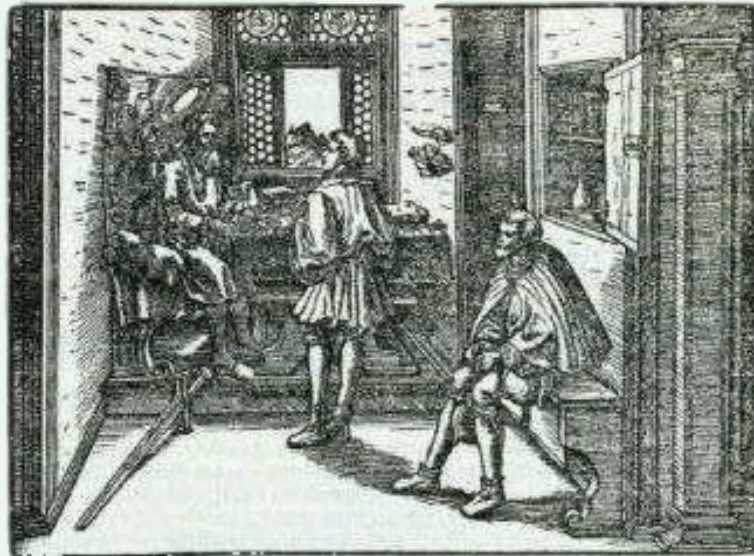


Die Epistel S. Pauli An die Galater.

I.



Paulus ein Apostel Nicht

von Menschen; auch nicht durch Menschen; Sondern durch
Ihesum Christ und Gott den Vater / Derz auffer-
wecket hat von den Todten Und alle Brüder die bey
mir sind.

Dies Gemeinen Galatia.

Alle / alle die
nicht abtun
der
guten.

Made sey mit euch / und st. etc. von Gott dem
Vater. und unserm Herrn Ihesu Christ / Der sich selbst für Vns
gegeben hat. Das Vns errettet von dieser gegenwertigen argen Welt / Nach dem
willen Gottes / und unser Vaters / welchem sey Ehre von ewigkeit zu ewig-
keit / Amen.

Ich wundere / Das euch so leicht abwendet / laßet von dem der euch
beruffen hat die gnade Christi auff andes Euangelium So
doch kein anders ist / In das erliche sind / auch verurtheilt und wol-
len des Euangelium Christi verkeren. Aber auch wir oder ein Engel vom
Hemel euch würde Euangelium predigen anders denn das wir euch gepredigt
haben / Der sey verflucht. Die wir jetz gesagt haben / sagen wir auch aber
mal / jemand euch Euangelium prediget anders denn das empfangen
habt / Der verflucht. Prediget er denn jetz Menschen oder Gott dienst?
Oder gedene? Menschen gefellig zu sein? Wenn ich den Menschen noch ge-
fellig were / So were ich Christus Knecht nicht

thue auch aber kund / lieben Brüder / das das Euangelium das von
mir geprediget ist / nicht menschlich ist / Denn ich hab es von keinem Men-
schen empfangen / noch gelernt / Sondern durch die offenbarung Ihesu
Christi.

Preface & Introduction

LUTHER'S PREFACE

I myself can hardly believe I was as verbose when I lectured on St. Paul's Epistle to the Galatians, as this volume indicates. But since I recognize as mine all the thoughts which the brethren have taken such pains to set down in it, I am forced to admit that I said as much and perhaps even more. For the one doctrine which I have supremely at heart, is that of faith in Christ, from whom, through whom and unto whom all my theological thinking flows back and forth day and night. Not that I find I have grasped anything of a wisdom so high, so broad and so profound, beyond a few meager rudiments and fragments; and I am ashamed that my poor, uninspired comments on so great an Apostle and chosen instrument of God should be published. Yet I am compelled to forget my shame and be quite shameless in view of the horrible profanation and abomination which have always raged in the Church of God, and still rage to-day, against this, one solid rock which we call the doctrine of justification. I mean the doctrine that we are redeemed from sin, death and the devil, and made partakers of eternal life, not by ourselves (and certainly not by our works, which are less than ourselves), but by the help of another, the only-begotten Son of God, Jesus Christ.

