

PAUL'S THEOLOGY

Lesson 20

Scripture – Part Four

As I type this lesson, I have the blessing of having my daughter Rachel with me on a business trip. Rachel is on Spring Break and chose to travel with me to Philadelphia and then Dallas for some depositions.

While I sit and write this lesson, Rachel is reading her Political Science assignment. She has a great attitude, but is not too enthralled by the book she is required to read. It brings back memories of my time spent in formal education.

I liked school. I did not love it, but I liked it. Unfortunately, I often saw the work as what I “had to do” for a course, rather than a “chance to learn.” Do not get me wrong, I learned much of the required information, but it was rarely out of joy. Most often, it was out of obligation.

I wish I had the attitude then that I do now. I would love the chance to re-study now that I appreciate what the knowledge could really mean to me in life. That sentiment is true in many areas. For example, driving to the airport in Philly, we went by the exit to “Valley Forge.” I asked a doctor in the car if that was the place where George Washington nearly froze to death in the revolutionary war. He said, “Yes.” (I confess that while I remember the Valley Forge story, I did not realize it was a suburb of Philadelphia!)

I do look back on my education and thank God that it was solid. I had the benefit of some wonderful teachers. They taught me knowledge, but they also taught me how to think. In fact, the biggest asset of law school is not the law you learn, but learning how to find the law you need! School should teach you how to think and process information. That is every bit as important as the data you learn.

The same, I believe, is true in this class. Our goal is not simply to give you data points about God, Christ, the Spirit, the Bible, Paul, or even theology. Our goal is to also help us learn a framework for more personal study, to help us learn how to think about the Divine, and to help us get the tools for responsible self-learning and personal devotion before God. It is the teaching equivalent of “give someone a fish, they eat for a day; teach someone to fish, they eat for a lifetime.”

TODAY'S ISSUES

This brings us to today's final class on Paul and Scripture. Today, we look at some surprising ways that Paul used and interpreted Scripture. By “surprising,” we mean that absent our study, it is not what we might expect from our 21st century mindset!

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We arrive at this recognizing that Paul came to his own studies with an educational past. Paul learned from his rabbinical studies how to think, how to read Scripture, and how to study and apply it. We see some of this rabbinical training as we go through today's lesson. We also see how the Holy Spirit and the encounter with Christ (not only on the road to Damascus but in Paul's daily walk) added to Paul's perspectives and approach.

We will look at how Paul would combine various Scriptures to make his point. We will then look at the ways Paul used the Old Testament in what scholars call "typologies," "analogies," and "allegories." Before we do either, however, we take a moment to note why our study approach is valid and important.

WHY DOES PAUL'S TRAINING MATTER?

Some might ask why, as people who believe in the full inspiration of Scripture, we care what Paul's upbringing was? The question might fairly arise, "If God is writing Scripture, don't we just need to understand Scripture without digging into where Paul may have been influenced?"

While we believe in the 100 percent inspiration of Scripture, we remind everyone that God did not write it **all** on a tablet. God was the one who chose to use humans to put his Word into words. We are faithful to God as we try to understand the Scriptures in the way he gave them to us!

The reformed scholar B.B. Warfield put it well:

If God wished to give His people a series of letters like Paul's, He prepared a Paul to write them, and the Paul He brought to the task was a Paul who spontaneously would write just such letters.¹

Similarly, Earle Ellis writes:

Without doubt the apostle's understanding of the OT was completely revolutionized after his conversion; nevertheless his Jewish heritage remained of fundamental importance for his understanding and use of the Bible...Reading habits, methodology and hermeneutical

¹ Warfield, Benjamin B., *Revelation and Inspiration*, (Baker Book House reprint 1991) at 101.

norms were fully implanted by his parents, his synagogue, and, most of all, his teacher in rabbinics – Gamaliel.²

We might see it in light of the “Bits and Pieces” portion of last week’s lesson. Paul, like us, was a product of those he had contact with in his life. They left their effects on him, as surely as people do on us today. God’s hand was fully involved in Paul becoming the man he was as he wrote his letters we have in Scripture. It is quite natural to find Paul’s early training and those rabbinic methods of understanding Scripture in his writings.

With those concerns addressed, let us venture into the last two areas of discussion in this part of our series on Paul.

PAUL’S HABIT OF COMBINING SCRIPTURES

If you have ever spent much time driving, then you are certainly familiar with receiving directions. “Go down the street to the fork in the road, and then turn left. Go two miles, and then make a sharp right turn. When you come to the tee in the road, take the left turn,” *etc.* Directions can sometimes be quite a combination of instructions, no?

