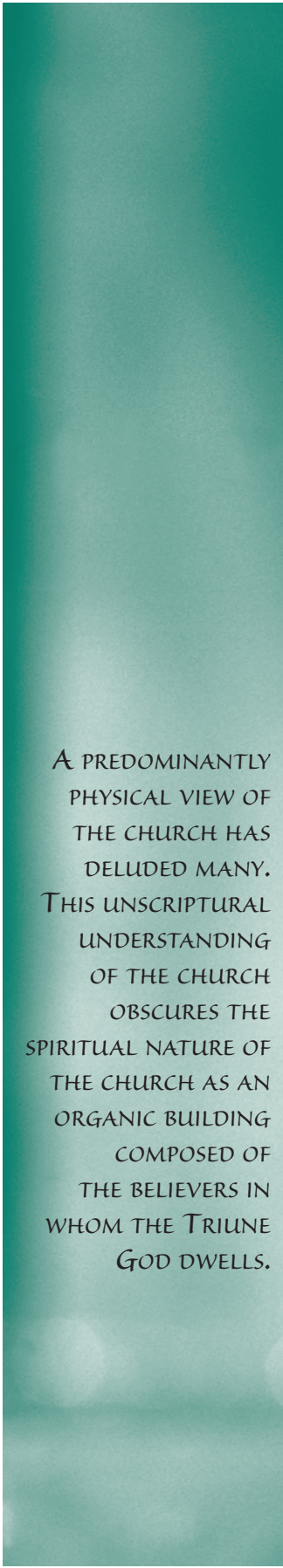
"Do you mean God is going to make us all rich?" Yes, that's what I mean...

...He is going to make us rich.

...God had redeemed us from the curse of poverty. (8-10)

This distorted gospel is contrary to the apostles' teaching in the New Testament. When Paul states that "Christ has redeemed us out of the curse of the law" (Gal. 3:13), the curse he refers to is not physical poverty but the condemnation of the law. The law requires that the soul who sins must die (Ezek. 18:20) and stipulates that the wages of sin is death (Rom. 6:23). Christ's redemptive death on our behalf has delivered us from this dire consequence of the law; through the shedding of His redemptive blood, our sins have been forgiven by God.<sup>9</sup> Further, "the blessing of Abraham" in Galatians 3:14 does not refer to material prosperity but to "the promise of the Spirit," that is, the bountiful Spirit whom God promised to the believers in Christ as "Abraham's seed, heirs according to promise" (vv. 2, 5, 7, 29). The Lord Jesus exhorted the believers to be "rich toward God" rather than storing up earthly treasure for themselves (Luke 12:21). The Lord instructed an "exceedingly rich" ruler to sell all that he had and to distribute it to the poor so that he might have treasure in the heavens and might follow the Lord (18:18-25). The writer of Hebrews commends the believers who were willing to suffer the loss of earthly things at the hands of their persecutors, accepting their loss "with joy" on account of the heavenly riches as their "better possession" (10:34). God "has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies in Christ" (Eph. 1:3), revealing that the Spirit is the essence, nature, and reality of all the divine blessings and that Christ is the sphere, means, and element of these blessings. Our enjoyment of these spiritual and heavenly blessings is dependent on the impartation of Christ as the Spirit into us. Hence, the gospel that the apostle Paul, as one of God's fellow workers, was commissioned to preach was not outward prosperity but "the unsearchable riches of Christ" (3:8; 1 Cor. 3:9). Paul

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portrayed himself and his co-workers as “having nothing” in the eyes of man “and yet possessing all things” in the divine economy (2 Cor. 6:10). In Paul’s view, he and his co-workers were “poor” with respect to material possessions “yet enriching many” (v. 10) by ministering the surpassing riches of God’s grace and the bountiful supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ (Eph. 1:7; 2:7; 3:2; Phil. 1:19). The apostles were poor in silver and gold (Acts 3:6), but they were thoroughly constituted with God the Father in His divine nature as gold, with God the Son in His redemption as silver, and with the Spirit in His transforming work as precious stones.<sup>10</sup> They ministered the Triune God into the believers for the building of the church as “the temple of God” (1 Cor. 3:5, 12, 16-17). Just as the “different gospel” of the Judaizers distracted the Galatians from the grace of Christ (Gal. 1:6), so also the gospel of material prosperity is a perversion of “the gospel of Christ” (v. 7) defrauding the believers of their participation in the immeasurable riches of the all-inclusive Christ as the genuine gospel in God’s New Testament economy.