This rock was shaken by Satan in Paradise, when he persuaded our first parents that they might by their own wisdom and power become like God, abandoning faith in God, who had given them life and promised its continuance. Shortly afterwards, that liar and murderer (always true to himself) incited a brother to murder his brother, for no other reason than that the latter, a godly man, had offered by faith a more excellent sacrifice, while he himself, being ungodly, had offered his own works without faith and had not pleased God. After this there followed a ceaseless and intolerable persecution of this same faith by Satan through the sons of Cain, until God was compelled to purge the world and defend Noah, the preacher of righteousness, by means of the Flood. Nevertheless, Satan continued his work in Ham, the third son of Noah, and in others too many to mention. Thereafter the whole world acted like a madman against this faith, inventing innumerable idols and religions with which everyone (as St. Paul says) went his own way, hoping to placate a God or goddess, gods or goddesses, by his own works; that is, hoping without the external [alieno] aid of Christ and by his own works to redeem himself from evils and sins. All this is sufficiently evidenced by the doings and writings of all nations.

But these are nothing in comparison with that people of God, Israel, or the Synagogue, who were blessed beyond all others, not only with the sure promise given to the Fathers and with the Law given by God through angels, but also with the constant testimony of the words, miracles and examples of the prophets. Yet even among them, Satan (i.e. the fury of self-righteousness) had such success that after killing all the prophets they killed the very Son of God himself, their promised Messiah; and all for the same reason, namely, that they taught that we men are received into the favor of God by the grace of God, not by our own righteousness. This is the sum of the doctrine of the devil and the world from the

beginning: 'We will not appear to do evil, but whatever we do, God must approve of it and all his prophets must agree. If they do not, let them die. Let Abel perish and Cain live. Let this be our law.' And so it is.

In the Church of the Gentiles, however, things have been and are even worse, so that the madness of the Synagogue may well seem mere child's play in comparison. For the Jews, as St. Paul says, did not know their Messiah; otherwise they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. But the Church of the Gentiles has accepted Christ and confesses him to be the Son of God, who has been made our righteousness; and this it publicly sings, reads and teaches. Yet despite this confession, those who claim to be the Church kill, persecute and rage against those who believe and teach by word and deed nothing else but that Christ is precisely what they themselves are compelled (though insincerely) to confess him to be. For they are in power to-day under the name of Christ; but if they could keep their power without the name of Christ, they would openly declare him to be what in their hearts they think him. They have a far lower opinion of him than the Jews, who at least take him for a thola, a thief who deserved his crucifixion, whereas our people regard him as a fable, like some invented God of the heathen, as can be seen at Rome in the Papal Curia and almost everywhere in Italy.

Since, therefore, Christ is made a mockery among his Christians (for so they wish to be called), and Cain kills Abel continually and the abomination of Satan now reigns supreme, it is necessary to pay the very closest heed to this doctrine, and to oppose Satan with it, whether we are eloquent or not, learned or not. For if all men kept silence, this rock ought to be proclaimed by tile very rocks and stones themselves. Hence I am willing to do my duty and let this extremely verbose Commentary be published in order to stir up my brethren in Christ against the wiles and malice of Satan, who in these last days has become so infuriated at the recovery of the sound knowledge of Christ, that whereas it has hitherto seemed as if men were possessed by demons and raving mad, it now seems as if the demons themselves are possessed by worse demons and raving with a more than demonic madness – which strongly suggests that the Enemy of truth and life feels the Day of Judgment to be imminent; a dreadful day of destruction for him, but a lovely day of redemption and the end of his tyranny for us.

For he has reason to be alarmed, when all his members and his powers are so assailed, just as a thief or adulterer is alarmed when the dawn breaks upon him and he is caught in his act.

