

SOW TO THE SPIRIT IN FREEDOM

*Christian Giving In Paul's Epistle To The Galatians*

by Kenneth E. Roberson, Sr.

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## SOW TO THE SPIRIT IN FREEDOM

### *Christian Giving In Paul's Epistle To The Galatians*

by Kenneth E. Roberson, Sr.\*

#### *I. Introduction.*

This essay will discuss two main points. The first is that Christians should give to those teaching the Word. Regarding this point, this essay will show from Galatians 6:6, which says, "Let him that is taught in the word communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things[.]" that Christians being taught the Word should give good things to, or share good things with, the person teaching the Word. The essay will also show that such giving is an example of sowing to the Spirit, that is, well doing. Further, the essay will demonstrate that the "good things" can include money.

The second point is that Christians should not give to those teaching the doctrine of the Judaizers. That doctrine taught that Christians were required to keep the law of Moses to be justified before God, and implied that Christians were under obligation to the law of Moses. As to this point, the essay will demonstrate that Gal. 6:6, read in context, suggests that Christians should not give to those who taught the false doctrine of the Judaizers. The essay will then show that Paul suggested that one who gives to the Judaizers "soweth to his flesh" and not to the Spirit. Finally, the essay will demonstrate that Christians' financial independence from the Judaizers is supported by Gal. 6:6-17, Paul's concluding comments in which he emphasized the independence of Christianity from the doctrine of the Judaizers.

The churches of Galatia were in modern-day Turkey, and Paul wrote to them in his epistle to the Galatians. The Galatian epistle was one of the earliest, if not the earliest, of Paul's epistles. It was written to the Galatian churches, in large part as a response to the false teaching of certain persons, commonly referred to as "Judaizers." The Galatian epistle reveals that the Judaizers were falsely teaching the Galatian churches that the gospel required Christians to be circumcised and do works of the law of Moses, i.e., keep the law, in order to be justified before God. The term "Judaizers" is commonly used to refer to the persons promoting this teaching, since their teaching would have made Christianity, in effect, a mere offshoot of Judaism.

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In Paul's epistle to the Galatians, at Gal. 6:6-17,<sup>1</sup> Paul wrote on matters that impact principles of Christian giving. In those verses, Paul said:

“(6) Let him that is taught in the word communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things. (7) Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. (8) For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting. (9) And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not. (10) As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith. (11) Ye see how large a letter I have written unto you with mine own hand. (12) As many as desire to make a fair shew in the flesh, they constrain you to be circumcised; only lest they should suffer persecution for the cross of Christ. (13) For neither they themselves who are circumcised keep the law; but desire to have you circumcised, that they may glory in your flesh. (14) But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world. (15) For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature. (16) And as many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God. (17) From henceforth let no man trouble me: for I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus.”

What was Paul teaching in the above verses?

## II. *Christians Should Give To Those Teaching The Word.*

As we will see, one of the things Paul was teaching at Gal. 6:6-17 was that Christians should give good things, including money, to those who are teaching the Word of God.

### A. *Christians Should “Communicate,” Or Give, To Those Teaching The Word.*

*Paul taught that Christians being taught the Word should give good things to those teaching it.* At verse 6, Paul said, “Let him that is taught in the word *communicate* unto him that teacheth in all good things.” The word “communicate” is a translation of a form of the Greek verb “koinoneo” (Gk.: “κοινωνεω”).<sup>2</sup> “Koinoneo” can be translated to

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<sup>1</sup> Unless otherwise indicated, all Scriptural references are to the King James Version (KJV). References to the New American Standard Bible are indicated by “NASB.”

<sup>2</sup> George V. Wigram and Ralph D. Winter, *The Word Study Concordance* (Wheaton: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., 1972), pp. 426-427.

“share.”<sup>3</sup> It can also mean to “give” someone “a share of” something.<sup>4</sup> It can also be translated, “to give a share to” or to “go shares with.”<sup>5</sup> Accordingly, Paul taught that Christians being taught the Word should *give* good things to, or *share* good things with, the person teaching the Word.

B. *Giving To Those Teaching The Word Exemplifies A Greater Principle: Sowing To The Spirit, That Is, Well Doing.*

*Paul also taught that giving to those teaching the Word exemplifies “sowing to the Spirit.”* At verse 7, Paul said, “whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.” Paul here drew from farming principles: the sower *sows* seed to the ground, and *reaps* from the ground a harvest. Relying on these principles, Paul taught that what a person sows, a person reaps. And, at verse 8, Paul said that a person who “soweth to his flesh” shall, of the flesh, reap corruption, but the person who “soweth to the Spirit” shall, of the Spirit, reap eternal life.

But what does it mean to “soweth to the Spirit”? Paul did not expressly say, and left us to infer the meaning of that phrase. Obviously, the reference to sowing here is metaphorical; Paul did not expect Christians literally to sow grains to the Spirit. To determine how one “soweth to the Spirit,” we must examine the context in which this phrase is found.