### *A Material Temple*

Second, the importance of a material temple in Judaism is reflected in today’s degraded Christianity, where many believers consider the church primarily as a physical structure where believers gather. This misguided notion has so thoroughly infiltrated the lexicon of Christians that it is commonplace for believers to speak of “going to church” as if the church were a building down the street. Such a predominantly physical view of the church has deluded many into desiring to construct luxurious cathedrals or ornate chapels in the name of building a “temple” for God. This unscriptural understanding of the church obscures the spiritual nature of the church as an organic building composed of the believers in whom the Triune God dwells (Eph. 4:6; Rom. 8:9-11; Col. 1:27). As Paul testified in Acts 17:24, “The God who made the world and all things in it, this One, being Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands” (cf. 7:48). Instead, God dwells in the church as His spiritual habitation, composed of the believers in Christ. Knowing God’s desire to build the church as His spiritual house, the Lord Jesus declared that an hour was coming when the true worshippers would “worship the Father in spirit,” in the believers’ regenerated human spirit, rather than in any physical location, including the magnificent temple in Jerusalem, albeit “beautiful” and “adorned with beautiful stones” (John 4:20-24; Acts 3:2; Luke 21:5). Paul echoes this thought when he proclaims that the dwelling place of God is in the believers’ spirit (Eph. 2:22). As “the house of God,” “the church of the living God” is not a material structure but a composition of believers who themselves “are the temple of the living God” (1 Tim. 3:15; 2 Cor. 6:16); it is “a spiritual house” built with Christ as the cornerstone and with the believers as the living and precious stones (1 Pet. 2:4-6). The church as the temple of God is not a lifeless building devoid of God that belongs to the old creation; rather, it is the new creation composed of the believers in whom Christ as the Spirit dwells and makes His home (Gal. 6:15; 1 Cor. 3:16-17; Eph. 2:21-22; 3:17). Believers today must see such a scriptural revelation concerning the church so that they may no longer be preoccupied by a Judaized, physical view of the church and may, instead, focus upon living and worshipping the Father in their spirit, allowing the pneumatic Christ to take up His residence in their heart, and being built together with one another to form God’s house for His rest, satisfaction, and expression.

### *Mediatorial Priests*

Third, like Judaism, which employs a class of mediatorial priests, today’s organized Christianity embraces hierarchical clericalism. In the Old Testament God declared that the whole nation of Israel would be “a kingdom of priests” (Exo. 19:6). Because of the worship of the golden calf, however, the majority of the children of Israel lost the priesthood (32:1-29), and the tribe of Levi, which alone remained faithful to God in guarding God’s covenant and separating themselves from their idolatrous brothers, was chosen to assume the priesthood on behalf of the entire nation of Israel (vv. 25-29; Deut. 33:8-10). This priesthood constituted an intermediary class between God and the children of Israel; this