For, leaving aside the abominations of the Pope, whoever heard of such an outbreak of monsters as we see to-day in the Anabaptists alone? Truly, in them Satan is stirring up his own everywhere with frightful commotions, as if he were intent on breathing out the last blast of his kingdom, and were seeking all of a sudden, not only to subvert the whole world with seditions, but also to swallow up

completely Christ and his Church through innumerable sects. He does not vent such rage on other kinds of life or thought, like those of adulterers, thieves, murderers, perjurers, the ungodly, the sacrilegious, the unbelieving. On the contrary, he keeps them in peace in his court, pampering and indulging them in everything. Just as in the earliest days of the Church he not only tolerated but splendidly supported all the idolatries and religions of the whole world, while he everywhere harassed the Church and religion of Christ, so to-day he has no other concern than the one that is always peculiarly his own, to persecute Christ (who is, our righteousness without any works of ours) as it is written: 'Thou shalt bruise his heel.' But these thoughts of mine on this Epistle are being published not so much against these people as for our people, who will either thank me for my pains or pardon my weakness and temerity. I have certainly no wish that the impious should approve of them, but rather that they and their God should be irritated by them; for I produced them (with much toil) only for such as those to whom St. Paul himself wrote his Epistle – the troubled, afflicted and tempted (who alone understand these things), wretched Galatians in the faith. Those who are not such may listen to the Papists, monks, Anabaptists and all the other masters of infinite wisdom and religion, heartily despising what we say and do, without even caring to understand it.

For the Papists and Anabaptists are to-day agreed on this one point against the Church of God (even if their words disguise it), namely, that the work of God depends on the worthiness of the person. According to the Anabaptists, baptism is nothing unless the person is a believer. From this principle (as it is called) it must follow that all the works of God are nothing if man is not good. If baptism, which is a work of God, ceases to be a work of God when man is evil, it follows that the married state, the office of a magistrate, and the station of a servant, which are works of God, are no longer works of God because men are evil. The ungodly have the sun, moon, earth, water, air, and all that is subject to man; yet since they are not godly, it must follow that the sun is not the sun, and moon, earth, water, air, are not what they are. The Anabaptists themselves had bodies and souls before they were re-baptized, but because they were not godly, they had not real bodies and souls. Similarly, their parents were not really married – as they admit – because they were not re-baptized, and therefore the Anabaptists themselves are all illegitimate and their parents were adulterers and fornicators. Yet they inherit their parents' property, although they admit themselves to be illegitimate and without right of inheritance.

Who cannot see here in the Anabaptists, not men possessed by demons, but demons themselves possessed by worse demons? So also the Papists still to this day insist on works and the worthiness of the person, contrary to grace, thus giving strong support (in words at least) to their brethren the Anabaptists. For these foxes are tied together by the tails, even though their heads look in opposite directions. While they outwardly profess to be great enemies, inwardly they think, teach and defend one and the same thing against our one and only Savior Christ, who alone is our righteousness. Let him who can, then, hold fast to

this one article; and let the rest, who make shipwreck, be driven by the wind and waves until they either return to the ship or swim to the shore. But more about the Anabaptists another time, if the Lord Christ wills. Amen. [The foregoing formed the preface to the first edition (1535). In the second edition (1538) and subsequent editions, the following paragraphs were added after 'swim to the shore.'] The sum and end of the complaint is that there is no hope of peace or an end of complaint so long as Christ and Belial do not agree. One generation passes, another comes. If one heresy dies, another springs up, for the devil neither slumbers nor sleeps. I myself – although I am nothing – who have now been in the ministry of Christ for twenty years, can testify that I have been attacked by more than twenty sects, of which some have entirely perished, while others still show signs of life, like parts of dismembered insects.

