

transformation.

IT'S GOD'S WORK

The problem Paul had to uncover was one of working toward self-righteousness that would result in pride and undermine the needed total dependence upon God for the development of real (agape) love. In his letter to the Philippians, Paul states his understanding of total trust in God's work done in Jesus when he says: "Of one thing I am certain: the One who started the good work in you will bring it to a completion by the Day of Christ Jesus" (Phil. 1:6) NEB. Paul has seen the revelation of God's work in Jesus... We were crucified with Him... Now God was to be the source and guide of all we do... and the Holy Spirit is



well able to do the job entrusted. How could any works of our good intentions have any possible good effect when God has said that only trust in Jesus would get the job done. As the work of the "flesh" (self-centered life) could only produce "flesh" (more self-centered), God could not accept any of the works no matter how "good" they might seem to us, because they would only build our own pride and take us farther away from the perfection of His love at work in our lives.

When Paul says that obedience to the Law will rob us of our freedom, he is talking about the freedom found in trusting God to guide us. In order to obey the Law, I must look at myself and try to be good enough for God to love and accept me. That is the pits! I know I'm not good enough, and no amount of work or works will ever make me good enough. I'm a sinner, born in sin, and a slave

to sin, until I put my hope and trust in the sacrifice and person of Jesus Christ. Then, as I looked to Him in order to be redeemed from my sinful life and nature, God says He gave me a whole new nature. I became a new creation in Christ, and as I rest in trust, love and obedience to the Holy Spirit, God will guide my life. But I must let the Spirit do the job, the continuous choice is mine. Learning more each day about how to let that happen.

FREEDOM IN DISCIPLINE

A wise person once said; "Happiness is not to be found in doing whatever you want to do, but rather real happiness lies in learning to like what you have to do: True freedom is only found in discipline. Paul calls himself a "love-slave" of Jesus Christ. He chose to sell out completely to the love of God, and become a slave to that love and it's requirements for his life, and he found real life. If I know that every word of guidance for my life is guided by absolute love and wisdom for me to be happy and satisfied in my life, then I will want to find those words and begin to apply them in my life. God has spoken these words, and they are all available for me to seek and find in His Word, the Bible. Somehow I must be made to see the profit to me of abandoning myself to the love of God in order to be taught life. The letter to the Galatians is a letter to us to help us along that path of understanding. Let us ask the Holy Spirit to open our hearts to see and understand the love contained in it.

Father, we are so thankful that your love is big enough for each one of us individually to find satisfaction. In the complexity of our own minds, unravel the tangles of doubt and teach us the simplicity of Your wisdom. In Jesus's Name, we pray in

The Letter of St. Paul to the Galatians



By Pat Mullins

"Therefore, now that we have been justified through faith, let us continue at peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have been allowed to enter the sphere of God's grace, where we now stand." (Romans 5:1-2a) NEB

"Thus the law was a kind of tutor in charge of us until Christ should come, when we should be justified through faith;" (Galatians 3:24) NEB

IMMEASURABLE LOVE!

I love you. Just the way you are, I love you. With all of your failures and faults, I love you. Even if you never know it, I love you. Even when you turn your back and reject me, I love you. No matter what you ever do, I love you. Ignore me, reject me, hate me, praise me, worship me, adore me, none of these actions on your part will ever mean anything to the fact that I say to you now; I love you. I saw you before you were born, and I loved you even then as I love you now. I have always had such wonderful plans for you and your life because I love you. I love you enough to let you do it your way and bear the rejection in hope that one day you will stop and see that I love you. God, our Father as a Father should really be toward a special and beloved child, says over and over again, I love you. From Genesis through Revelation He speaks. In the warmth of the sun shining down upon the earth for our life and comfort He speaks. In the forests and plains and oceans of beauty that thrill our imaginations He speaks; I love you. I created all this for your pleasure and enjoyment

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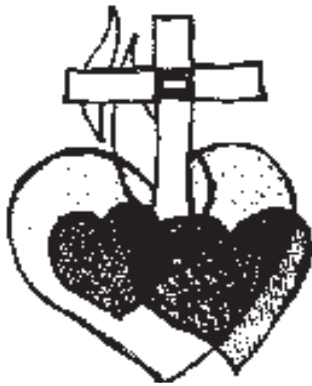
to display that I love you. I care about every detail of your life, and I would lead you into a life of satisfaction if you want it. Even in the midst of all this mess the world is in a perhaps your life is in, we could start today, right now, and you will see I love you.

