

The Circumcision Wars III Galatians—Chapters 2-3

Fred R. Coulter

You will remember how that the Jews insisted upon *physical* circumcision whenever there was a proselyte, and how that with that process of circumcision they became a Jew or part of the greater Jewish nation, even though it was in the Diaspora.

Paul's whole problem that he has in the book of Galatians is that there were those who were teaching that in order for the Gentiles to be finalized as Christians they had to follow the proselytizing of the Jews and receive the circumcision *in the flesh*. Once they did that, the teachers taught them to do other works of Judaism, because this made them in better standing with God.

This is the whole controversy that we have here when Paul went to Jerusalem, Galatians 2:9: "And after recognizing the grace that was given to me, James and Cephas and John—those reputed to be pillars—gave to me and Barnabas *the* right hands of fellowship, *affirming* that we *should go* to the Gentiles, and they to the circumcision. *Their only request was* that we remember the poor, which very thing I was also diligent to do. But when Peter came to Antioch, I withstood him to *his* face... [Peter was the apostle to the circumcision. In other words, to the Jews who still followed the circumcision.] ...because he was to be condemned" (vs 9-11).

However, what went along, one of the errors that they had with the Circumcision Party was that they insisted on following the rules of Judaism.

Verse 12: "For before certain *ones* came from James, he was eating with the Gentiles. However, when they came, he drew back and separated himself *from the Gentiles*, being afraid of those of *the* circumcision party"—showing that it was a political move.

Verse 13: "And the rest of *the* Jews joined him in *this* hypocritical act, insomuch that even Barnabas was carried away with their hypocrisy. But when I saw that they did not walk uprightly according to the Truth of the Gospel, I said to Peter... [this is very important for Peter] ...in the presence of them all, 'If you, being a Jew, are living like the Gentiles, and not according to Judaism, why do you compel the Gentiles to Judaize?'" (vs 13-14). That is to be separate.

One of the laws of Judaism that they had. Please understand, this has nothing to do with

keeping the commandments of God, which we are commanded to do. This has to do with the 'religious' laws of the *traditions* of the Jews in Judaism. One of the big problems with the development of the New Testament Church was that separation from the synagogue and separation from the laws of Judaism, which compelled the Jews to remain separate, don't even come into the presence of Gentiles and treat them as completely unclean.

Verse 14: "But when I saw that they did not walk uprightly according to the Truth of the Gospel, I said to Peter in the presence of them all, 'If you, being a Jew, are living like the Gentiles, and not according to Judaism, why do you compel the Gentiles to Judaize? We who are Jews by nature—and not sinners of *the* Gentiles—**knowing that a man is not justified by works of law...**'" (vs 14-16).

Justification means *the forgiveness of sin so you are put in right standing with God in heaven above!* No Law can do that! No law was designed to bring justification. When the temple stood they still had their sacrifices, which justified them to the temple.

But as Paul wrote in Hebrews, the 'sacrifices of bulls and goats cannot take away sin.' It didn't take it away. But the forgiveness, *through Christ*, removes the sin and that is *by faith* and *not by works!* That's why they understood the Gospel and they knew—and Peter well knew—that a man is not justified by works of law:

"...but through *the* faith of Jesus Christ, we also have believed in Christ Jesus in order that we might be justified by *the* faith of Christ, and not by works of law; because by works of law shall no flesh be justified." (v 16). That is the whole crux of the circumcision wars. Not only circumcision in the flesh, but also to practice the rules of Judaism.

Verse 17: "Now then, if we are seeking to be justified in Christ, *and* we ourselves are found to be sinners, *is* Christ then *the* minister of sin? **MAY IT NEVER BE!** For if I build again those things that I destroyed..." (vs 17-18).

We saw in Gal. 1 that he was one of the leading zealots of Judaism, and at the behest of the high priest would go out and arrest people, taking them in chains and bonds and bring them to Jerusalem because they were believing in Jesus

Christ. If he would go back and rebuild any of that way of life: separating from the Gentiles, circumcision of the flesh and all the laws of Judaism.

“...I am making myself a transgressor” (v 18). Christ is not behind that. Therefore, Christ cannot be the ‘minister of sin.’ That’s what he is telling Peter. He’s saying if he does that he is “...making myself a transgressor.”

Verse 19: “For I, through law, died to law... [Does that mean you don’t keep the laws and commandments of God? *No!* What does it say the wages of sin is? *Death!* That is *to the law of justification by works* he died!] ...in order that I may live to God.” When he died is a reference to baptism, because we are conjoined into Christ’s death, as well as crucifixion.

