

Chapter 8

ARE YE NOW MADE PERFECT BY THE FLESH?

O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you? This only would I learn of you, Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? Are ye so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh? Have ye suffered so many things in vain? If it yet be in vain. He therefore that ministereth to you the Spirit, and worketh miracles among you, doeth he it by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? (Galatians 3:1-5)

Paul's thrust throughout the first two chapters of the book of Galatians was upon the establishment of the authority of his gospel. He accomplished this, as we have seen, by a personal history in the gospel that spanned from his salvation, about 30 A.D., to the rebuke of Peter at Antioch, about 48 A.D. Paul changed his thrust in chapter three from a personal history, intermingled with doctrine, to a doctrinal disclosure of the grace of God revealed in the covenant relationship between God and Abraham. Paul used this change in chapter four to show the Galatians the doctrinal aspects of the grace of God in an allegory hidden in the historical relationship between Hagar, Ishmael, Sarah and Isaac.

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Paul began this new thrust by asking the Galatians several questions. First, he asked, *Who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth?* to provoke the Galatians to consider the source of the *other gospel* they had heard from the Judaizers. Paul asked them how they had received the Spirit of God: had He been received by the works of the law or by the hearing of faith? Once they had been brought to acknowledge that they had received the Spirit by the hearing of faith, Paul asked, could they then expect to be perfected by the flesh? Thus by these questions, Paul equated the works of the law with the flesh. This is an incredible revelation and one which requires expansion, which we will come to later.

These questions, then, revealed an intrinsic flaw which was in the minds of the Galatians. It was a manner of thinking that pervaded their world and it pervades ours. Since the fall of man, the unsaved world has thought in terms of its knowledge of good and evil (i.e., its concepts of right and wrong) for acceptance with God. In the religious realm, this has usually taken the form of religious rituals and religious works diligently performed by the worshipers to be pleasing to their gods. The emphasis in these religious expressions has been upon the efforts of the worshipers, with little or no emphasis placed upon the satisfaction of the One True and Living God. Consequently most so-called worship is egocentric rather than Theocentric. This, of course, is a manifestation of the extent of the deception the Devil imposed upon the human family in the fall of Adam and can only be changed by salvation in Jesus Christ, along with growth in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

For a proper understanding, the believer must understand the just and holy basis God has provided in His grace through the gospel to enable God in His Holiness and man in his sinfulness

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to come together. Before the foundation of the world, Christ authored the plan of salvation: knowing that man would fall, but not causing his fall. Thus the fact of man's fall negates any possibility of man providing himself with a remedy for his sins. The remedy for man's sins, then, must deal with man's condemnation as well as God's Holiness, Righteousness, and Justice. This requires that *Salvation be of the Lord*, and this is the revelation we have in God's Unfolding Plan of Redemption, the Bible. Therefore God's plan of redemption provides the ransom price for man's sins, as well as satisfying God's Holiness, Righteousness and Justice and, at the same time, allowing the expression of God's Love, Mercy, and Grace through the Person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ. Thus in His life Christ fulfilled *every jot and tittle of the law* as well as all righteousness, and in His death He bore the judgment of the sins of the whole world. Following His death and burial, He proved Himself to be the Son of God with power by His resurrection from the dead (Romans 1:4).

Consequently when Paul wrote his letter to the Galatians, he reminded them that *Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you*. In other words, Paul showed the Galatians that he had openly preached the crucifixion of Jesus Christ as the basis of their salvation. Their salvation was not effected through ritual, law, and human effort. It was effected by faith in God's promise of saving grace through the vicarious sacrifice of Christ on Calvary.

The crucifixion of Jesus Christ was a penal judgment to the Jews and to the Romans, but to God it was a vicarious atonement. The word *atonement* is an old English word with an interesting meaning, but its meaning is not the same as the Biblical word it stands for. In the era of the translation of the King James Bible, *an atonement* was a convergence, or agreement,

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between two parties at a moment in time; thus, it was an *at-one-ment*. Even though God and man are brought into agreement by the atonement of the Lord Jesus Christ at a moment in time, the Old Testament word actually means *a covering*. In His *determinate counsel and foreknowledge* (Acts 2:23) God provided for the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on behalf of sinners before the foundation of the world (Revelation 13:8).