But Satan, that God of all factious men, daily raises up new sects, and the latest is one which I should least of all have foreseen or expected. I mean those who teach that the Ten Commandments ought to be taken out of the Church, and that men ought not to be put in fear of the Law, but sweetly exhorted by the grace of Christ; that the saying of the prophet Micah might be fulfilled, that no man should reprove another: 'Thou shalt not drop upon us.' As if we did not know, or had never taught, that afflicted and contrite spirits are to be raised up through Christ, but that hard-hearted Pharaohs to whom the grace of God is preached in vain, must be put in fear of the Law. Why, they themselves are compelled to invent revelations of wrath against the wicked and unbelieving – as if the Law were or could be something other than a revelation of Wrath! Such is the blindness and pride of those self-condemned men.

Ministers of the Word, therefore, if they would be counted faithful and prudent on the Day of Christ, ought to be very sure that St. Paul did not speak empty words or prophesy of a thing of nought, when he said: 'There must be heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you. Let the minister of Christ know, I say, that as long as he preaches Christ purely, there will be no lack of perverse persons, even among our own people, who will make it their business to cause trouble in the Church. And he may comfort himself with the thought that there is no peace between Christ and Belial, or between the Seed of the woman and the seed of the Serpent. Indeed, he may rejoice in the trouble he is caused by sects and the constant succession of seditious spirits. For this is our glory, the testimony of our conscience that we are found standing and fighting on the side of the Seed of the woman against the seed of the Serpent. Let him bite our heel and never cease biting; we for our part will not cease to crush his head through Christ, the first to crush it, who is blessed for ever. Amen.

INTRODUCTORY

I HAVE taken in hand, in the name of the Lord, yet once again to expound this Epistle of St. Paul to the Galatians: not because I do desire to teach new things, or such as ye have not heard before, especially since that, by the grace of God, Paul is now thoroughly known unto you: but for that (as I have often forewarned you) this we have to fear as the greatest and nearest danger, lest Satan take from us the pure doctrine of faith, and bring into the Church again the doctrine of works and men's traditions.

Wherefore it is very necessary, that this doctrine be kept in continual practice and public exercise both of reading and hearing. And although it be never so well known, never so exactly learned, yet the devil our adversary, who continually rangeth about seeking to devour us, is not dead; likewise our flesh and old man is yet alive; besides this, all kinds of temptations vex and oppress us on every side. Wherefore this doctrine can never be taught, urged, and repeated enough. If this doctrine be lost, then is also the whole knowledge of truth, life and salvation lost and gone. If this doctrine flourishes, then all good things flourish, religion, the true service of God, the glory of God, the right knowledge of all things and states of life. Because therefore we would be occupied and not idle, we will there begin now where we made an end, according to the saying of the son of Sirak: 'When a man hath done what he can, he must begin again' (Ecclus. 18:6).

THE ARGUMENT OF THE EPISTLE TO THE GALATIANS

First of all it behooveth that we speak of the argument of this Epistle: that is to say, what matter St. Paul here chiefly treateth of. The argument therefore is this.

St. Paul goeth about to establish the doctrine of faith, grace, forgiveness of sins, or Christian righteousness, to the end that we may have a perfect knowledge and difference between Christian righteousness and all other kinds of righteousness. For there be divers sorts of righteousness. There is a political or civil righteousness, which emperors, princes of the world, philosophers and lawyers deal withal. There is also a ceremonial righteousness, which the traditions of men do teach. This righteousness parents and schoolmasters may teach without danger, because they do not attribute unto it any power to satisfy for sin, to placate God, or to deserve grace: but they teach such ceremonies as are only necessary for the correction of manners, and certain observations concerning this life.

Besides these, there is another righteousness called the righteousness of the law, or of the Ten Commandments, which Moses teaches. This do we also teach after the doctrine of faith.

There is yet another righteousness which is above all these: to wit, the righteousness of faith, or Christian righteousness, the which we must diligently discern from the other afore-rehearsed: for they are quite contrary to this righteousness, both because they flow out of the laws of emperors, the traditions of the Pope, and the commandments of God, and also because they consist in our works, and may be wrought of us either by our pure natural strength (as the sophisters term it) or else by the gift of God. For these kinds of righteousness are also of the gift of God, like as other good things are which we do enjoy.