Verse 20: “I have been crucified with Christ, yet, I live. *Indeed*, it is no longer I... [Greek ‘ego’—not from the self] ...but Christ lives in me...” That’s the whole goal and purpose of Christians. That through the Spirit of God Christ lives *in you*.

“...For *the life* that I am now living in *the* flesh, I live by faith—that *very faith* of the Son of God, Who loved me and gave Himself for me. I do not nullify the grace of God; for if righteousness is through *works of law*, then Christ died in vain” (vs 20-21).

If righteousness—which is the spiritual standing before God the Father in heaven above, having your sins forgiven and being blameless—came through any law there would be no need for Christ to have died. The reason? *All you would have to do is read that law and obey it.* But the law does not really change the heart the way the Spirit does. Let’s see the *justification by faith*. Then we will see why Paul was so hard on Peter concerning this very thing in Gal. 2.

We will understand that because of the improper translation of Rom. 3—in the critical verses—it gives the appearance of equating keeping the commandments of God as not necessary. This is why the Protestants claim that all 613 commandments found in the Law of Moses have been abolished forever. That is some statement!

Romans 3:20 (KJV): “Therefore, by **the** deeds of **the** law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by **the** law is the knowledge of sin. But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested...” (vs 20-21). There are a couple of misleading translations here. The first basic rule in translating Greek is this: Never insert the definite article where there is none. In other words, if you

have a definite article in the Greek you translate it. Where there is not a definite article in the Greek, you do not insert it. This reflects the bias and misunderstanding of the translators of the *King James Version* of the New Testament. The first problem is: “Therefore, by **the** deeds of **the** law...” Both of those definite articles are not in the Greek and hence in the translation that I have done when we studied the book of Galatians and those difficult Scriptures. It should read:

FV—v 20: “Therefore, **by works of law**... [NOT the works of *the* law, because that implies a misunderstanding that commandment-keeping is not necessary.] ...there shall no flesh be justified before Him...”

Here is an absolutely mind-blowing contradiction within the space of less than a page if Rom. 3 means commandment-keeping: Romans 2:13 (KJV): “For not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified.”

But, Romans 3:20: “...by works of law there shall no flesh be justified before Him... [Does that not appear to be a mind-blowing contradiction?] (Then you read): ...for through *the* law is *the* knowledge of sin.” Most people don’t even understand what he’s saying with that.

Verse 21 (KJV): “But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested...” That is a very unfortunate translation. ‘Without’ in the English means *the absence of*. But if you have absence of law, what do you have? *Lawlessness! Anarchy!* That’s precisely what the Protestants today believe.

When William Tyndale translated it—and he translated essentially this way—he did not understand it that way, because he understood that you have to keep the commandments of God from the bottom ground of your heart.

This means, *FV*—v 21: “But now, *the* righteousness of God *that is separate from* law has been revealed.” Separate from the law. Why is separate from? *Because it is a different operation! Justification is being put in right standing; upon repentance you are forgiven through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ.* Justification has to do with correcting past sins; the *forgiveness of past sins!*

One other statement we need to make: *You can never be justified from your past sins while you are still living in sin!* Justification forgives past sin! But what must you do before they can be forgiven to make it right through Christ? *Repent!*

Let's give a couple of examples in the law of the land of how that you cannot be justified in your sins even *if* you are law-abiding after you have sinned. What do I mean?

I saw a special report about discovering crimes and how this man killed his wife and children and just disappeared—no one ever found him. He moved to Denver and started out very humbly; clever when he started. He changed his type of living. People are creatures of habit, so he changed that. He started out as a dishwasher in a restaurant. Gradually he moved up and changed jobs and gradually got back into the same kind of work that he was doing previously. Then on one of these Ten Most Wanted that's on television they showed his picture, and someone recognized him and they came and arrested him.

Why could they arrest him? *Because he still had sins that had not been accounted for!* Murder! He lived an exemplary life; he didn't even get a speeding ticket for 20 years. All of his law-keeping after his law-breaking did not make right he murders that he committed—did it? *No!*

Commandment-keeping is one operation, which we are required to do. The law tells us what sin is, or violation of the law. You see it every time you go down the highway; the speed limit is 'xyz.' Where there is *no law* there is *no sin*. Or where there is a law that functions reasonably, most of the people will not be breaking it.