Thus, by virtue of His Omniscience, the atonement has existed in the mind of God for all eternity and was promised to Adam and Eve the moment there was a need for it, immediately after they sinned. The promise of the atonement was confirmed to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and finally came to be fulfilled, *in the fullness of time*, in Jesus Christ. Daniel prophesied that precisely four-hundred and eighty-three years (*seven sevens and three score and two sevens*) would elapse between the time of the decree of Cyrus to Israel, to restore and to rebuild Jerusalem, until Christ would be *cutoff, but not for himself*.

It was necessary that the eternal Christ come into the world by means of the virgin birth, so He could be both God and Man, but Man without the sin nature that plagues the human family. In every other respect Christ is a near Kinsman: capable of providing redemption for the human family. The Lord Jesus Christ was fully God and fully Man so that He fulfilled all righteousness in His life, as well as fulfilling every *jot and tittle of the law* and ... *in Him was no sin at all*.

In the Greek text of the New Testament, the Bible says, *The wages of the sin is death*. Since there was no sin in Jesus Christ and since He did not possess a sin nature, there was no cause of death in Him. Why then did Jesus have to die? The truth is, He did not have to die. He chose to die as a vicarious atonement. Remember, He said, ... *and what shall I say? Father save*

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me from this hour? but for this cause came I unto this hour (John 12:27). And He said, I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have the power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father (John 10:17-18). Consequently the life of our Lord, in which he fulfilled the law and all righteousness and the free-will offering of Himself in death, provides the judicial basis for the justification of sinners.

The application of this payment is accomplished by imputation through faith. Imputation is Biblical accounting. On the one hand, the sin of Adam was imputed, or charged, to every member of his race even though they were not present to commit the sin with Adam so that, on the other hand, Christ's righteousness could be imputed to those that believe: even though they have no righteousness of their own that is acceptable to God. Thus in the judicial reckoning of God: if God could charge every member of Adam's race with Adam's sin, then, by God's judicial reckoning, Christ could be charged with the sins of the whole race. If Christ could be charged with the sins of the world, then believers in Christ could be charged with the righteousness of Christ by entering into the benefits of God's atonement for their sins through faith in the Person and work of Jesus Christ.

Our understanding of these basic truths of the gospel, observed in the light of the Galatians' defection from these truths to the necessity of law and ritual, enable us to feel Paul's anguish over their spiritually incoherent behavior. We could cry with Paul: *O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you? (Galatians 3:1)*

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How was it possible for the Galatians to turn their backs upon the Lord Jesus Christ and seek to be justified by the works of their own hands? This persuasion did not come from God. In fact, this persuasion subverted the truth of the gospel and the work of the Holy Spirit. This persuasion came because of the deceitfulness of *the sin*. This sin, as we have repeatedly shown, has been at work in mankind since the Devil deceived Eve with it. Thus the writer to the Hebrews warned:

Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God. But exhort one another daily, while it is called today; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of [the] sin. (Hebrews 3:12-13)

For some unknown reason the translator of the book of Hebrews did not translate the definite article that precedes sin in the Greek text of this verse. This is unfortunate because, while there is a degree of deceit in all sin, the greatest deceit came from *the sin*, which produced *a way which seemeth right unto a man*. This sin, in all of its forms, has promised man life, but has produced death. It has promised man he would be like God, but it caused his fall from the image of God to an image akin to the egocentric angel (Lucifer) who introduced man to this sin.