We mention this by way of analogy. Let us consider the manner in which Paul often used Scripture. Much like combining direction instructions (“left, right straight, *etc.*”) Paul gives his directions by combining different Scriptures one right after the other. Consider, for example, Romans 3:10-18:

as it is written: "None is righteous, no, not one; no one understands; no one seeks for God. All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one. Their throat is an open grave; they use their tongues to deceive. The venom of asps is under their lips. Their mouth is full of curses and bitterness. Their feet are swift to shed blood; in their paths are ruin and misery, and the way of peace they have not known. There is no fear of God before their eyes."

In that short passage, Paul quoted from Psalms 14, 5, 139, 10 as well as Isaiah 59 followed by Psalm 36, all in rapid-fire succession. Repeatedly in Romans and

² Ellis, Earle E., *Paul’s Use of the Old Testament* (Oliver and Boyd, London 1957) at 38.

other letters, Paul sets out rapid-fire sets of Old Testament quotes. Consider Romans 15:9-12:

As it is written, "Therefore I will praise you among the Gentiles, and sing to your name." And again it is said, "Rejoice, O Gentiles, with his people." And again, "Praise the Lord, all you Gentiles, and let all the peoples extol him." And again Isaiah says, "The root of Jesse will come, even he who arises to rule the Gentiles; in him will the Gentiles hope."

In that set of verses, Paul quoted from Psalm 18, Deuteronomy 32, Psalm 117, and Isaiah 11.

These are only two examples of many where Paul combines passages of Old Testament Scriptures.³ As we see it happening over and over, we suspect there must have been something behind Paul's style and approach! In that, our suspicions are validated by understanding Paul's Hebrew training. Paul was commenting and using Scripture in much the way that a trained Jewish rabbi of his day might.

We have a good bit of material from the time of Paul and later that we can go to for comparison and instruction. The rabbis that pre-date Paul, his contemporaries, and those in the first few centuries after Paul, famously commented on the Scriptures with passages memorized and passed from one generation to the next until they were finally recorded by 500 A.D. These writings are still with us in what is called the Babylonian Talmud.

Looking at the Babylonian Talmud, in a section called "*Makkot*," we read some wonderful examples of rabbis using Scripture in the same manner as Paul. In commenting on the use of cities of refuge, a succession of rabbis are quoted as saying:

From the Torah, the Prophets, and the Holy Writings, it is shown that on the way on which a person wants to go – in that way he is led. From the Torah, "And God said to Balaam, You shall not go with them" (Num 22:12), and then: "if the men came to call you, rise

³ In addition to those set out, see Rom. 9:12-13, 25-29, 33; 10:5-8, 11-13, 19-21; 11:8-10, 26-27, 34-35; 1 Cor. 15:45, 54-55; 2 Cor. 6:16-18; and 1 Tim. 5:18; 2 Tim. 2:19.

up and go with them” (Num. 22:20); the Prophets: “I am the Lord your God who teaches you for your profit, who leads you by the way that you should go” (Is. 48:17); and the Holy Writings: “If he is of the scornful, he will be allowed to speak scorn, and if he is of the meek, he will show forth grace” (Prov. 3:34).

This is one of many, many examples we find in a number of different rabbinical writings.⁴

This habit of chaining together passages of Scripture was typical for not only Paul, but also for traditional Jewish rabbis. Jesus also practiced this rabbinical approach of chaining together verses. An example of Christ doing so is found when Jesus addressed the Pharisees concern over the disciples plucking and eating grain on the Sabbath:

He said to them, "Have you not read what David did when he was hungry, and those who were with him: how he entered the house of God and ate the bread of the Presence, which it was not lawful for him to eat nor for those who were with him, but only for the priests? Or have you not read in the Law how on the Sabbath the priests in the temple profane the Sabbath and are guiltless? I tell you, something greater than the temple is here. And if you had known what this means, 'I desire mercy, and not sacrifice,' you would not have condemned the guiltless." (Mt. 12:3-7).

In this short section, Jesus either references or quotes from 1 Samuel 21, Exodus 25, Leviticus 24, Number 28, Haggai 2, Hosea 6, and Micah 6!