We have the situation here that it is an entirely different operation. Let's look at it another way: If you have a glass vase and you drop it and break it, chances are you just sweep it up and throw it away and replace it—right? If you wanted to put it back together—say it didn't break in a million pieces, but it broke in a dozen good clean pieces—and you glued it back together. You still have a broken vase—don't you? Your gluing it back together could not make it new—could it? *No!*

That's the same thing with the forgiveness through Christ. Christ is to make you a new creature. All of man's efforts are like gluing back together the broken vase. Yes, you can make amends. Yes, you can change. Yes, you can overcome alcoholism. Yes, you can quit stealing. Yes, you can do all of those things. But *if you have not repented and been forgiven you cannot be made new!*

Romans 2:3: "Now, do you think yourself, O man... [all of the sins listed here in Rom. 1] ...whoever is judging those who commit such things, and you are practicing them *yourself*, that you shall escape **the judgment** of God?" When you sin, it is God's judgment that you have sinned—

correct? *God gave the Law*—did He not? *Yes!* Where there is no law there is no sin. Where there is no law, sin cannot be imputed. That is self-evident, even in the court of this world.

Here is the whole key from v 4 to the end of Rom. 3; that builds the whole case and explains it from beginning to end. Verse 4: "Or do you despise the riches of His kindness and forbearance and long-suffering, not knowing that the graciousness of God leads you to **repentance**?" The key is *repentance!*

Verse 13: "Because the hearers of the Law *are* not just before God, but the doers of the Law shall be justified." Justified means *made right from past sins*. But why are only the 'doers' of the Law to be made right from past sins? *Because if you correct yourself and repent you will be justified upon repentance!*

Let's see what happened, Acts 2. These were all the Jews who were at the temple on Pentecost. Were they law-abiding Jews? *Of course!* They wouldn't have been at the temple if they weren't keeping Pentecost, meaning that they also kept the other commandments of God. However, do you suppose that all of them were sinless? *Of course not!* They all had past sins that they needed forgiven—correct? But they were doing the Law.

Acts 2:37: "...Men *and* brethren, what shall we do?" Then Peter said to them, "**Repent and be baptized...**" (vs 37-38)—which then is the instrumentality, the formal covenantal instrumentality of forgiveness and justification. To formally, in a covenant agreement, put you in right standing with God, through the righteousness of God, in sending Jesus Christ as the Savior of mankind.

"...each one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for **the remission of sins**, and you yourselves shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (v 38). *When you receive the gift of the Holy Spirit you have been justified before God!*

Nowhere does this give license to do away with commandments or laws. Justification is the operation of the forgiveness of past sin. *Justification cannot be accomplished by law* because justification is the means of *correcting* sin. Law is the means of *defining* sin. It is separate operation to justify sin, or make right past sins. But you cannot be justified while living in sin, though you seek to do so.

Acts 8—the story of Simon Magus. He was still living in sin—was he not? *Yes!* Even though he was baptized, he had not repented. Remember this: *without repentance* there is no forgiveness; *without forgiveness* there is no justification. You are still in

your sins. You cannot be justified *in* your sins; you are only justified *from* your sins upon repentance.

Acts 8:18: “Now when Simon saw that the Holy Spirit was given by the laying on of the hands of the apostles, he offered them money, saying, ‘Give this authority to me also, so that on whomever I lay hands, he may receive *the* Holy Spirit.’ But Peter said to him, ‘May your money be destroyed with you because you thought that the gift of God might be purchased with money. You have neither part nor lot in this matter, for your heart is not right before God’” (vs 18-21)—because there’s no repentance!

You cannot be justified in your sins; you can only be justified from your sins, when you have repented!

Verse 22: “‘Repent, therefore... [which he did not do] ...of this your wickedness, and beseech God, if perhaps the thought of your heart may be forgiven you; for I perceive *that* you are in *the* gall of bitterness and *the* bondage of unrighteousness.’” (vs 22-23).

Let’s see how this all keyed upon repentance. There is no forgiveness of sin without repentance. There is no justification of past sins unless there is forgiveness, unless there is repentance. That’s why the sorrow of the world never works Godliness. Simon Magus had the sorrow of the world. He said, ‘Oh, will you pray for me that none of these things come upon me?’

Romans 2:4: “Or do you despise the riches of His kindness and forbearance and long-suffering, not knowing that the graciousness of God leads you to repentance?”

Here’s what happens if you don’t repent, v 5: “But you, according to your own hardness and unrepentant heart, are storing up wrath for yourself against *the* day of wrath and revelation of God’s righteous judgment.” That’s almost identical, just different words, of what Peter told Simon Magus.

Verse 6: “Who will render to each one according to his own works. On the one hand, to those who with patient endurance in good works... [keeping the commandments of God, loving God and the brethren, loving neighbor as self] ...are seeking glory and honor and immortality—eternal life... [God is going to give them eternal life] ...on the other hand, to those who are contentious... [and unrepentant] ...and who disobey the Truth...” (vs 6-8). What is Truth?