The sin is the source of the old nature -- that latent influence which remains in the believer, despite salvation in Jesus Christ. The old nature is *the flesh*. It is *the flesh* (in the believer) that searches for levels of personal goodness and morality of which it can boast. This is not the healthy prodding of the Spirit of God to bring the lives of believers into alignment with the Word of God. This is the prodding of the old nature (which is centered in the ego) and *lusts against the Spirit*, so it might have something of which to boast before God. The flesh also manifests itself in overt sins. However we need not spend time describing mankind's overt sins, because the

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genuine believer would not presume to offer these for acceptance with God.

Therefore to minimize the effects of this nature and to magnify the Lord Jesus Christ and His grace, we ought to consider some of what it cost God to provide salvation in Jesus Christ. Consider the ignominy and agony of the sinless Son of God being charged with sin. Consider that Jesus Christ, charged with our sins, was forsaken of the Father as He stood in our stead on the cross of Calvary. Consider that this was the only time in all eternity that their fellowship had ever been broken. Consider the agony of their separation and the mournful cry of our Lord from the cross, *My God! My God! Why hast thou forsaken me?* Finally, consider this: all that Christ endured at the hands of the Jews, the Romans, and the shame and suffering of the cross was necessary to effect salvation for sinners like us.

Consider the magnitude of the rejection of the grace of God -- that sinful man, who's *heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who has sinned, and come short of the glory of God;* of whom, there is not *a just man upon the earth, that doeth good and sinneth not;* that such a man would dare say to God: *Accept me on the basis of the works of righteousness which I have done. Overlook my faults, for there are many in the world far worst than I. I will acknowledge Jesus, if I must, but I know I must be diligent in my works of righteousness to come to heaven.*

It is hard to imagine that anyone could be so presumptuous and arrogant as to make such a statement. Nevertheless, this is, in effect, what is said consciously or unconsciously, when men minimize the grace of God and maximize law, ritual and human effort in their relationship with God. Paul's probe, then, was very appropriate. How could anyone in their right mind, spiritually

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speaking, reject the grace of God for the works of their own hands. The Galatians acted as though they were *bewitched* in making such a choice. This was the case. The spell had been cast long ago by the serpent in the garden of Eden when Eve was deceived by the serpent and Adam wilfully sinned. Thus, at Galatia, the old nature derived from the fall was activated by the Judaizers' *other gospel* so that, it caused the Galatians to act as though they were possessed and spiritually insane. Consequently Paul sought to restore their spiritual sanity when he asked: *This only would I learn of you, Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?* (Galatians 3:2, emphasis mine)

Man's corrupted sense of right and wrong is such a strong influence, it is easy for the believer to forget its source. Therefore Paul sought to remind the Galatians of the source of *the flesh* and the source of *the Spirit*. This is why he asked, How did you receive the Spirit of God, by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? This question probed to the source. The Spirit of God had been received by the *hearing of faith*. He was not received by *the works of the law*. This is the reason Paul asked two more questions: *Are ye so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?* (Galatians 3:3, emphasis mine)

As we observed earlier, this last question is extraordinary, because Paul, writing under the inspiration of the Spirit of God, by this question identified *the works of the law* with *the flesh*. This is quite a disclosure. Man's attempts at law-keeping are not spiritual. They are carnal! Therefore anyone who attempts to keep the law to gain access to God; to improve his status with God; or to maintain his status with God, is *in the flesh*. He is not *in the Spirit*. He is carnal! He is not spiritual! This is information that is not commonly known or taught in our churches. Yet

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its Scriptural validity is unimpeachable. The fact that it is unknown is clearly revealed in much that has been preached and is being preached in churches throughout the world. Consequently this is information which is absolutely necessary to the proper interpretation of the Scriptures. This is information which shows the clear difference between *the flesh* and *the Spirit*. This is information which will clearly magnify the grace of God and silence the boasting of spiritually ignorant men.