Alfred Edersheim wrote that this was originally a preaching technique for Jewish rabbis. Explaining the Hebrew word for this combining of passages (*haraz* – זרה) Edersheim writes:

⁴ We should note that often in the Talmud and later writings the Scripture quotations come first from the “Torah,” followed by “Prophets,” and then “Holy Writings.” These were the three divisions of Hebrew Scripture (Christ called them the Torah [Law of Moses], the Prophets, and the Psalms [the major section of the “Holy Writings”]. (see Lk 24:44). Paul rarely ordered his quotations in this precise way. Likely reasons for the difference are either the development of ordering the quotations came later than Paul or Paul purposefully modified the order to better make his points.

A favourite method was that which derived its name from the stringing together of pearls (*haraz*), when a preacher, having quoted a passage or section from the Pentateuch, strung on to it another and like-sounding, or really similar, from the Prophets and the Hagiographa [“Holy Writings”].⁵

Knowing that this habit or approach of Paul’s was fairly typical of those trained as he was, what shall we make of it? In other words, “So what?”

We suggest this helps us on several fronts. First, it demonstrates the validity of the assertion we made earlier that Paul did not leave his tools of study behind when the truth of Christ was revealed to him. Second, while some might express dismay over Paul’s assortment of Scripture as if he was loading a plate from a buffet, they should not. Paul was faithfully setting out truth as was the custom and training of his day. Third, Paul’s versatility of Scripture should inspire us again to commit to memory passages from throughout the Bible. Finally, we should note that Paul was acutely aware of the continuing and recurring threads of God’s themes and prophecies throughout the fabric of Scripture.

PAUL’S INTERPRETATION TECHNIQUES

The most common technique for Paul’s interpretation of Scripture is straight forward and direct. When Paul wants to make the point that all are sinners, he goes straight to the Psalms for the direct point, “None is righteous.” Most of Paul’s uses of Scripture fall into this direct and literal category; however, not always!

There are a number of places where Paul writes of Old Testament passages as “typologies,” “analogies,” and perhaps even “allegories.” We should note here, however, that those literary terms (even though they may be used in certain Bible translations) are literary conventions of the modern age, at least in the purity of their meaning. So, we will try to understand what Paul was doing, more so than we will worry over whether our labels fit fully.

1. Typologies

⁵ Edersheim, Alfred, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah* (Eerdmans 1971 Ed.) Vol. 1 at 449.

Normally, when we speak of “typologies,” we are speaking of the study of types. In theology, though, we are looking at Old Testament passages that seem to be a type (or anti-type) of something in the New Testament. In other words, we see in an Old Testament passage or set of events, a shadow or echo of something more fully seen in the New Testament.

An example of this from Paul that helps us understand the concept is found in Colossians 2:16-17:

Therefore let no one pass judgment on you in questions of food and drink, or with regard to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath. These are a shadow of the things to come, but the substance belongs to Christ.

Paul calls the Old Testament festivals a *skia* (σκια) which means a shadow, or a faint outline of things to come, of the reality in Christ. Paul does not mean that these festivals and dietary laws were figments of the Jews’ imaginations. They were true and valid instructions under the law for those who lived under the law, but they were not the full reality that came forth in Christ. In this sense, Paul is writing and understanding these aspects of the Old Testament to be “types” or symbols of what was more fully found in Christ. By the way, this is why for Paul the moral issues of the Old Testament were still binding, but the dietary and religious rituals were not. The moral and ethical rules were expressions of God’s character which never changes, while the dietary laws and religious rituals found fulfillment in Christ.

The Colossians passage also serves to illustrate that as Paul took Old Testament passages and events and explained them as “types” and “anti-types,” it does not mean that Paul thought of the original events as anything less than true and literal. Rather, Paul took the real events as examples or foreshadowing of a similarly real event or action.

In this sense, we can look to 1 Corinthians 10, and find Paul writing about Israel’s experiences in the wilderness as events that really took place, but that took place to teach and instruct the church. Paul writes that “our fathers were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea” and says they “were baptized into Moses” (1 Cor. 10:1-2). Paul then writes of how the Jews in the wilderness “all ate the same spiritual food, and all drank the same spiritual drink,” and even that related for Paul to the Church as a lesson, “For they all drank from the spiritual Rock that followed them, and the Rock was Christ” (1 Cor. 10:4). This was for Paul a literal

event, but as the church drank from the “cup of blessing” it was a “participation in the blood of Christ” (1 Cor. 10:16).