- Your Word is Truth
- Your Law is Truth
- Your commandment are true
- all Your precepts are true and altogether

righteous

—showing there has to be *obedience*.

“...but obey unrighteousness...” (v 8). What is unrighteousness? *Sin!* Here again, you cannot be justified *in* your sins; you must be justified *from* your past sins.

Here’s what happens when you obey unrighteousness: “—indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish—upon every soul of man who works out evil, both of *the* Jew first, and of *the* Greek” (vs 8-9). Now God is judging every man, every person.

Verse 10: “But glory and honor and peace to everyone who works good... [there are the benefits of keeping the commandments of God] ...both to *the* Jew first, and to *the* Greek, because there is no respect of persons with God” (vs 10-11). Now meaning *through Christ*. Genealogies do not count; physical things such as circumcision does not count; letter of the Law is accepted if you repent of past sins; but if you don’t letter of the Law does not count for eternal life. It may qualify you for the second resurrection, but not the first.

Verse 12: “For as many as have sinned without law... [separate from the knowledge of the Law] ...shall also perish without law... [they’re still going to die] ...and as many as have sinned within *the* Law... [with the knowledge of the Law] ...shall be judged by *the* Law.” This shows you very clearly that the Law is binding—isn’t it? *No doubt about it!*

Verse 13: “Because the hearers of the law *are* not just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified.” Then Paul goes on to show that circumcision, if you break the Law, is meaningless. Uncircumcision, if you keep the Law—the righteousness of the Law—is counted for circumcision. Again, showing no *physical* thing can accomplish *spiritual* means.

I think this will become abundantly clear, Romans 3:20: “Therefore, by works of law there shall no flesh be justified before Him...” By law is the knowledge of sin; law was never meant to justify sin before God. What law is this talking about? *Obviously, it cannot be referring to law-keeping such as the Ten Commandments*, because it says ‘the doers of the law shall be justified.’ This has to be referring to the laws of sacrifice, which are

1. works of law that justified to the temple
2. works of law that refer to any ‘religious’ work of law of any ‘religion’ of any form in the world designed to give justification in that ‘religion’

i.e. Catholicism—confess your sins to the priest, not to God. That's not real repentance. The priest then gives you a *work of his law*. You go do 200 'hail Marys' and 500 'our fathers.' You go give to Catholic charity and help feed the poor and your sins are forgiven. That is a *work of law*, which never justified anyone. You can take the same thing with the rosary of the Buddhists, the rosary of the Orthodox, the rosary of the Muslims. They all have 'prayer beads.'

"...by works of law there shall no flesh be justified before Him, for through *the law is the knowledge of sin*" (v 20). That is the function of the Law. The function of the Law cannot forgive, because it is only something written on tables of stone or on paper. You can never go to the Bible and say, 'Bible, forgive me my sin.' Of course, that seems ridiculous, but the Law tells you what sin is. You open the Bible and it says 'You shall not commit adultery.' If you repent and stop committing adultery, then you can be justified of that sin when you repent.

Verse 21: "But now, *the righteousness of God that is separate from law* has been revealed... [Why is the righteousness of God manifest? *Because God is so great and good and righteous that He would provide this means of forgiveness!* Which is separate from the Law, however, is manifest] ...being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets." They witnessed the coming of the Messiah and this kind of forgiveness of those who would believe.

Verse 22: "Even *the righteousness of God...* [achieved by justification] ...*that is through the faith of Jesus Christ...* [have to believe in Him] ...toward all and upon all those who believe; for there is no difference"—upon those who believe vs those who offer a *work of law*.

Verse 23: "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God... [*all need justification*] ...*but* are being justified freely by His grace... [you cannot pay for it; you cannot work for it; you cannot earn it] ...through the redemption that *is* in Christ Jesus; Whom God has openly manifested *to be* a propitiation... [a continual mercy seat] ...through faith in His blood, in order to demonstrate His righteousness, in respect to the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God..." (vs 23-26).

- *Justification* forgives sins that are past!
- *Law-keeping and commandment-keeping* keeps you from sinning in the present!
- You *must repent* before you're forgiven!
- In your repentance, you *must resolve* to keep the commandments of God!

- You are *justified from* your sins, rather than *in* your sins!

This is the purpose of the Gospel: "...yes, to publicly declare His righteousness in the present time, that He might be just, and the one Who justifies the one who *is* of *the* faith of Jesus. Therefore, where *is* boasting? It is excluded. Through what law? *The law* of works?..." (vs 26-27).