THE PRODIGAL FATHER

Our intellect cries, unreasonable, preposterous! Our pride cries, I don't want to have to accept this unless I can participate in some way. I don't want to be 'obligated.' And the great Apostle Paul challenges us to believe the "Gospel" of grace. The letter to the Galatians is an argument for grace as God's only way of rescuing us from ourselves.

Not long ago I read in a book called "The Autobiography of God" by Rev. Oglivie, a sharing on the well known parable of the 'prodigal' son. (Luke 15:11-24) There was a new insight and a new twist he shares as he asks us to see the father in the parable as the real 'prodigal', and to see God revealing His love for us in the story.

If we stop for a moment and look in the dictionary for the word 'prodigal' we find the definition fits God's love for us very well. Prodigal: recklessly wasteful; extravagant; profuse in giving; exceedingly abundant, etc. God's love for you and I is like that, and that was the basis for the Gospel according to Paul. God has done all the work in our behalf in His working in the person on Jesus, and had covered all the requirements for us to be able to just love and rejoice in His love. God has done it all, and



the only requirement He placed upon us was to believe His Word, accept His sacrifice in Jesus, and let His Holy Spirit lead us away from our self-centeredness into Christ centeredness. An honest heart for the 'seed' to fall into, a heart that was willing to be needy for God, this heart would find the love God is pouring out. The letter to the Galatians is the Holy Spirit's word to us to help reveal this reality to our understand. Let's look deeper.

SIMPLY TRUST

These are people that Paul has brought to the saving knowledge of the love of God, and He had preached and demonstrated the power of putting all trust and hope in the life of the risen Lord Jesus Christ. Remember the person who had asked Jesus; "What work are we to do for God? Jesus replied,...to believe on Him who He has sent." (see Jn. 6:29). To believe, in this usage, meant to entrust yourself unto that person, even Jesus. Paul had seen this reality of God's grace and this revelation of the simplicity of abandonment to Jesus. To let the Holy Spirit be both the life and the guide for the life was the message he taught, the Gospel he proclaimed.

The letter was written because the simplicity of this complete trust had been complicated by the attitude which said that was not enough. God's grace may have been enough to get a life redeemed from going to hell, but surely there was to be some special things to be done in order to "get spiritual", and hold our position in Christ. Here is where we get into the discussion about the meaning, purpose, and result of the Law. As we look at this, bear in mind that what Paul was objecting to was the motive for the actions, not the actions themselves. The pollution of the message of the Gospel which proclaimed faith in the grace of God was in the reason for the actions because although the actions themselves may indeed flow from a heart of love towards God, they are not done with the purpose of being more or less acceptable to God.

As we read this letter, we get the sense of the intensity of the situation. We might picture it like a father that is trying to talk his child out of jumping off the Golden Gate Bridge. Every avenue of authority, persuasiveness, and importunity is being used to get the actions reversed and back onto the right path. Total unleashed love that is

willing to even sacrifice the whole relationship if necessary to convince the loved one of the danger ahead. "Greater love has no man that to lay down his life for his friends" Love willing to be spent completely, and even rejected in order to get the job done. (Lord, teach us to Love.) And the power and joy of this abandonment of himself to serve the other



person is preserved for us in the letter to all people who seek to win God's favor by their deeds.

FROM LAW TO LOVE

These same demands are made upon us as Christians today, "If you want to be acceptable to God you must...do this,...do that...do it this way..." Wrong? No, not necessarily as long as we see that the Law is but a tutor for our behavior and morality until Christ shall come into our lives as Lord and Savior. Then the Holy Spirit is to be our internal guide and teacher, and the motive for our actions becomes grounded in grace and love. If the Law has done the job well, and we were obedient to the teaching of our faith, there may not be a huge change in our exterior behavior, but the reason we do it will change from Law to Love. We teach our children "Thou shall not steal" and out of fear of the punishment for breaking the Law, they learn not to steal. But one day God will break into their lives with overwhelming love. Their love for their God and their neighbor will become genuine and experiential, and then they won't steal because they would not want to hurt the ones they love so much. Motive!! Internal