Again, this is Paul seeing in the Old Testament “examples for us” (1 Cor. 10:6). This was Paul’s understanding that Old Testament passages were written both for their own time but also for the benefit of the Church (Rom. 4:23-24a, “But the words, ‘it was counted to him’ were not written for his sake alone, but also for ours”).

Get out a good concordance or use a web resource like www.BibleGateway.com and see if you can find where Paul uses Abraham as a type of a believer, or Isaac as the type of the promised seed. Look for Pharaoh as the type of person who chooses to disobey God, hence serving God’s purposes.

In Romans 5:14, Paul writes of Adam and uses the Greek word *tupos* (τυπος)⁶ from which our English word “type” comes. The passage reads,

Yet death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those whose sinning was not like the transgression of Adam, who was a type of the one to come.

This is a passage where Adam is deemed a “type” of Christ, yet not in the sense that Christ was the sinner Adam came to be. Rather, Adam’s first act of sin had repercussions on all his descendants. In the same way, Christ’ life of righteousness had a universal impact on all those who are in Christ.

After calling Adam a type of Christ, Paul then explains how Adam is what we might term an anti-type. For through Adam, sin and condemnation reigned, while through Christ, righteousness and life reigned. Adam’s act of disobedience led to many being sinners, while Christ’s life of obedience made many righteous (Rom. 5:15-19).

2. Analogies

Oxford English Dictionary defines an “analogy” as “a comparison between two things, typically on the basis of their structure and for the purpose of explanation or clarification.” In Paul, when we write of analogies, we are considering those

⁶ The Greek *tupos* originally was the image left after striking or imprinting something. It was used for forms, examples, and patterns.

passages where Paul uses the Old Testament as a teaching comparison. To some degree, the typologies we have already considered might be termed analogies, but here we look at a few that are more directly analogies.

We might consider here the way Paul analogizes from the Old Testament in Romans Chapter 10. The relevant verses are 5-11:

For Moses writes about the righteousness that is based on the law, that the person who does the commandments shall live by them. But the righteousness based on faith says, "Do not say in your heart, 'Who will ascend into heaven?'" (that is, to bring Christ down) or "'Who will descend into the abyss?'" (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead). But what does it say? "The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart" (that is, the word of faith that we proclaim); because, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved. For the Scripture says, "Everyone who believes in him will not be put to shame." For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord is Lord of all, bestowing his riches on all who call on him. For "everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."

Paul begins by contrasting Moses' teaching (that righteousness based on law goes out to those who live and keep the law) with Paul's teaching that righteousness is based on faith. The key word drawing the comparison is the Greek "But" that begins verse 6, "But the righteousness based on faith..." and here, Paul sets up the analogy. Paul then uses the Old Testament passage of Deuteronomy 9:4-6 where Moses warned the people that they must never think they earned the possession of the Promised Land out of their own righteousness as he states, "Do not say in your heart." Paul then dips into Deuteronomy 30:12 asking, "who will ascend into heaven?" and adds the New Testament explanation of ascending "to bring Christ down."

This passage causes a number of scholars dismay. The portion of Deuteronomy that Paul is quoting actually speaks of God's law as being so close to the Jews, in their hearts and mouths, that they are without excuse for ever evading God's will. Scholars wonder, as Douglas Moo puts it:

How, then, can Paul take a passage that is about the law of God and find in it the voice of righteousness by *faith*? And how, in his

explanatory comments, can he claim that what the text is talking about is not the commandment but Christ?⁷

Paul is analogizing from the Old Testament passage. While the Jews were without any excuse for transgressing the law because God brought it to them, so the saved should never wonder whether they will be put to shame. For God brought Christ down (and raised him from the grave) just as assuredly as God provided the law through Moses. It is why we can affirm with Paul that the word we proclaim, Christ, brings salvation.⁸

At some point as we press modern English writing conventions on Paul, we begin to blur the line between analogies and allegories on certain passages. We will consider those next.

3. Allegories

If we are to use the definition of “allegory” provided by A. T. Hanson, then we are hard pressed to find allegories in the writings of Paul. Hanson sets out allegory as:

Either interpreting a text in a sense which completely ignores its original meaning, or in a sense whose connection with its original meaning is purely arbitrary.⁹

We do not see Paul in this light, so if that is our definition of “allegory,” then we must reclassify several Scriptures as analogies or typologies. If by allegory, however, we accept Paul acknowledging the primary historical accuracy of events, and then understand Paul to offer teaching points off allegorical interpretations, then we can agree to classify certain passages accordingly.