The Jews, when they boasted, Jesus said, 'If you obey the Truth, the Truth will set you free.' They said, 'We're in bondage to no man; we're Abraham's seed.' Jesus said, 'I know you're Abraham's seed, but you're still sinning.' So, they can't boast! By any 'religion'? *No, they can't boast!* By any court of law? *No!*

(go to the next track)

By works, such as the Buddhists in Tibet? They think they're justified when they take their long journey and they take this 'religious walk' up to their 'holy city' the headquarters. They take a vow that they will pray and they will worship all the way. If they finally attain to the temple then they have done the greatest works, so when they die they will join in nirvana. The walk is that you talk so many steps, you throw yourself flat down on the ground, you mumble your prayers, you get up and walk again so many steps and you fall down on the ground and you get up after mumbling your prayer, and you do this for how many ever hundreds of miles that it is for the walk. When you have done it you are justified according to Buddhism.

That work cannot justify you to God!

Did all the works of being obedient to law, after murder, take away the penalty for murder when the killer was arrested? *No!* Just think how futile this would be. He comes before the judge and the judge says, 'We finally got you.' *But I've been good. I haven't done any murder since then.* 'But you haven't paid for the ones you have done.'

Justification is payment, of your past sins, by the sacrifice of Christ!

"...By no means! Rather, *it is* through a **law of faith**" (v 27). *Repent and be baptized for the remission of your sins and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit?* That is the operation of the 'law of faith' that, in a sense the term 'the law of faith' is really if you have law vs faith then those people are stuck with a contradictory term that 'the law of faith' becomes an impossible term for them to understand if they believe in faith without law.

If you believe that faith does away with all

law, how is possible to have ‘the law of faith’? You have no law. This is where they get all tripped up in their thinking.

Verse 28: “Consequently, we reckon that a man is justified... [from his past sins up repentance] ...by faith... [repentance comes in beginning back in Rom 2:4, because he believes in the sacrifice of Christ.] ...**separate from** works of law. *Is He* the God of the Jews only? *Is He* not also *the God of the Gentiles*? YES! *He is* also God of *the Gentiles*, since *it is* indeed **one God Who will justify** the circumcision by faith, and *the* uncircumcision through faith” (vs 28-30).

The final statement is on which all the book of Romans rests, v 31: “Are we, then, abolishing law through faith?... [If you make it void, what do you do? *You get rid of it!*] ...MAY IT NEVER BE! Rather, we are establishing law.” How do we establish the Law? *Through the Holy Spirit it is written in your heart and your mind!* You desire to do it from within, and that’s what justification is all about.

Where the Protestants get all discombobulated is that they do not understand the difference between *justification by faith* and *commandment-keeping* and *obedience to God!* They accuse us of looking to justify ourselves by Sabbath-keeping, etc.—which is not true. We believe in the blood of Christ to justify us through faith and belief in His sacrifice. That’s the whole underpinning of Protestantism.

I just want to add one other thing to justification: Since Sabbath-keeping is obeying the commandments; Sabbath-breaking is sin. ‘Sin is the transgression of the Law.’ Sunday-keeping is likewise a sin, so there’s a double sin involved. Therefore, the Protestants who think they are justified *from* their sins are not justified because they are living *in* sin.

That’s the key thing to remember. Everything they *think* they have, they do not have, which goes right back to 1-Tim. 1: ‘Desiring to be teachers of the Law, not understanding what they believe nor strongly affirm.’

Now that we’ve had this brief survey in the book of Romans to understand *justification of faith*, let’s see how that is accomplished. First of all, let’s review again how a Jewish proselyte of the Gentiles became accepted into the synagogue community.

Remember, they had what was called an *ethical circumcision*, which is a Gentile turns from their gods and religious practices and begins to keep Judaism. That is *ethical* circumcision. When that

occurred, then they came to be called ‘common’—meaning that they were not unclean heathens worshipping in idolatrous religions. They were Gentiles who were not yet circumcised, but who would associate with the worship of the Jews.

In the synagogues they had a place for the Gentiles to be who were uncircumcised, which was way in the back. When they came to the point of real dedication to it, then what they had to do, they had to go beyond just *ethical* circumcision. They had to finalize their proselytism by *physical* circumcision. This is where the problem came in the first century where there were still those within the Church insisting upon circumcision.

Let’s see where Peter should have known better than to do this thing that he did in Gal. 2, because in following along with Judaism, what was he doing? *He was saying there was a law whereby if you did it*—such as separating yourself from the Gentiles—*you were in right standing with God!* That is a law of Judaism; *that is not a Law of God!*

What we have here is something very important. Acts 10:1: “Now *there* was in Caesarea a certain man named Cornelius, a centurion of a band that is called *the Italian band.*” They were Gentiles who were not circumcised. Therefore, because they were devout, they were called ‘common.’