intermediary class became an enduring system in the Jewish religion. In the New Testament, however, God returned to His original intention that all His people should serve God directly as priests. The apostle John states that the Lord Jesus purchased by His blood the believers out of “every tribe and tongue and people and nation” in order to make them priests to God (Rev. 1:6; 5:9-10). Similarly, the apostle Peter proclaims that the believers are “a holy priesthood” to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ and “a royal priesthood” to tell out the virtues of the One who has called them out of darkness into His marvelous light (1 Pet. 2:5, 9). However, contrary to the universal priesthood of the believers, the priestly system of the Roman Catholic Church, the clerical system of the state churches, and the pastoral system of the independent churches insult the unique preeminence of Christ in the church and undermine God’s ordination that every believer function in the proper church life. This intermediary class replaces “one Mediator of God and men, the man Christ Jesus” (1 Tim. 2:5). In His person Christ is both God and man, and in His work Christ “gave Himself as a ransom for all,” accomplishing redemption for all men (v. 6). Hence, Christ alone is qualified to be the Mediator between God and men, and it is only through this incarnated, crucified, and resurrected One that we can “believe into God” (1 Pet. 1:19-21), “have access...unto” God (Eph. 2:18), come to God the Father (John 14:6), “come forward to God” in “the Holy of Holies” (Heb. 7:25; 10:19-20), and “offer up a sacrifice of praise continually to God” (13:15). Therefore, all our prayers and petitions should be offered directly to God through Christ, who “lives always to intercede” for us (7:25; Rom. 8:34), and not through any other intermediaries.

Furthermore, since the system of the clergy and laity elevates certain believers above the majority, it inherently negates the supremacy of Christ in the church, where Christ alone should be exalted as “the Head of the Body, the church” and owns the title of “Teacher,” “Instructor,” “Master,” and “Lord.”<sup>11</sup> In the church as the household of the faith (the household of God) and the new creation of God (the new man), all the believers have equal status as fellow brothers in Christ and fellow members of His Body,<sup>12</sup> and among them only Christ possesses the unique distinction and honor as “the Firstborn among many brothers” and “the Firstborn from the dead” (v. 29; Col. 1:18). In the church there should be no superior class of believers who are “esteemed as rulers” and “exercise authority” over the rest, “lording it” over them (Mark 10:42-44; 1 Pet. 5:3; 2 Cor. 1:24), for the believers are “all brothers” (Matt. 23:8), who should honor Christ as their only Lord and serve each other as slaves (20:26-27; Luke 22:26).

Moreover, the hierarchical distinction between clergy and laity annuls the organic function of the believers as the members of the Body of Christ by granting a virtual monopoly of spiritual responsibility to a select class of believers. In Paul’s understanding, every believer in Christ is a precious “gift of Christ” with a measure of grace, an indispensable gift who is constituted with Christ and given by Christ to His Body for its building up (Eph. 4:7-12). According to the divine revelation in the Bible, God intends not only that all His people serve God as priests (Exo. 19:6; Rom. 15:16) but also that “all Jehovah’s people” be “prophets” to speak for God and speak Him forth to others (Num. 11:29). Paul confirms this divine intention when he indicates that all the believers have the obligation and the capacity to prophesy in a meeting of the church: “If all prophesy” (1 Cor. 14:23-24), and “You can all prophesy one by one” (v. 31). The functioning of all members to prophesy, to speak forth Christ, is of central importance, since prophesying “builds up the church” as the Body of Christ by ministering to people Christ as the unique element of the Body (vv. 4-5, 12; 12:12). Ultimately, the growth and building up of the Body, the goal of God’s New Testament economy, is principally dependent on “the operation in the measure of each one part” (Eph. 4:12, 16), that is, the functioning of every perfected member of the Body of Christ to minister the immeasurably rich Christ as the grace of God and the life-giving Spirit through the practice of prophesying (3:2, 6-8; 2 Cor. 3:6). In order for all the believers to function according to their measure for the growth and building up of the Body of Christ, they all need to be released from the hierarchical clergy-laity system, which replaces and nullifies the function of all the members of the Body.