The two key passages most often cited as Paul’s allegorical interpretations of the Old Testament are found in Galatians 4:21f and 1 Corinthians 9:8-10. Let us

⁷ Moo, Douglas, *The New International Commentary on the New Testament – The Epistle to the Romans* (Eerdmans 1996) at 651.

⁸ We explored this passage in the context of how Paul’s quotations from the Old Testament do not always line up in last week’s lesson. It is available for download at www.Biblical-Literacy.com.

⁹ Hanson, AnthonyTyrrell, *Studies in Paul’s Technique and Theology* (London: SPCK 1974) at 159.

consider both.

Galatians 4:21f

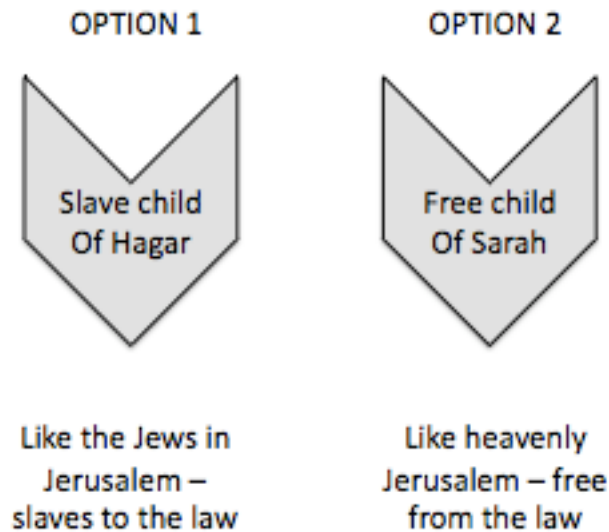
This passage can cause even serious Bible students to scratch their heads and re-read the verses multiple times, very slowly. Paul wrote:

Tell me, you who desire to be under the law, do you not listen to the law? For it is written that Abraham had two sons, one by a slave woman and one by a free woman. But the son of the slave was born according to the flesh, while the son of the free woman was born through promise. Now this may be interpreted allegorically: these women are two covenants. One is from Mount Sinai, bearing children for slavery; she is Hagar. Now Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia; she corresponds to the present Jerusalem, for she is in slavery with her children. But the Jerusalem above is free, and she is our mother. For it is written,

"Rejoice, O barren one who does not bear;
break forth and cry aloud, you who are not in labor!
For the children of the desolate one will be more
than those of the one who has a husband."

Now you, brothers, like Isaac, are children of promise. But just as at that time he who was born according to the flesh persecuted him who was born according to the Spirit, so also it is now. But what does the Scripture say? "Cast out the slave woman and her son, for the son of the slave woman shall not inherit with the son of the free woman." So, brothers, we are not children of the slave but of the free woman.

Paul sets out either an allegory or types, depending on your terminology, making his point about life by faith rather than Jewish law. Paul sets up two options:



As the ESV translates Paul, Paul explains the Old Testament story as one that “may be interpreted allegorically.”¹⁰ Paul’s point is that the Old Testament stories of Sarah, Hagar, and the children they bore to Abraham are stories that can be figuratively interpreted to contrast the Jews living under the law (Hagar and Ishmael) to living in the freedom in Christ (Sarah and Isaac). Paul makes the comparison both in the way the Jews persecute of the church, and in who really receives God’s promises made to Abraham.

1 Corinthians 9:8-10

This passage quotes the same part of the Old Testament that we considered last week when Paul wrote to Timothy (1 Tim. 5:18). In Timothy, as we noted last week, Paul combined a quotation from the Old Testament with one of Jesus. Here, Paul just quotes Deuteronomy 25:4, but he does so with language that seems

¹⁰ The Greek for “allegorically” is *allegoroumena* (αλληγορουμενα). This is the only place the word occurs in the New Testament. Hanson and others question whether we should interpret it as “allegory” in light of Hanson’s concern that an allegory denies any other primary meaning. Citing Hanson, Fung argues the best rendering is the NIV’s “These things may be taken figuratively.” See Fung, Ronald, *The New International Commentary on the New Testament – The Epistle to the Galatians* (Eerdmans 1988) at 206.

to exclude any understanding beyond what Paul renders. The passage reads:

Do I say these things on human authority? Does not the Law say the same? For it is written in the Law of Moses, "You shall not muzzle an ox when it treads out the grain." Is it for oxen that God is concerned? Does he not speak entirely for our sake? It was written for our sake, because the plowman should plow in hope and the thresher thresh in hope of sharing in the crop.