Therefore when we view the Scriptures with this information, we are given the capacity to see why God said to Samuel, *For the Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart*. God views His people through the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ so that *their sins and iniquities* are no longer remembered. Thus the believer is ... *accepted in the Beloved* and not on the basis of works of righteousness which he has done. This is the reason Israel's desire to enter a covenant relationship with God based upon the law, just sixty days after they had been delivered from Egypt by grace through the blood of the Passover lamb, was a provocation to God and an act of unbelief. This being true, what must God think of all of the fleshly schemes that are put forth *to glorify God?*

Once again, we must be reminded, the Lord Jesus said, *I am the way, the truth and the life: no man cometh unto the Father but by me* (John 14:6). Therefore dispensational truth aside, all Old Testament and New Testament saints have come unto God by faith in Jesus Christ. Thus the truth *the just shall live by faith* is irrevocably true in every age, despite the fact that the present age is called the age of grace and faith. Paul will show us, as we progress through his letter to the Galatians, that *the law is not of faith*. With the information we have learned about the works

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of the law and the flesh, we should understand, as believers in Jesus Christ, if we turn again to law after being justified by faith, we are in the flesh and not in the Spirit. Therefore as we have previously noted, *the Spirit-filled life* is a life that finds itself in alignment with the Spirit of God, Who is always in alignment with the Word of God. Thus the Spirit-filled life is a life predicated upon the faith. Since *[the] faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the word of God*, the Spirit-filled life is a Word-of-God-filled life. If we approach the Scriptures with the understanding that *the works of the law* have their source in the flesh, and the work of the Spirit has its source in *the hearing of faith*, this will open our understanding of the Scriptures to new levels. For example, Paul wrote to the Romans and said: *There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit* (Romans 8:1, emphasis mine).

This statement was apparently misunderstood by some of the early churches. Consequently there is a variation in ancient Greek manuscripts of this text. This is, of course, evidence that there was a divergence of opinion then, as now, concerning this text. Some expositors have said that the latter part of the verse should be omitted from the verse. Apparently, they, too, have not understood the principles we have been considering. Consequently they hold that the Greek texts which omit the part of the verse that we have stressed are the better and more accurate texts.

The understanding we have gained from Paul's letter to the Galatians causes us to hold a differing position. We hold that the portion of the verse, which we have stressed, was a part of the original manuscript of Paul to the Romans. We believe the deletion came because some transcriber of Scripture did not understand the principles we have been considering in Paul's letter to the Galatians. Perhaps he failed to transcribe the text accurately out of a sense of defending the

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truth: *There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus.* If he did this because he thought he was correcting a corrupted text, he obviously missed the point of Paul's argument to the Romans. In fact, he removed the answer to Paul's perplexing experiences, in the seventh chapter of Romans, by removing the mitigating circumstances which could produce the condemnation Paul felt and described in chapter seven of Romans.

If we consider the entire context of Romans chapter eight and verse one, we will find it to be the conclusion of a specific set of circumstances which began in Romans chapter seven. This specific set of circumstances fits contextually with the overall argument that runs from the beginning to the ending of the book of Romans. Therefore the immediate context in Romans chapter seven reveals that after Paul had received Jesus Christ as his Savior, there came a time when he, contrary to the truth of the Scriptures, placed himself under the restrictions of the Mosaic law. In this condition, when he violated the law, he was not condemned of God, but he felt immediate and complete self-condemnation because of his failures before the law. He found that the things he wished to do, he was unable to do, and the things he wished he would not do, he did. The strife in him was so great, he finally cried out in despair: *O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?* (Romans 7:24)

Then Paul recognized his position in Christ. He had been reckoned dead to the law from the moment he believed. He had already been delivered from the condemnation of the law by the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Therefore he said:

I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin. There is therefore now no condemnation to them in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. (Romans 7:25-8:1)

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Paul used this personal experience, which probably took place before he went into Arabia with the Lord, to stress the concept of justification by faith, apart from the deeds of the law. This is the central theme of Paul's epistle to the Romans, and this theme runs, like the scarlet thread in the core of British naval ropes, as a sub-theme in virtually all of Paul's epistles. Likewise the companion truth of the identification of *the flesh* with *the works of the law* is essential to the proper understanding of justification by faith and the believer's relationship to the law. Thus in the first chapter of the book of Romans, Paul revealed to them the deceitfulness of man's morality. He did this by showing that there were (and are) men who have considered God's grace to be an unclean thing compared to their morality. He revealed this when he said, *For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness...* (Romans 1:18, emphasis mine). In fact, these men:

... changed the truth of God into [the] lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen. For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which against nature: and likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompence of their error which was meet.