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### *The Law of Letters*

Fourth, just as Judaism is built upon the law of letters, so also the daily life of countless Christians today is governed by outward rules of conduct while falling short of the full revelation concerning their organic union with Christ. So powerful was the grip of the law on the Galatians under the influence of the Judaizers that Paul spoke of them as those who “desire to be under the law” (Gal. 4:21). As Handley C. G. Moule writes, “There is a Judaist element...in every human heart” (12-13). Today innumerable Christians, like the Jews and the Galatians of Paul’s time, live mainly by the principle of the law in letters as the outward code of morality in an attempt to please God. The principle of the law includes endeavors to conform our behavior to “Christian virtues” or “biblical” ethical principles by our natural strength. It also encompasses all attempts to maintain a certain standard of conduct as well as behavioral improvement according to personal resolutions based on social ethics, religious expectations, and moral aspirations, all in the name of “glorifying” God apart from our spiritual union with Christ. Just as the Galatians had come under a strong influence of the law and were trying to perfect themselves by the flesh (3:3), so also countless believers are taught by preachers and authors to make ethical improvement of their living and the pursuit of law-keeping the goal of their spiritual life. This tendency to exalt the law as a governing rule of the Christian life is illustrated by a well-known and oft-quoted statement regarding the law of God in the Westminster Assembly’s 1647 Confession:

Although true believers be not under the law as a covenant of works, to be thereby justified or condemned; yet is it of great use to them, as well as to others; in that, as a rule of life, informing them of the will of God and their duty, it directs and binds them to walk accordingly. (175)

In his article entitled “Antinomianism,” Mike Ratliff similarly uplifts the law as the paramount rule of the Christian life: “God’s law in Scripture should directly control the Christian’s life,” “Keeping the law is a continuing obligation for Christians,” and “The moral law revealed in the Ten Commandments and expounded in other parts of the Bible is an expression of God’s righteousness, given to be a code of practice for God’s people in every age.” Such an elevation of the law beyond its limited utility in God’s intention, though seemingly good, is directly opposed to God’s New Testament economy. The advocates of law-keeping as the aim of the Christian life are not ministers of the life-giving Spirit (2 Cor. 3:6) or ministers of Christ (1 Tim. 4:6; Rom. 15:16), who impart the riches of Christ by presenting the healthy teaching of God’s economy, which is in faith (1 Tim. 1:4). Instead, they are ministers of the killing letter (2 Cor. 3:6) and “teachers of the law” (1 Tim. 1:7), who instruct people what to do and what not to do, thereby teaching “different things,” that is, unhealthy teachings that differ from the unique teaching of the apostles, the economy of God concerning Christ and the church (vv. 3-4, 10; Acts 2:42).

Both the teachers and adherents of law-keeping need to realize that even if the believers become perfect by keeping the law of Moses, they will still not fulfill God’s ultimate intention in His eternal economy. The Lord Jesus told the disciples that for them to enter into the kingdom of the heavens, their righteousness must not merely rival but surpass that of the scribes and Pharisees, which is according to the law of Moses (Matt. 5:20). Further, the Lord told a certain ruler that even if he kept the Ten Commandments, he was still lacking if he was not able to give up his possessions to follow the Lord (Luke 18:20-22). The righteousness that God desires to obtain in the believers is inestimably higher than the righteousness of those who are found “walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord, blameless” (1:6), for this surpassing righteousness is nothing less than Christ Himself imparted into His redeemed people and lived out of them (Gal. 2:20; 4:19). Since the law of letters is weak through the flesh and unable to give life, this law cannot perfect us (Rom. 8:3; Gal. 3:21; Heb. 10:1). In contrast, the law of the Spirit of life—Christ Himself as the life-giving Spirit who operates in us as the innate ability and spontaneous function of the divine life—is well able to not only set us free from the law of sin and of death and fulfill the righteous requirement of the law (Rom. 8:2, 4) but also impart the divine



life into our spirit, soul, and body in order to conform our entire tripartite being to the image of Christ the firstborn Son, making us His organic reproduction (vv. 10, 6, 11, 29). It is truly lamentable that the guiding principle that regulates the daily walk of so many earnest Christians today is the law of letters written “in tablets of stone” rather than the law of the Spirit of life that has been inscribed “in tablets of hearts of flesh” (2 Cor. 3:3; Jer. 31:33; Heb. 8:10). May the Lord turn the focus of all His seeking believers from the dead, weak, and impotent law of letters to the pneumatic Christ as the inward, powerful, and vivifying law of life so that through the operation of this higher law, they may not only be saved from futile efforts to please God by keeping the law but also be shaped into the image of God’s Son to become His duplication for God’s delight.