But this most excellent righteousness, of faith I mean (which God through Christ, without works, imputeth unto us), is neither political nor ceremonial, nor the righteousness of God's law, nor consisteth in our works, but is clean contrary: that is to say, a mere passive righteousness, as the other above are active. For in this we work nothing, we render nothing unto God, but only we receive and suffer another to work in us, that is to say, God. Therefore it seemeth good unto me to call this righteousness of faith or Christian righteousness, the passive righteousness.

This is a righteousness hidden in a mystery, which the world doth not know, yea, Christians themselves do not thoroughly understand it, and can hardly take hold of it in their temptations. Therefore it must be diligently taught and continually practiced. And whoso doth not understand or apprehend this righteousness in afflictions and terrors of conscience, must needs be overthrown. For there is no comfort of conscience so firm and so sure, as this passive righteousness is.

But man's weakness and misery is so great, that in the terrors of conscience and danger of death, we behold nothing else but our works, our worthiness and the law: which when it sheweth unto us our sin, by and by our evil life past cometh to remembrance. Then the poor sinner with great anguish of spirit groaneth, and thus thinketh with himself: 'Alas! How desperately have I lived! Would to God I might live longer: then would I amend my life.' Thus man's reason cannot restrain itself from the sight and beholding of this active or working righteousness, that is to say, her own righteousness: nor lift up her eyes to the beholding of the passive or Christian righteousness, but resteth altogether in the active righteousness: so deeply is this evil rooted in us.

On the other side, Satan abusing the infirmity of our nature, doth increase and aggravate these cogitations in us. Then can it not be but that the poor conscience must be more grievously troubled, terrified and confounded.

For it is impossible that the mind of man itself should conceive any comfort, or look up unto grace only, in the feeling and horror of sin, or constantly reject all disputing and reasoning about works. For this is far above man's strength and capacity, yea and above the law of God also.

True it is, that of all things in the world, the law is most excellent: yet is it not able to quiet a troubled conscience, but increaseth terrors, and driveth it to desperation; for by the commandment sin is made exceeding sinful (Romans 7:13) Wherefore the afflicted and troubled conscience hath no remedy against desperation and eternal death, unless it take hold of the promise of grace freely offered in Christ, that is to say, this passive righteousness of faith, or Christian righteousness. Which if it can apprehend, then may it be at quiet and boldly say: I seek not the active or working righteousness, although I know that I ought to have it, and also to fulfill it. But be it so that I had it, and did fulfill it indeed, yet notwithstanding I cannot trust unto it, neither dare I set it against the judgment of God. Thus I abandon myself from all active righteousness, both of mine own and of God's law, and embrace only that passive righteousness, which is the righteousness of grace, mercy and forgiveness of sins. Briefly, [I rest only upon] the righteousness of Christ and of the Holy Ghost, which we do not, but suffer, and have not, but receive; God the Father freely giving it unto us through Jesus Christ.

Like as the earth engendereth not rain, nor is able by her own strength, labor and travail to procure the same, but receiveth it of the mere gift of God from above: so this heavenly righteousness is given us of God without our works or descryings. As much therefore as the earth of itself is able to do in getting and procuring to itself seasonable showers of rain to make it fruitful, even so much are we men able to do by our strength and works in winning this heavenly and eternal righteousness; and therefore we shall never be able to attain unto it, unless God himself by mere imputation and by his unspeakable gift do bestow it upon us. The greatest knowledge, then, and the greatest wisdom of Christians is, not to know the law, to be ignorant of works and of the whole active righteousness, especially when the conscience wrestleth with the judgment of God. Like as on the contrary, amongst those which are not of the number of God's people, the greatest point of wisdom is, to know and earnestly to urge the law, works, and the active righteousness.

But it is a thing very strange and unknown to the world, to teach Christians to learn to be ignorant of the law, and so to live before God, as if there were no law: notwithstanding, except thou be ignorant of the law, and be assuredly persuaded in thine heart that there is now no law nor wrath of God, but altogether grace and mercy for Christ's sake, thou canst not be saved; for by the law cometh the knowledge of sin (Romans 3:20).