And even as they did not like to retain God in their [full] knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind to do those things which are not convenient; being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, spiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, without understanding, covenantbreakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful: who knowing the judgment of God, that they which do such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them. (Romans 1:25-32)

This portion of Scripture is quite a revelation of irony and the extent of the Devil's deceit in the hearts of men. Paul revealed to the Romans that there were (and are) men who are so steeped in their blindness to the truth and their love of the error of the Devil that they have held

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the truth of the saving grace of Jesus Christ to be unrighteous and have accepted the Devil's lie (embodied in the sin) to be the truth. As a consequence, God has given them over to their reprobate minds, received as a result of the fall, to operate in them without restraint. With these minds, they have practiced homosexuality and every other form of debauchery condemned by the law. Yet, at the same time, they have claimed that human morality is an essential element of man's entrance into heaven. This is indeed ironic.

Paul continued his argument into chapter two of Romans, where he showed the hypocrisy of the Jews who judged others for the very things they themselves were doing. Paul also brought the Gentiles under the condemnation of the law by showing that their agreement with its precepts and their failures to keep them deemed them, as well as the Jews, guilty before the law. Consequently these Gentiles and Jews accused others and excused themselves in order to give themselves a sense of self-justification. Thus Paul established the guilt of both unsaved Jews and unsaved Gentiles. After that, in chapter three of Romans, Paul asked: *What then? Are we [Christians] better than they? No, in no wise: for we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin; as it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: there is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God* (Romans 3:9-11).

The essential difference between Christians and unsaved Jews and Gentiles is the justification which is the believer's by faith in the vicarious atonement of Jesus Christ. The Christian is not better than they, he is simply justified by faith and they are not. Paul continued outlining the deplorable condition of the human family, whether they were Jews or whether they were Gentiles, to establish the guilt of the human family before God. Paul's purpose was to prove

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that the only way a man can be justified before God is by grace through faith. Thus:

... we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the [full] knowledge of sin. (Romans 3:19-20)

Thus Paul established the truth that no one can be justified before God by the law. The law can reveal a full knowledge of sin, but it cannot save. Whereas God's love, mercy and grace provides the sinner (who believes the gospel) with the imputed righteousness of Christ.

Paul continued teaching the doctrine of justification by faith as he entered chapter four of Romans. In this chapter, he provided a greater view of the truth of imputed righteousness by writing about the faith of Abraham. Paul showed that *the promise, that he [Abraham] should be the heir of the world, was not to Abraham, or to his seed, through the law, but through the righteousness of faith. For if they which are of the law be heirs, faith is made void, and the promise of none effect: because the law worketh wrath: for where there is no law, there is no transgression* (Romans 4:13-15, emphasis mine).

In this same chapter Paul made a comparison between the physical condition of Abraham and Sarah (before the birth of Isaac) and the spiritual condition of lost individuals. God promised Abraham a son when it was physically impossible for him and Sarah to have a son. He was impotent and Sarah had been barren all of her life and had passed through menopause. Nevertheless God promised (despite these conditions) she would have a son one year hence. On different occasions (associated with this promise) both Sarah and Abraham laughed at the concept of producing a son. Nevertheless before the time of conception, both Abraham and Sarah came to believe ... *that, what [God] had promised, He was able also to perform* (Romans 4:21). God

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showed them that He was able to call those things that are not as though they are. God altered their physical condition and they were able to produce the promised son, but only by the power of God.