Trying to understand what Paul meant when he wrote, "Does he not speak **entirely** for our sake?" causes some to question whether Paul completely ignored any other purpose or meaning in the passage. In other words, even by Hanson's strict definition, is this Paul allegorizing the Old Testament?

Scholars have argued all sorts of ideas on this passage. Some have argued that Paul was contradicting a literal meaning of the Old Testament text.¹¹ Longenecker and others argue that this is allegory, with a full disregard for the literal meaning of the Old Testament.¹² But all of these approaches seem to have too narrow a view of Paul's approach on such things. Fee does a wonderful job explaining that Paul is writing in a way that we can lose sight of as the Greek becomes English.¹³ Paul is not disregarding the lesson of the Old Testament, but Paul is making clear that God's first and foremost concern is for his people to understand that wages are due the worker, whether Ox or apostle!¹⁴

¹¹ Deissmann calls this an example of Paul's "violence of interpretation" as "unpractical and feeble words" from a man from the city. Deissmann, Adolf, *Paul – A Study in Social and Religious History* (Peter Smith 1972) at 102-103.

¹² Longenecker, Richard, *Paul, Apostle of Liberty* (Harper and Row 1964) at 59-61. Longenecker writes, "Paul leaves the literal and primary sense of the words and insists they were written for a reason not obvious in the passage itself.

¹³ See Fee, Gordon, *The New International Commentary on the New Testament – The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (Eerdmans 1987) at 407-408.

¹⁴ Lenski does well noting, "Few men notice the real reason that God gave this law... This law concerning oxen extends far beyond oxen. It really concerns them only incidentally; this law is chiefly a law concerning us." Lenski, R.C.H., *Commentary on the New Testament – The Interpretations of St. Paul's First and Second Epistles to the Corinthians* (Hendrickson Publishers 1998 printing) at 360.

Many scholars would like to pigeon hole each example of Paul's work as fitting into one mold or another. It never is that simple. It is like taking the child's square peg and forcing it into a round hole. It just does not really fit.

If instead, we look at broader brush strokes, we can find Paul's usage of types, of analogies, even of some definitions of allegories, but we find them within Paul's own style and purposes. This should not surprise us. For while we can find roots of Paul's training and roots of certain rabbinical approaches to Scripture, Paul really viewed everything through the lens of Christ. That was his first and foremost hermeneutic. It was Christ that called him forth into the fullness of faith, and so it was Christ that gave him the understanding of how that fullness of faith gave fullness of understanding to the Old Testament. It gave Paul the freedom to use stories like Sarah and Hagar to teach his points of freedom and persecution. It freed Paul up to find the types and images that God placed in history in anticipation of Christ's work in and for the church. For Paul, Scripture was itself an echo of his own calling, to "Jesus Christ and him crucified" (1 Cor. 2:2).

POINTS FOR HOME

1. *"Who will ascend into heaven?" (that is, to bring Christ down)"* (Rom. 10:6).

God gave the law on the mouths and in the hearts of the Jews. The Jews never went to God to get the law. They never had to stumble around and wonder where it might be. God gave it to them. He ascended from on high and placed it before them. In like manner, God has given his final word in Christ. We never went looking for Christ. He came looking for us! It was Christ who died for his children, long before anyone asked or sought him out. He died once for all, the godly for the ungodly. So, we have Christ near our hearts and mouths. We are without excuse!

2. *"The son of the free woman was born through promise"* (Gal. 4:23).

God promised Christ. From before the beginning of the world, God chose us in Christ to be holy and blameless (Eph. 1:4). His rich grace was lavished on us in Christ. This was the mystery of his will finally revealed at the right time (Eph. 1:8-10). Pause and think about this for a moment. God, who never lies, has promised life through his Son. Not bound by

Jewish ritual law, not bound by a performance standard. A simple eternal promise from God found in the death and resurrection of Christ. How can we who believe this ever live like people of the world?

3. *“Does he not speak entirely for our sake?”* (1 Cor. 9:10).

God found Paul on the road to Damascus, but God had known Paul long before. God took Paul, his training, his upbringing, and the tools he had, and used Paul to bring eternal truth to His church. Think about your life, what you have seen, and what you have done. God is no less able to use you, your training, your upbringing and the tools you have to bring his purposes to fulfillment.