Contrariwise, works and the keeping of the law must be so straitly required in the world, as if there were no promise or grace; and that because of the stubborn, proud and hard-hearted, before whose eyes nothing must be set but the law, that they may be terrified and humbled. For the law is given to terrify and kill such, and to exercise the old man; and both the word of grace and of wrath must be rightly divided, according to the Apostle (Timothy 2:25 f.).

Here is then required a wise and faithful disposer of the Word of God, which can so moderate the law, that it may be kept within his bounds. He that teacheth that men are justified before God by the observation of the law, passeth the bounds of the law, and confoundeth these two kinds of righteousness, active and passive, and is but an ill logician, for he doth not rightly divide. Contrariwise, he that setteth forth the law and works to the old man, and the promise of forgiveness of sins and God's mercy to the new man, divideth the Word well. For the flesh or the old man must be coupled with the law and works: the spirit or new man must be joined with the promise of God and his mercy. Wherefore when I see a man that is bruised enough already, oppressed with the law, terrified with sin, and thirsting for comfort, it is time that I should remove out of his sight the law and active righteousness, and that should set before him by the Gospel the Christian and passive righteousness, which excluding Moses with his law, offereth the promise made in Christ, who came for the afflicted and for sinners. Here is man raised up again and conceiveth good hope, neither is he any longer under the law, but under grace (Romans 6:14). How not under the law? According to the new man, to whom the law doth not appertain. For the law hath his bounds unto Christ, as Paul saith afterwards: 'The end of the law is Christ' (Galatians 3:24; Romans 10:4); who being come, Moses ceaseth with his law, circumcision, the sacrifices, the Sabbaths, yea and all the prophets.

This is our divinity, whereby we teach how to put a difference between these two kinds of righteousness, active and passive: to the end that manners and faith, works and grace, policy and religion should not be confounded, or taken the one for the other. Both are necessary, but both must be kept within their bounds: Christian righteousness appertaineth to the new man, and the righteousness of the law appertaineth to the old man, which is born of flesh and blood. Upon this old man, as upon an ass, there must be laid a burden that may press him down, and he must not enjoy the freedom of the Spirit, or grace, except he first put upon him the new man by faith in Christ (which notwithstanding is not fully done in this life); then may he enjoy the kingdom and unspeakable gift of grace.

This I say to the end that no man should think we reject or forbid good works, as the Papists do most falsely slander us, neither understanding what they themselves say, nor what we teach. They know nothing but the righteousness of the law, and yet they will judge of that doctrine which is far above the law, of which it is impossible that the carnal man should be able to judge. Therefore they must needs be offended, for they can see no higher than the law. Whatsoever then is above the law, is to them a great offense.

But we imagine as it were two worlds, the one heavenly and the other earthly. In these we place these two kinds of righteousness, being separate the one far from the other. The righteousness of the law is earthly and hath to do with earthly things, and by it we do good works. But as the earth bringeth not forth fruit except first it be watered and made fruitful from above (for the earth cannot

judge, renew and rule the heaven, but contrariwise the heaven judgeth, reneweth, ruleth and maketh fruitful the earth, that it may do what the Lord hath commanded): even so by the righteousness of the law, in doing many things we do nothing, and in fulfilling of the law we fulfill it not, except first, without any merit or work of ours, we be made righteous by the Christian righteousness, which nothing appertaineth to the righteousness of the law, or to the earthly and active righteousness. But this righteousness is heavenly and passive: which we have not of ourselves, but receive it from heaven: which we work not, but apprehend it by faith; whereby we mount up above all laws and works.

Wherefore like as we have borne (as St. Paul saith) the image of the earthly Adam, so let us bear the image of the heavenly (1 Corinthians 15:49), which is the new man in a new world, where is no law, no sin, no sting of conscience, no death, but perfect joy, righteousness, grace, peace, life, salvation and glory.