Thus it is so with the sinner who believes the gospel. Through the doctrine of salvation and the judicial reckoning of God, God is able to change the sinner completely unto Himself. God has the judicial right, by the judgment of Jesus Christ, to call those things that are, as though they are not, and those things that are not, as though they are. Thus by this reckoning, sinners are called saints: they are reckoned to have died with Jesus, to have been buried with Jesus and to have been raised from the dead with the Lord Jesus. By the same reckoning, the believer is reckoned holy, righteous, just and to be a child of God, who is no longer alive to the law.

In the fifth chapter of Romans, Paul showed them how that God had reckoned the whole human family to have sinned with Adam. Thus he introduced the Romans to the concept of federal headship (that one person's actions can be deemed the actions of all). Adam was the federal head of the human race to plunge it into sin, and Jesus Christ was the Federal Head of the race to provide the remedy for sin. Consequently Paul showed the Romans *that where [the] sin abounded, grace did much more abound*. Thus Paul's presentation of the believer's justification by faith to the Romans revealed to them that salvation is totally of grace without any admixture of law.

Beginning in chapter five of Romans and continuing through chapter eight, Paul spoke of sin in the singular with the definite article thirty times. This is the greatest concentration of this noun with this grammatical structure in all of the New Testament. This cannot be an accident, nor

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can it be a peculiarity of Paul's writing style, because in the other twelve books he wrote, he used this construction but three times. Thus it is the presentation of a very important doctrinal truth which is essential to the understanding of human nature and human morality. Unfortunately the translator did not see the significance of this grammatical structure and, apparently, dismissed it as unnecessary to the translation of the text. Nothing could be further from the truth. Therefore we have taken the liberty of adding the definite article to sin in our Scriptural quotations when it is present in the Greek text.

Paul's next step in the presentation of the doctrine of justification by faith was the development of the truth concerning *the sin* of Adam and Eve and the sin-nature it produced. This sin and its nature must be understood in order for the believer to understand his relationship with the Lord. Consequently Paul questioned: *What shall we say then? Shall we continue in [the] sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to [the] sin, live any longer therein?* (Romans 6:1-2)

If the translator of this text had included the definite articles that appear before the singular noun, sin, he could have prevented certain glaring errors that have arisen from this portion of Scripture. For example: this text, translated without the definite articles suggests believers have died to their capability to sin. Consequently there are denominations under the canopy of Christianity that teach the eradication of the old nature, or the suppression of the old nature, from this and similar texts. However when we translate the definite article, the text reads: *How shall we that are dead to [the] sin, live any longer therein?* The article makes it evident we are not dead to sin, but we are dead to a specific sin. The specific sin was Adam's, which introduced a

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corrupted sense of right and wrong into the human family and gave that family the concept it could be like God by the works of its own hands. So, in essence, Paul said, *How shall we that have been counted dead to our knowledge of good and evil (received as a result of the fall) live any longer relying on these corrupted concepts of right and wrong? The reception of these concepts caused us to be put out of the presence of God. Therefore it is impossible to come into a right relationship with God by the use of these concepts.* Paul continued asking:

Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we [were] buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. (Romans 6:3-4)

This question was asked of the Romans to see where they stood in their knowledge of their relationship with the Lord. By this question, Paul instructed the Romans in a fundamental truth which is outwardly declared by baptism in water. The believer declares his agreement with God's judicial reckoning (that he has been counted to have died with Jesus Christ, to have been buried with Christ, and to have risen with Jesus Christ) when he submits to believer's baptism.

Consequently, by water baptism, the believer has identified himself with Christ's death, burial and resurrection so that, he is dead to the law and alive unto God. Thus his new life is a life of faith without the works of the law for justification before God:

For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection: knowing this that our old man [was] crucified with him, that the body of [the] sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve [the] sin. For he that is dead is freed from [the] sin. (Romans 6:5-7)

To better understand Paul's use of *the sin* we should think of the two trees which were named in the account of the fall of man in these terms: *the tree of the knowledge of good and evil*

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was a counterfeit of *the tree of life*. This comparison will help us to understand that the precepts which came from the evil tree were evil in the guise of good. This will provide a better understanding of *the sin* and its effects on the world and on believers.