Verse 2: “A devout man who also feared God with all his house, both in giving many alms to the people and *in* beseeching God continually *in prayer.*” God looks to the heart! Then he had a vision, sent off for Peter and Peter doubted the vision. Let me just say, without going into great detail here, this has nothing to do with clean or unclean meats. If anyone turns there to show that it does have to do with clean and unclean meats, remember, Peter said that he has ‘never eaten anything common or unclean.’

Let me explain the difference between ‘common’ and ‘unclean’ food—not referenced to clean and unclean meats. In Jewish law, if a Gentile made bread or prepared a meal and there were no Jews around, that food was ‘unclean’—it was handled by a Gentile. If the making of the bread or the meal was supervised by a Jew, then it was ‘common’ and could be eaten by Jews, but not on the Sabbath or Holy Days. That’s how they rated things ‘common’ or ‘unclean.’ They rated people ‘common’ and ‘unclean.’ This is why this analogy is used. But remember, Peter never ate anything ‘common’ or ‘unclean.’

Let’s see what happened when Peter came, v 25: “And as Peter was coming in, Cornelius met him and fell at *his* feet, worshipping *him.* But Peter raised

him up, saying, ‘Stand up, for I myself am also a man.’ And as he was talking with him, he went in and found many gathered together. And he said to them, ‘You know that it is unlawful for a man who is a Jew... [one who practices Judaism] ...to associate with or come near to anyone of another race..... [in other words, go into their houses] ...But God has shown me *that* no man should be called common or unclean’” (vs 25-28). That’s why Peter should have known better. He should have remembered what God taught as well as what Paul wrote (what we covered in the book of Romans).

After Cornelius explained about the whole thing and that he saw an angel and the message was to send for him, v 34: “Then Peter opened *his* mouth *and* said, ‘Of a truth I perceive that God is not a respecter of persons.’” Yet, in Gal. 2 Peter was a respecter of persons and separated himself from the Gentiles.

None of those things make you spiritually better than anybody else. If you wash your hands, if you wash your feet, if you separate from things like that what does that do *spiritually* for your standing before God? *Nothing!* What are we to do to our neighbors? *We’re to love our neighbors as ourselves!*

So, Peter was saying, “...‘Of a truth I perceive that God is not a respecter of persons, but in every nation the one who fears Him and works righteousness is acceptable to Him.’.... [without being circumcised!] ...The word that He sent to the children of Israel, preaching the Gospel of peace through Jesus Christ (He is Lord of all), you have knowledge of; which declaration came throughout the whole of Judea, beginning from Galilee, after the baptism that John proclaimed’” (vs 34-37).

It’s very important for us to understand that the disciples were writing these things immediately. As a matter of fact, when you really read the book of Matthew carefully: Remember, Matthew was a Levite and this was the greatest event to happen that Jesus Christ the Son of God—being God manifest in the flesh—came to earth and was teaching His disciples. They were taking notes on it all the way through. Why teach without taking notes? Are you taking notes as I’m teaching? *Yes!* Published, not just preached!

“...‘throughout the whole of Judea, beginning from Galilee, after the baptism that John proclaimed, *concerning* Jesus, Who *was* from Nazareth: how God anointed Him with *the* Holy Spirit and with power, *and* He went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, because God was with Him. And we are

witnesses of all *the* things that He did, both in the country of the Jews and in Jerusalem. They killed Him by hanging *Him* on a tree. *But* God raised Him up the third day, and showed Him openly, not to all the people, but to witnesses who had been chosen before by God, to *those of* us who did eat and drink with Him after He had risen from *the* dead. And He commanded us to preach to the people, and to fully testify that it is He Who has been appointed by God *to be* Judge of *the* living and *the* dead. To Him all the prophets bear witness, **that everyone who believes in Him receives remission of sins through His name.**” (vs 37-43).

That is justification by faith! ***If you believe in Jesus Christ, accept His sacrifice, as God to forgive you of your sins in His name, you have remission of sins!*** That’s the whole basis of true Christianity. The Protestants go to the other extreme and cast out all law, which is not true.

Notice something else that took place, which is very important: why the Apostle Paul really looked upon Peter’s act as being very inexcusable and worthy of exposing publicly, and worthy of being preserved in the Scriptures for us down through all time.