## Conclusion

Contrary to what many commentators assume, the overarching theme of Galatians is not the antithesis between justification by faith in Christ and justification by works of law. Instead, it is the processed and consummated Christ as the life-giving Spirit replacing the law with its ordinances. Paul’s persistent burden in writing the Epistle to the Galatians was not simply to rescue them from something negative—the observance of the law of Moses—but, even more, to usher them into something surpassingly positive—the subjective experience of the indwelling Christ as the Spirit for the development of their organic union with Christ in their entire tripartite being to produce the church as God’s new creation. It is by God’s revealing His Son in us through the Spirit in our spirit that we can be delivered from all forms of religion and realize this supremely precious One whom we announce and minister as the gospel. It is by living by the Spirit and thus allowing Christ to live in us that we may experience dying to the law and living to God in an organic union with Christ, thereby being saved from a life of trying to keep the law by the effort of the flesh and being saved into the normal Christian life, in which we receive the bountiful supply of the Spirit to live and magnify Christ, living in the faith of the Son of God and partaking of the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ in our spirit. And it is by Christ being formed in us through our continual receiving of the bountiful Spirit that we may no longer be constituted with the law as the governing principle of our daily life but, instead, be constituted with Christ in all our inward parts, thereby being transformed and conformed to the image of Christ. The issue of such a deeply subjective experience and enjoyment of the indwelling Christ is not a religious system or human organization but the church as the new creation, which is the one new man, the organic corporate enlargement and expression of Christ. May the Lord fully deliver us from every vestige of the present evil age, the current religious course of the world, and bring us into the progressive expansion of our union with Christ as the Spirit for the fulfillment of God’s good pleasure to have an enlarged expression of His beloved Son. [4C](#)

## Notes

<sup>1</sup>The following verses in the New Testament show that the items of the fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5:22-23 were exhibited in the Lord’s human living and His ministry on earth: Matt. 5:5, 43-48; 11:29; 24:45; 25:21; Mark 10:18; Luke 6:27, 35; 12:42; 18:7; John 14:27; 15:11; 16:24, 33; 2 Thes. 3:3; Rev. 1:5; 19:11. The following verses exhibit how these items were also displayed in the apostles’ life and service: 1 Cor. 4:2; 7:25; 9:25; 13:4; 16:24; 2 Cor. 6:6; 10:1; 12:15; Rom. 2:4; 12:7; 14:17; 16:20; Acts 24:25; Eph. 4:12, 32; 1 Tim. 1:12; 2 Pet. 1:6; Rev. 2:13.

<sup>2</sup>See Rom. 8:2, 6, 9-11, 14, 27, 34; 12:4-5; John 11:25; 14:6; 1 Cor. 12:12-13; Eph. 4:4-6.

<sup>3</sup>See Rom. 12:5; 1 Cor. 1:2; 6:15; 12:12-14, 20, 26-27; 14:33; Eph. 3:6; 4:25; 5:30; Heb. 2:10-13.

<sup>4</sup>See Acts 9:4-5; Eph. 1:22-23; 5:23; Col. 1:18, 24; 1 Cor. 6:15, 17; Gal. 2:16; John 3:16.

<sup>5</sup>See Eph. 4:23-24; Col. 3:10; Rom. 8:10, 6, 11, 23; 1 Thes. 5:23; John 3:6; Phil. 3:21; 1 Cor. 15:51-54; 2 Cor. 5:4.

THE THEME OF GALATIANS IS NOT THE ANTITHESIS BETWEEN JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH IN CHRIST AND JUSTIFICATION BY WORKS OF LAW. IT IS THE PROCESSED AND CONSUMMATED CHRIST AS THE LIFE-GIVING SPIRIT REPLACING THE LAW WITH ITS ORDINANCES.

THE ARK PORTRAYS  
CHRIST'S MYSTERIOUS  
PERSON OF TWO  
DISTINCT YET  
MINGLED NATURES.  
ALTHOUGH JESUS  
CHRIST WAS A  
GENUINE MAN  
WHO POSSESSED THE  
HUMAN NATURE,  
HE DID NOT  
EXPRESS HIS PERFECT  
HUMANITY BUT  
EXPRESSED ONLY  
THE FATHER.