The serpent promised Eve three things if she would eat of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. It is interesting to note, each one of these promises was a counterfeit of a promise of God to the believer by his faith in Jesus Christ. First, the serpent promised Eve she would live and not die if she ate of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Thus he promised her life. Those of us who have placed our faith in Jesus Christ have been given eternal life from the moment we believed. Thus, from the Tree of Life, we have life. Second, the serpent promised Eve she would be as God if she ate the fruit he offered her. The true believer is born into the family of God by faith in Jesus Christ, so that he is called a child of God. The apostle John wrote of the Lord Jesus Christ and said, *When he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is*. With the resurrection, glorification and adoption of the believer, the believer will once again be in the image of God. Third, the serpent promised Eve she would gain the knowledge of good and evil if she ate of the evil tree. Consequently she gained a knowledge of good and evil, but it was a corrupted sense of morality without absolutes and governed by the ego. In contrast, the genuine believer has been given the capacity to know good in the absolute sense. The believer knows God, Who is the only one Who is *good*. He knows God by the Word of God and the indwelling presence of the Spirit of God. This is a knowledge of good that comes by divine revelation through the Word of God. This is an absolute knowledge of good, which cannot be attained by the works of the flesh. The Word of God says: *Now we have received, not*

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the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God (I Corinthians 2:12). Further the believer has at his disposal the knowledge of evil without involvement in the evil. This is the knowledge of the Evil one and his evil devices. This knowledge reveals that many of the things man regards as good are in fact evil. When the believer gains a proper knowledge of the fruit of the evil tree, he comes to understand that many of the things which are produced by the evil tree are counterfeits of those things which are produced by the good tree. Paul told the Corinthians, *we are not ignorant of his devices.* Some of the devices of the Devil are: *the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life.* All of these came from the evil tree and were used of the Devil to produce *the sin* by the deception of Eve and the wilful sin of Adam. The lust of the flesh and of the eyes usually results in overt sins, while the pride of life usually manifests itself in that which man calls good. Thus in our understanding of the evils of the Evil one, we find man's knowledge of good supplanting the righteousness of Jesus Christ.

It was the Corinthians' expression of these concepts that caused Paul to write: *I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present ... a chaste virgin to Christ. But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ (II Corinthians 11:2-3, emphasis mine).* Paul described the ones who were beguiling the Corinthians and presenting *another Jesus and another gospel* and operating by *another spirit as false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also*

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be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works (II Corinthians 11:13-15, emphasis mine).

In chapter six of Romans, Paul revealed to them that the believer in Jesus Christ has been *freed from [the] sin*. That is, he has been freed from the concept of establishing his own righteousness by the works of his own hands for acceptance with God. Paul told the Roman believers, *Likewise, reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto [the] sin*. Then Paul declared: *For when ye were the servants of [the] sin ye were free from [the] righteousness. What fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death. But now being made free from [the] sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life. For the wages of [the] sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord* (Romans 6:20-23).

It is evident, then, the fruit of the good tree is the righteousness of Jesus Christ, which is obtained by grace, through faith. The partaker of this fruit has eternal life. Whereas the fruit of the evil tree produced the sin and spiritual death. Therefore, operationally, the fruit of the evil tree produces a counterfeit righteousness. It promises life, but it produces death. Our Lord said: *Either make the tree good, and his fruit good; or else make the tree corrupt, and his fruit corrupt: for the tree is known by his fruit* (Matthew 12:33).