Verse 44: “While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit came upon all those who were listening to the message. And the believers from the circumcision were astonished, as many as had come with Peter, that upon the Gentiles... [who were not circumcised] ...also the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out” (vs 44-45). That is the key. The Holy Spirit comes with *repentance and belief!* The Holy Spirit does not come with any *work of law, of any law!* Justification comes by belief *without work of any law!*

As we saw, justification means that you are put in right standing with God in heaven above! That does not eliminate commandment-keeping.

- it eliminates *the laws of Judaism* for justification
- it eliminates the *animal sacrifices* of the Old Covenant
- it eliminates the *rituals and ceremonies* of the Old Covenant

Now we’re dealing with the receiving of the Holy Spirit and we’re dealing with those people who will be spread across the face of the whole earth and not with the Jews in Judea, Galilee or Jerusalem.

Verse 46: “For they heard them speak in *other* languages and magnify God....” The Italians spoke Latin, there was also Aramaic among the Jews; there was also Greek that they spoke. I don’t

know what other language that was there in the assemblage of those who came with Peter.

When they ‘spoke in tongues’ they were magnifying God. This is why Peter is so inexcusable in this. This had to be done while the Gentiles were in the *physical uncircumcised condition*, so that God taught through this that *physical* circumcision, and all the laws of Judaism, **do not** make you righteous before Him, but *a repentant heart and belief in Christ!*

It was exactly the same thing that happened to the apostles and the disciples on Pentecost. When that happened, “...Then Peter responded *by saying*, ‘Can anyone forbid water, that these should not be baptized, who have also received the Holy Spirit as we *did*?’ And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord. Then they besought him to remain *for a number of days*” (vs 46-48).

Notice what happened when Peter got back to Jerusalem, which was the headquarters of James and the Circumcision Party, Acts 11:1: “Now, the apostles and the brethren who were in Judea heard that the Gentiles had also received the Word of God.” In their minds a lot of them thought that this was only for the Jews, or for the children of Israel. They had a long way to go in their understanding—didn’t they?

Notice how he was received, v 2: “And when Peter went up to Jerusalem, those of *the* circumcision disputed with him”—because they did not yet understand that it was now lawful to associate with uncircumcised Gentiles. They contended with him! Why? *Because they had in their mind the normal way of proselytizing that the Jews had to bring Gentiles into the synagogue, which was finalized by physical circumcision!* That’s why there was the contention.

Verse 3: “Saying, ‘You went in to men who were uncircumcised and did eat with them.’.... [That’s why Paul said, ‘Peter, you’re a hypocrite.’] ...But Peter related *the event* from the beginning and expounded *everything* in order to them, saying” (vs 3-4)—and he gave the whole thing there and told them what happened.

Verse 15: ““And when I began to speak, the Holy Spirit came upon them, even as *it* also came upon us in *the* beginning. Then I remembered the Word of *the* Lord, how He had said, “John indeed baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with *the* Holy Spirit.” Therefore, if God also gave them the same gift that *was given* to us, who believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I *to dissent*? Do I have the power to forbid God?” And after hearing these things, they were silent; and they glorified

God, saying, ‘Then to the Gentiles also has God indeed granted repentance unto life’” (vs 15-18).

That’s why the whole thing of the operation of *justification by belief in Christ for the forgiveness of sin*—that is how it’s done!

Peter and those of the Circumcision Party, and also a lot of the itinerant preachers that were coming through, were coming along and saying to the Galatians, ‘You believe in Jesus, that’s fine, but now you must be circumcised so you can finish your conversion.’ Then they started adding all the other things that would come with circumcision.

Galatians 3:1: “O foolish Galatians, who has bewitched you *into* not obeying the Truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ, crucified, was set forth in a **written** public proclamation?” The Greek verb there is ‘grapho’ from which we get the word ‘graphe’—the Holy Scriptures.

- Why was it written? *So they could read it!*
- Did Paul write epistles to the Churches? *Yes!*
- Were they to be read in the Churches? *Yes!*
- Don’t you think they had the Gospel by that time? *There’s no question that they did, otherwise you couldn’t have something written!*

Verse 2: “This only I desire to learn from you: did you receive the Spirit of God by works of law, or by *the* hearing of faith?” We saw how the Gentiles received it. As they listened to Peter preach they received the Holy Spirit.

- there was no ritual that they did
- there was no sacrifice that they offered
- there was not circumcision that was required
- *all of those being works of law*

Now then, there were those coming around deceiving them saying ‘you must be circumcised.’ So, he says, v 3: “Are you so foolish? Having begun in *the* Spirit, are you now being perfected in *the* flesh?” In other words, following Jewish proselytism.