Why, do we then nothing? Do we work nothing for the obtaining of this righteousness? I answer: Nothing at all. For the nature of this righteousness is, to do nothing, to hear nothing, to know nothing whatsoever of the law or of works, but to know and to believe this only, that Christ is gone to the Father and is not now seen: that he sitteth in heaven at the right hand of his Father, not as a judge, but made unto us of God, wisdom, righteousness, holiness and redemption: briefly, that he is our high-priest entreating for us, and reigning over us and in us by grace.

Here no sin is perceived, no terror or remorse of conscience felt; for in this heavenly righteousness sin can have no place for there is no law, and where no law is, there can be no transgression (Romans 4:15).

Seeing then that sin hath here no place, there can be no anguish of conscience, no fear, no heaviness. Therefore St. John saith: 'He that is born of God cannot sin' (1 John 3:9). But if there be any fear or grief of conscience, it is a token that this righteousness is withdrawn, that grace is hidden, and that Christ is darkened and out of sight. But where Christ is truly seen indeed, there must needs be full and perfect joy in the Lord, with peace of conscience, which most certainly thus thinketh: Although I am a sinner by the law, as touching the righteousness of the law, yet I despair not, yet I die not, because Christ liveth, who is both my righteousness and my everlasting and heavenly life. In that righteousness and life I have no sin, no sting of conscience, no care of death. I am indeed a sinner as touching this present life and the righteousness thereof, as the child of Adam: where the law accuseth me, death reigneth over me, and at length would devour me. But I have another righteousness and life above this life, which is Christ the Son of God, who knoweth no sin nor death, but is righteousness and life eternal: by whom even this my body, being dead and brought into dust, shall be raised up again and delivered from the bondage of the law and sin, and shall be sanctified together with the spirit.

So both these continue whilst we here live. The flesh is accused, exercised with temptations, oppressed with heaviness and sorrow, bruised by the active righteousness of the law; but the spirit reigneth, rejoiceth and is saved by this passive and Christian righteousness, because it knoweth that it hath a Lord in heaven at the right hand of the Father, who hath abolished the law, sin, death, and hath trodden under his feet all evils, led them captive and triumphed over them in himself (Colossians 2:15).

St. Paul therefore in this Epistle goeth about diligently to instruct us, to comfort us, to hold us in the perfect knowledge of this most Christian and excellent righteousness. For if the article of justification be once lost, then is all true Christian doctrine lost. And as many as are in the world that hold not this doctrine, are either Jews, Turks, Papists or heretics. For between the righteousness of the law and the righteousness of Christ, or between active and passive righteousness, there is no mean. He then that strayeth from this Christian righteousness, must need fall into the active righteousness; that is to say, when he hath lost Christ, he must fall into the confidence of his own works. This we see at this day in the fantastical spirits and authors of sects, which teach nothing, neither can teach anything aright, concerning this righteousness of grace. The words indeed they have taken out of our mouth and writings, and these only do they speak and write. But the thing itself they are not able to deliver and straightly to urge, because they neither do nor can understand it, since they cleave only to the righteousness of the law. Therefore they are and remain exactors of the law, having no power to ascend higher than that active righteousness. And so they remain the same as they were under the Pope, save that they invent new names and new works, and yet notwithstanding the thing remains the same: even as the Turks do other works than the Papists, and the Papists than the Jews, etc. But albeit that some do works more splendid, great, and difficult by far than others, notwithstanding the substance is the same, the quality only is different: that is to say, the works do differ in appearance and name only, and not in very deed, for they are works notwithstanding, and they which do them are and remain, not Christians, but hirelings, whether they be called Jews, Mahometists, Papists, etc.

