

ly from Christ, and derived his knowledge of the distinguishing doctrines of the gospel, not through human learning or teaching, but through the immediate revelation of Christ. In proof of this statement, he reminds the Galatians that, before his conversion, he was a Pharisee and a violent persecutor of the Church; that he occupied a high place among his equals in years, and that he entertained a high veneration for the prevalent Rabbinical learning; and, therefore, it could not be expected that his opinions could be easily changed, and his feelings turned into an opposite channel. The only cause adequate to the production of such a result was, God by his grace effectually calling him and revealing his Son not only to him, but in him; accompanied with the divine persuasion that it was his duty to preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ. He not only saw and heard the Saviour addressing him on his way to Damascus; but the light of divine truth also streamed into his heart, and dispelled the darkness of sin. In allusion to his own conversion, he says, "God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined into our hearts, to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ."

For three years after his conversion he abode fifteen days at Jerusalem, saw only Peter and James, and without a closer acquaintance with the Jewish Christians, he came into the regions of Syria and Cilicia—certainly not a sufficient period to receive instructions in the leading facts and doctrines of the gospel. After fourteen years, in company with Barnabas and Titus, he came to the council of Jerusalem, the history of which is contained in the fifteenth chapter of Acts, when it was ascertained, on comparison, that he taught the very same doctrine with the other apostles. In proof of this harmony, which, in the circumstances, could only be the result of divine teaching, Titus, who was a Greek, was not compelled to be circumcised. And in farther proof that Paul was not the messenger of others, he informs the Galatians that, when Peter afterwards came to Antioch, and when, for fear of offending the Jewish Christians, he withdrew from the Gentiles, our apostle rebuked him before all the Jews for his dissimulation—in the original hypocrisies—showing the inconsistency of his conduct, proving that we are not justified by the works of the law, but by the hearing of faith, and that a contrary practice implies the belief that Christ is dead in vain. This narrative sufficiently shows, that the doctrine of free grace, so humbling to the pride of the unrenowned heart, was no preconcerted scheme—no cunningly devised fable—but a truth given by inspiration of God, and necessary to our eternal well-being.

II. In the second part of this epistle, which embraces the third and fourth chapters, Paul endeavors to prove, by a variety of arguments, that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the hearing of faith. Though this subject is more largely discussed in the epistle to the Romans, yet we have three proofs that, not the law, but faith, is necessary to salvation. The apostle first appeals to their own experience, that the Spirit was only obtained through faith. He refers, both to the miracles which some believers then wrought, through the power of the Holy Ghost, and also to those practical graces of the Christian character which were the fruits of the Spirit's operation. The second argument in proof of salvation by free grace, is derived from the case of Abraham, who, before his circumcision, believed God, and it was counted to him for righteousness, and, therefore, as the father of the faithful, he stands in the same relation to both Jews and Gentiles.—Genesis xv. 6.—8. The history fully demonstrates that he was not justified in consequence of circumcision. The third argument is derived from the Old Testament scriptures. Galatians iii. 8—14. Paul asserts that the scriptures manifestly presuppose the calling of the Gentiles, for God said to Abraham, previous to his circumcision, "In thee shall all the nations of the earth be blessed"—a declaration which manifestly respects the Gentiles;—that no sinner can obtain life by the law which denounces death against transgression; that the scriptures reveal another mode of justification; and that Christ died to save from the penalty of the law; but if a man can save himself, by either moral or ceremonial observances, the Redeemer's death must have been wholly unnecessary.

Paul here interrupts the course of his argument, for the purpose of answering a few objections. It is possible that the Mosaic law might have abolished the entire patriarchal dispensation, and introduced a new set of principles; and if this were so, the reasoning, from the example of Abraham, would be wholly inconclusive. It is answered, that if a

human covenant be binding and unalterable, much more is God's covenant of grace, ordered in all things and sure; and that consequently the law which was given 430 years after the call of Abraham, could not annul that covenant and frustrate its provisions. The law, therefore, anticipated and proclaimed the good news that the Gentiles should be admitted into the church, and be justified by faith that is in Christ Jesus. "The Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, in thee shall all nations be blessed." The phrase, "preached before the gospel," occurs only in this passage in the New Testament. It occurs repeatedly in the works of Philo, the Jew, and means to announce good news before they actually happen. Thus Philo, having asserted that the history of the creation given in Genesis, is an account of the intellectual creation, after which the visible is formed, notices in proof of his doctrine, that light was created before the sun. "These," says he, "were the evening and the morning, the latter of which announced beforehand the good news that the sun was about to arise." The sentiment, therefore, conveyed by the apostle is: foreseeing that God would justify all nations by faith, the scriptures previously announced the good news to Abraham—in thee shall all the nations of the earth be blessed. And if the Apostle, as is not improbable from his varied learning, was acquainted with the writings of Philo, the full force of the sentiment would be: as the morning proclaimed and indicated the rising sun, so the Old Testament Scriptures announced and indicated the future salvation of the Gentiles. It is even affirmed that the law divinely foreshadowed the gospel; for it assumes that the possession of Canaan, which is a type of heaven, was given to Abraham, as an inheritance, not by purchase, but by promise Galatians iii. 15, 18.

It might be farther objected, that the law is not only useless, but pernicious, since it cannot give life, but only denounces death against transgression, and inspires the sinner with emotions of terror and alarm. The apostle answers that such a conclusion by no means follows. The moral law is necessary to restrain and prevent human wickedness; to convince man of his guilt, and to shut him up as a close prisoner to the righteousness which the gospel reveals; while the ceremonial law was necessary, during the immaturity and infancy of mankind, by sensible signs and symbols, to impress the mind with the value of salvation. The law was our school-master till Christ—till Christ came—that we might be justified by faith. Galatians iii. 19, 20.—The apostle next enters upon a digression, as is customary in all his epistles, in which he shows the superiority of the gospel over the law. This contrast was suggested by the term school-master, as applied to the law—a term which denotes a teacher of children in the rudiments of learning, a class of men who, among the Greeks, were slaves—combined with the declaration, "ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus." Now a son and an heir, in scripture language, are convertible terms. But as an heir in his minority, is under tutors and governors till he reaches the full years of manhood, so believers were, during four thousand years, under a ceremonial law in its various modifications, till the fullness of time, when believers are the acknowledged sons of God and joint heirs with Christ Jesus. Galatians iv. 1, 10.

Having obviated these objections the apostle concludes his argument from Scripture, in proof of salvation by free grace, by adducing the allegory of Hagar and Sarah. The former was a slave, and, as in eastern countries, the children follow the condition of the mother, her offspring was in bondage. Ishmael was born after the flesh; Isaac was born in virtue of the promise: "In thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed." Now Hagar, a slave, is a type of Mount Sinai, from which the law was delivered in a manner so terrible, that Moses said, "I exceedingly fear and quake." This type is said to answer to Jerusalem which now is—evidently referring to the past dispensation, which the Judaizing teachers considered as still in force—and is in bondage with her children. Sarah is the type of the Jerusalem above, the Jerusalem descending from God out of heaven, the Christian Church, whose inhabitants enjoy the liberty with which Christ has made his people free.—Galatians iv. 22, 31.

III. In the third, and last part of this epistle, we have a number of practical exhortations, encouraging us to various Christian duties, and deterring us from the commission of sin. We are enjoined to hold fast our freedom obtained through Christ; and then, to enable us to try our-