Let’s see something really important concerning circumcision. What they would do, they—the false preachers who were coming along with their twisting of the Gospel—would come along and say, ‘We know that you believe, but you know there’s another step that’s necessary, and you really need to understand that there are other things that you need to do. You can’t be in right standing with God unless you do them. We know that Paul has not preached it, but rest assured that in time Paul will preach it; so we’re just bringing it to you ahead

of time. In light of that:

Galatians 5:11: “But I, brethren, **if I still proclaim circumcision**... [He would not have made that statement unless there were people saying that ‘yes, the Apostle Paul is going to make you circumcised.’] ...why am I yet being persecuted? Then the offense of the cross has been taken away.”

Notice how offended that the Jews back Jerusalem were when Peter came back and told them about the Gentiles who had been converted while they were still in uncircumcision. Verse 12: “I would *that* they would even make themselves eunuchs—those who are throwing you into confusion.” That’s what they were doing.

Let’s understand what we’re doing here, Galatians 3:3: “Are you so foolish? Having begun in *the Spirit*, are you now being perfected in *the flesh*?” Through circumcision, and we can add *any other physical rule* that people hold over your head and claim that you ‘are not a good Christian’ if you don’t do what they say. Any other rule such as a terrible dress code, wearing your hair down to your feet, or going to church on Sunday. Is that a work of man? *Yes!* You can’t be saved unless you go to church on Sunday. Or you can’t be saved unless you take the Mass. You can’t be saved unless you’re within the structure of the hierarchical Roman Catholic Church.

All of those are *works of law* having nothing whatsoever to do with the commandments of God. Those are all fleshly, physical things, which people do and use as religious tools. Another one is, when you pray ‘use the statue of Mary.’ When you pray, use a rosary. When you pray, say the ‘sacred heart.’ When you pray, say the Sheema. When you pray, say ‘great is Allah.’ Another one is you can’t be a true Christian unless you believe in the trinity when the Bible doesn’t teach it. Speaking in tongues is demonic gibberish, and the doctrine you’re saved until you do.

What if someone said, ‘I want to be saved’ so they get up there and they fake it? And the minister comes up and says, ‘You’re now saved.’ Is he saved because he faked it? Is he saved because the minister said he’s saved? *NO!* Unless you believe in Christ and accept His sacrifice, and receive the Spirit of God, you have no salvation. That’s the whole contention with the circumcision.

Verse 3: “Are you so foolish? Having begun in *the Spirit*, are you now being perfected in *the flesh*? Have you suffered so many things in vain, if indeed it *has been* in vain? Therefore, *consider this*: He Who is supplying the Spirit to you...” (vs 3-5). It’s about receiving the Spirit of God, because only with the Spirit of God *in* you, are you truly in right

standing and justified before God in heaven above?

“...and Who is working deeds of power among you, *is He doing it* by works of law or by *the* hearing of faith?... [because you believe] (then it comes back to Abraham): ...*It is* exactly as *it is written*: ‘Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him for righteousness’” (vs 5-6). Go back and look at Abraham’s life, he didn’t have any *works of law* to justify him. He believed God! He obeyed God’s voice, kept His statutes, His judgments, His commandments and His laws.

Verse 7: “Because of this, *you should* understand that those who *are* of faith are the *true* sons of Abraham.” Remember how the Pharisees and the Sadducees said, ‘We are of the seed of Abraham’ Jesus said, ‘I know you are but you don’t do the works of Abraham’ (John 8).

Verse 8: “Now, *in* the Scriptures, God, seeing in advance that He would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the Gospel beforehand to Abraham, *saying*, ‘In you shall all the nations be blessed.’ *It is* for this reason that those who are of faith are being blessed with the believing Abraham. For as many as are *relying* on works of law are under a curse, because it is written, ‘Cursed *is* everyone who does not continue in all things that have been written in the book of the Law to do them’” (vs 8-10).

That says an awful lot! Next time we will explain what it means to be continuing “...in all the things that have been written in the book of the Law to do them.”

Scriptures from *The Holy Bible in Its Original Order, A Faithful Version* by Fred R. Coulter

Scriptural References:

- 1) Galatians 2:9-21
- 2) Romans 3:20-21
- 3) Romans 2:13
- 4) Romans 3:20-21
- 5) Romans 2:3-4, 13
- 6) Acts 2:37-38
- 7) Acts 8:18-23
- 8) Romans 2:4-13
- 9) Romans 3:20-31
- 10) Acts 10:1-2, 25-28, 34-48
- 11) Acts 11:1-4, 15-18
- 12) Galatians 3:1-3
- 13) Galatians 5:11-12
- 14) Galatians 3:3-10

Scriptures referenced, not quoted:

- Galatians 1
- Romans 1

- 1 Timothy 1
- John 8

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