<sup>6</sup>See Rom. 2:28-29; Phil. 3:3; Col. 2:11; cf. Lev. 26:41; Jer. 4:4; 9:25-26; Ezek. 44:7; Acts 7:51.

<sup>7</sup>See Gen. 32:28 in the KJV and Strong's H3478. R.A. Redford, expositing on Genesis 32:28 in *The Pulpit Commentary*, notes that *Israel* "seems in this place to signify either Prince of El (Calvin, Ainsworth, Dathe, Murphy, Wordsworth, and others), or wrestler with God (Furst, Keil, Kurtz, Lange, *et alii*, rather than warrior of God (Gesenius), if indeed both ideas may not be combined in the name as the princely wrestler with God ('Speaker's Commentary,' Bush), an interpretation adopted by the A.V."

<sup>8</sup>See Rom. 5:17, 21; 6:12; 8:35-39; 12:2; 16:20; Eph. 6:11-12; 1 John 2:13-17; Rev. 12:11.

<sup>9</sup>See Rom. 4:25; 5:6, 8; 1 Cor. 15:3; Gal. 1:4; 1 Pet. 2:24; 3:18; Heb. 9:28; Matt. 26:28; Heb. 9:22.

<sup>10</sup>See "Building with Gold, Silver and Precious Stones" by John Campbell (*Affirmation & Critique*, vol. 11, no.1, Apr. 2006, pp. 58-72). Gold, being immutable and untarnishable, signifies the pure, eternal, and incorruptible divine nature of the unchanging Father (2 Pet. 1:4; Rom. 1:23; James 1:17; 1 Tim. 1:17; Mal. 3:6; Psalms 102:27). In the Holy Scriptures gold is the symbol of divinity, as seen in the Ark of the Testimony (Exo. 25:22), which symbolizes Christ as the embodiment and testimony of God (Col. 2:9; John 1:18), who is the center and content of the church as the house of God (Col. 3:4, 10-11; Eph. 2:21-22; 1 Tim. 3:15). The Ark portrays Christ's mysterious person of two distinct yet mingled natures in that it was made of acacia wood, symbolizing Christ's strong human nature, overlaid within and without with pure gold, symbolizing Christ's glorious divine nature (Exo. 25:11; John 1:14). Although Jesus Christ was a genuine man who possessed the human nature (1 Tim. 2:5; John 19:5), He did not express His perfect humanity but expressed only the Father (5:19, 30, 36, 43). Since Christ as the Son is "the effulgence of [the Father's] glory and the impress of His substance" (Heb. 1:3), the gold of the Ark must refer to the Father's glorious divine nature borne and expressed by Christ (John 1:14). The shining of gold therefore symbolizes the glory of God, the expression of God (Exo. 25:10-11; 26:15, 29; 36:34; 37:12; 28:6; 39:3; Acts 7:2; 2 Cor. 3:18). Indeed, throughout the Bible gold is consistently associated with glory: Exodus 25:18 speaks of "cherubim of gold," whereas Hebrews 9:5 speaks of the "cherubim of glory." Hebrews 2:7 says that the Lord Jesus is crowned with "glory and honor," whereas Revelation 14:14 says that the Son of Man has "a golden crown" on His head. Ultimately, the New Jerusalem is described as being "pure gold" and "having the glory of God" (21:18, 11) because the holy city is the shining expression of God's divine nature wrought into the believers as the constituents of this city. Therefore, gold typifies God the Father in His divine nature and His divine glory.