As Paul came to the crescendo of his argument for justification by faith, without the deeds of the law, he clearly showed the Roman believers their relationship to the sin and the law. Thus as he entered chapter seven of Romans, he wrote:

Know ye not, brethren, (for I speak to them that know the law,) how that the law hath dominion over a man as long as he liveth? For the woman which hath an husband is

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bound by the law to her husband so long as he liveth; but if the husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of her husband. So then if, while her husband liveth, she be married to another man, she shall be called an adulteress: but if her husband be dead, she is free from that law; so that she is no adulteress, though she be married to another man. Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God. (Romans 7:1-4)

This is a wonderful illustration. It is wonderful because it uses a situation with which we are all familiar to show the believer's relationship to the law. Even though the illustration uses one woman in two different sets of circumstances, for the sake of clarity, we will speak of the two situations as though there were two women. The first woman was married and her husband died. In process of time she found another man to be her husband. This was, according to the law, in total accord with the law. Consequently the woman was not charged with adultery, even though she had been married to two men, because she was free from the law of her first husband by his death. The second woman was married and for one reason or another she divorced her husband. In the process of time she, too, found another man to be her husband. However this woman was declared to be guilty of adultery, because she was still alive to the law of her first husband because he was alive.

From a physical point of view, both of these women did the same thing. That is, they both lived with two men in the intimacy of marriage. One was an adulteress and the other was not. Even so if we only had their conduct to judge this situation, it would be very difficult, if not impossible, to determine who was the adulteress and who was not. Since conduct will not supply the answer to this question, we have to look elsewhere for the difference. The difference is supplied by the terms of the law. There was no condemnation to the woman whose husband died,

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because she was no longer obligated to walk according to the precepts of her dead husband. However she was obligated to walk according to the precepts of her new husband, who, because of their marriage, had established an entirely different set of precepts by which she was to walk. Thus Paul wrote: *But now we are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were held; that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter* (Romans 7:6).

The *newness of the spirit* is another way of saying, ... *The just shall live by faith. And the law is not of faith...* (Galatians 3:11-12). The problem with the law is not that there is any fault in the law; the fault lies in the inability of fallen man to perform the deeds of the law perfectly, even though he thinks he can. In fact, Paul wrote the Corinthians that, *The strength of [the] sin is the law*. Consequently *the sin* acts like a fulcrum on the minds of the unsaved and the minds of believers, who are in the flesh, to think that they must perform the deeds of the law to please God. Paul continued to write in Romans chapter seven:

What shall we say then? Is the law sin? God forbid. Nay, I had not known [the] sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet. But [the] sin, taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence. For without the law sin was dead. For I was alive without the law once: but when the commandment came, [the] sin revived, and I died. And the commandment, which was ordained to life, I found to be unto death. For [the] sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it slew me. Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good. Was then that which is good made death unto me? God forbid. But [the] sin, that it might appear sin, working death in me by that which is good; that [the] sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful. (Romans 7:7-13, emphasis mine)

Thus the exceeding sinfulness of *the sin* must be recognized by the believer. This is the reason the believer must reckon himself dead to the law and alive unto God through Jesus Christ. His walk is not a walk of law, but a walk of faith, by hearing the Word of God. This, then, is a

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perfect example of what Paul meant when he wrote: *There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh* [i.e., trying to keep the precepts of the law for justification before God], *but after the Spirit* [i.e., by grace through faith the believer is reckoned dead to the law and alive unto God through the judicial justification of the believer by the Person and work of our Lord Jesus Christ].

This is the believer's relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ. This is the truth Paul desired the Galatians to perceive. They were deemed to be free from the law by their faith in Christ. They were also declared to be alive unto God. Therefore there was no place for a ministry of condemnation and death in their lives. If they had walked according to the truth of Paul's gospel, they would never have been under the bewitching spell of the Judaizers. Consequently it is imperative for the believer to realize that attempts at law-keeping for justification before God is the flesh and can only produce condemnation.

However the recognition that one is dead to the law and alive unto God through Jesus Christ is a walk in the Spirit. Thus for those who walk according to God's judicial reckoning, *There is therefore now no condemnation*. We can see, then, it is impossible to improve our relationship with God utilizing concepts and a nature received by direct disobedience to God. Paul's question, *Are ye now made perfect by the flesh?* should have convinced the Galatians and silenced the Judaizers, causing the Galatians to realize that attempts at keeping the deeds of the law for justification before God are the works of the flesh and have no place in the life of the believer!