Therefore do we so earnestly set forth and so often repeat this doctrine of faith or Christian righteousness, that by this means it may be kept in continual exercise, and may be plainly discerned from the active righteousness of the law. (For by this only doctrine the Church is built, and in this it consists.) Otherwise we shall never be able to hold the true divinity, but by and by we shall either become canonists, observers of ceremonies, observers of the law, or Papists, and Christ so darkened that none in the Church shall be either rightly taught or comforted. Wherefore, if we will be teachers and leaders of others, it behooves us to have great care of these matters, and to mark well this distinction between the righteousness of the law and the righteousness of Christ. And this distinction is easy to be uttered in words, but in use and experience it is very hard, although it be never so diligently exercised and practiced; for in the hour of death, or in other

agonies of the conscience, these two sorts of righteousness do encounter more near together than thou would wish or desire.

Where I do admonish you, especially such as shall become instructors and guiders of consciences, and also every one apart, that ye exercise yourselves continually by study, by reading, by meditation of the Word and by prayer, that in the time of temptation ye may be able to instruct and comfort both your own consciences and others, and to bring them from the law to grace, from active and working righteousness to the passive and received righteousness, and, to conclude, from Moses to Christ. For the devil is wont, in affliction and in the conflict of conscience, by the law to make us afraid, and to lay against us the guilt of sin, our wicked life past, the wrath and judgment of God, hell and eternal death, that by this means he may drive us to desperation, make us bond-slaves to himself, and pluck us from Christ. Furthermore, he is wont to set against us those places of the Gospel, wherein Christ himself requires works of us, and with plain words threatens damnation to those who do them not. Now, if here we be not able to judge between these two kinds of righteousness, if we take not by faith hold of Christ sitting at the right hand of God, who maketh intercession unto the Father for us wretched sinners (Hebrews 7:25), then are we under the law and not under grace, and Christ is no more a savior, but a lawgiver. Then can there remain no more salvation, but a certain desperation and everlasting death must need follow.

Let us then diligently learn to judge between these two kinds of righteousness, that we may know how far we ought to obey the law. Now we have said before, that the law in a Christian ought not to pass his bounds, but ought to have dominion only over the flesh, which is in subjection unto it, and remains under the same. When it is thus, the law is kept within his bounds. But if it shall presume to creep into thy conscience, and there seek to reign, see thou play the cunning logician, and make the true division. Give no more to the law than belongeth unto it, but say thou: O law, thou wouldest climb up into the kingdom of my conscience, and there reign and reprove it of sin, and wouldest take from me the joy of my heart, which I have by faith in Christ, and drive me to desperation, that I might be without all hope, and utterly perish. This thou dost besides thine office: keep thyself within thy bounds, and exercise thy power upon the flesh, but touch not my conscience; for I am baptized, and by the Gospel am called to the partaking of righteousness and of everlasting life, to the kingdom of Christ, wherein my conscience is at rest, where no law is, but altogether forgiveness of sins, peace, quietness, joy, health and everlasting life. Trouble me not in these matters, for I will not suffer thee, so intolerable a tyrant and cruel tormentor, to reign in my conscience, for it is the seat and temple of Christ the Son of God, who is the king of righteousness and peace, and my most sweet savior and mediator: he shall keep my conscience joyful and quiet in the sound and pure doctrine of the Gospel, and in the knowledge of this passive and heavenly righteousness.

When I have this righteousness reigning in my heart, I descend from heaven as the rain making fruitful the earth that is to say, I come forth into another kingdom, and I do good works, how and whensoever occasion is offered. If I be a minister of the Word, I preach, I comfort the brokenhearted, I administer the Sacraments. If I be an householder, I govern my house and my family, I bring up my children in the knowledge and fear of God. If I be a magistrate, the charge that is given me from above I diligently execute. If I be a servant, I do my master's business faithfully. To conclude: whosoever he be that is assuredly persuaded that Christ is his righteousness, doth not only cheerfully and gladly work well in his vocation, but also submitteth himself through love to the magistrates and to their laws, yea though they be severe, sharp and cruel, and (if necessity do so require) to all manner of burdens and dangers of this present life, because he knoweth that this is the will of God, and that this obedience pleaseth him.

Thus far as concerning the argument of this Epistle, whereof Paul intreateth, taking occasion of false teachers who had darkened this righteousness of faith among the Galatians, against whom he setteth himself in defending and commending his authority and office.