As exemplified in Exodus 30:11-16, silver is often used in the Bible in connection with purchase or expiation (Gen. 20:16; Exo. 38:25-28; Lev. 27:3; 2 Sam. 24:24; 1 Kings 20:39) and thereby signifies the redemption accomplished by the Son. Just as Christ as the Lamb of God is the reality and fulfillment of the animal sacrifices and offerings presented on the altar (John 1:29, 36; Rev. 5:6, 9; cf. Heb. 10:5-10), so also is He the reality and fulfillment of "the expiation silver" that every man of Israel gave as "a ransom for himself" (Exo. 30:12, 16). Christ is the precious silver as the One who gave Himself "as a ransom for many" for the accomplishing of redemption for all men (Exo. 11:2; Zech. 11:12; Matt. 20:28; 26:14-15; 27:3-10; 1 Pet. 1:18-19; 1 Tim. 2:6; Titus 2:14).

The experience of the "golden" divine nature of the Father and the "silver" redemption of the Son issues in precious stones, which are not elemental but the product of a long process, implying the Spirit's transforming work by which natural men are made living stones for God's building (John 1:42; Rom. 12:2; 1 Pet. 2:5). This thought finds support in 2 Corinthians 3:18, which indicates that it is distinctly by the operation of the Spirit that the believers are transformed into the image of the Lord Jesus: "We...are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, even as from the Lord Spirit" (cf. Rom. 8:2, 29). Precious stones adorn the foundations of the wall of the New Jerusalem (Rev. 21:19), and the building work of the wall is jasper (v. 18), showing that the transformation wrought by the Spirit constitutes the believers, who were once made of clay (Gen. 2:7; Isa. 64:8), into living stones (1 Pet. 2:5) for the eternal dwelling and corporate expression of God.

Remarkably, these three experiences of the Divine Trinity for the divine building are seen in the first chapter of the Gospel of John, which serves as a prologue to the book. In verses 12 and 13 those who receive the Son are born of God—that is, they receive the life and nature of the Father



to become His genuine children. This corresponds to the believers' experience of partaking of the Father's divine nature, signified by the gold. In verse 29 the Son as the embodiment and expression of the Triune God in the flesh (vv. 1, 4, 14, 18) is introduced by John the Baptist as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world to accomplish redemption through His crucifixion. This corresponds to the believers' experience of the Son's redemption, signified by the silver. Upon this Lamb the Spirit descended and abode as a dove (v. 32), and this Dove-Lamb—signifying the Son as the Redeemer in the flesh, after accomplishing redemption through His death, becoming the life-giving Spirit in resurrection (1 Cor. 15:45b)—then changed the name of Simon to Peter, meaning “stone” (John 1:42; 1 Pet. 2:5). This corresponds to the believers' experience of the life-dispensing Spirit, who transforms worthless men of clay into precious stones. John 1 ends with an allusion to Jacob's dream at Bethel, where he beheld a ladder joining heaven and earth, set up a stone as a pillar, and poured oil on top of the stone (v. 51; Gen. 28:17-19). Bethel means “the house of God,” which is the church in the present age (1 Tim. 3:15; Eph. 2:21-22; Heb. 3:6), an organic building constructed with the transformed believers as precious stones mingled with the transforming Spirit as the oil (Isa. 61:1; Luke 4:18; Acts 10:38). Such a spiritual house of God (1 Pet. 2:5) will consummate in the New Jerusalem in the new heaven and new earth as the eternal tabernacle of God (Rev. 21:3). This is the ultimate fulfillment of building with gold, silver, and precious stones.

<sup>11</sup>See Col. 1:18; Matt. 23:8, 10:25; Eph. 6:9; Col. 4:1; Jude 4; John 13:13; Phil. 3:8; Acts 2:36; Rom. 10:9; 14:9.

<sup>12</sup>See 1 Cor. 12:13; Gal. 3:28; 6:18; Col. 3:10-11; Eph. 3:6; 5:30; Heb. 3:1; cf. Eph. 2:19.

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THE EXPERIENCE  
OF THE “GOLDEN”  
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OF THE FATHER  
AND THE “SILVER”  
REDEMPTION OF  
THE SON ISSUES  
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STONES IMPLYING  
THE SPIRIT’S  
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WORK BY WHICH  
NATURAL MEN ARE  
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THE CHURCH IS AN  
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SUCH A SPIRITUAL  
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