“Sowing” involves doing or conduct. At verse 8, Paul taught that one who “soweth to the Spirit” shall *reap* life everlasting. At verse 9, Paul taught that those who persevere in “well doing” would *reap*. Verses 8 and 9 provide evidence that one who “soweth to the Spirit” is one who engages in “well doing.”

Verse 10 provides additional evidence. For verse 10 says, “As we have *therefore* opportunity, let us *do good* unto all men, . . .” Paul thus associates “sowing to the Spirit” with “do[ing] good.”

In sum, for Paul, the Christian “soweth to the Spirit” when the Christian engages in *well doing*.

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<sup>3</sup> George Ricker Berry, *The Interlinear KJV Parallel New Testament In Greek And English* (Reading, Pa.: Handy Book Co., 1897; rpt. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1994), p. 499.

<sup>4</sup> Walter Bauer, *A Greek English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 2nd ed. (William F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich; revised & augmented by F. Wilbur Gingrich and Frederick W. Danker) (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979) (hereafter, BAGD), p. 438.

<sup>5</sup> W. E. Vine, *Expository Dictionary Of New Testament Words* (New Jersey: Revell Company, 1966), I, p. 214.

Paul writes Gal. 6:7-10 immediately after Gal. 6:6. This supplies evidence that a *specific example* of the Christian who “soweth to the Spirit” is the Christian who, in accord with Gal. 6:6, gives good things to the person teaching the Word.

Seed is sown to ground or soil. In Paul’s metaphor, when the Christian “soweth to the Spirit,” the “ground” or soil is the Spirit.

Thus, Gal. 6:6-10 provide evidence that when Paul wrote that the Christian who “soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting,” or that “the one who sows to the Spirit shall *from* the Spirit reap eternal life” (NASB, italics added), Paul was teaching that Christians who engage in *well doing* shall, *from the “soil” of the Spirit*, reap eternal life.<sup>6</sup> And, as we have seen, these verses also provide evidence that giving good things [“communicat[ing]”] to the person teaching the Word is an example of “sowing to the Spirit.”

### C. *The Good Things Can Include Money.*

Paul’s writings provide evidence that one of the “good things” (Gal. 6:6) that a Christian can give is money. Paul counseled Christians to “soweth to the Spirit,” and Gal. 6:6 evidences that giving “good things” to a person teaching the Word is an example of such sowing. However, Paul did not, at Gal. 6:6-17, expressly state what the “good things” of Gal. 6:6 are. Thus, the phrase “good things” can include *any number of things*, including money. Certainly, Gal. 6:6-17 do not expressly *exclude* money from such “good things.”

Moreover, as discussed below, another epistle of Paul’s, his Second Epistle to the Corinthians, provides evidence that one of the “good things” can be money.

Paul’s second missionary journey took him through parts of modern-day Turkey and Greece. One of the churches Paul founded during his second missionary journey was the church in the city of Corinth. (Acts 18:1-18.) In Paul’s day, Corinth was in the Roman province of Achaia in Greece. Like Paul’s second missionary journey, his third missionary journey took him through parts of modern-day Turkey and Greece. The account of Paul’s third missionary journey is found at Acts 18:23-21:3. One of the reasons Paul made his third missionary journey was to strengthen the disciples whom he had converted to Christ during his second missionary journey. (Acts 18:23.)

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<sup>6</sup> This is not, of course, inconsistent with Paul’s teaching that Christians are saved by faith alone. For Paul, “well doing” presupposes that the deeds are based on *faith*, since “whatsoever is not of faith is sin” (1 Cor. 14:23). It is by that faith that the Christian is saved (Acts 16:30-31; Rom. 3:28; Gal. 3:8, 24) and receives eternal life (1 Tim. 1:16). See also, of course, Jn. 3:16.

However, another reason Paul made his third missionary journey was to take up a collection for the needy church in Jerusalem, and one of Paul's destinations during his third missionary journey was, again, Corinth (see Acts 20:2). During Paul's third missionary journey, but before he arrived in Corinth, Paul wrote First Corinthians and Second Corinthians. These epistles evidence Paul's purpose to take up a collection which would minister to the needy saints in Jerusalem. (1 Cor. 16:1-3; 2 Cor. 8:1-7; 9:1-2, 12; [see also Rom. 15:25-26, 30-31, written to the church in Rome after the collection occurred but before it was delivered to Jerusalem].)

In Second Corinthians, Paul discussed the fact that the church in Corinth already had promised to give to the church in Jerusalem. Paul wrote in Second Corinthians that he had sent certain Christians ahead of him to Corinth to ensure that the gift of the Corinthian Christians would be ready before Paul arrived in Corinth during his third missionary journey. And what Paul wrote at 2 Cor. 9:5-6 (NASB), illuminates our discussion of principles of giving. For, in those verses, Paul associated the Corinthian Christians' *gift of money with sowing*. Paul wrote:

“(5) So I thought it necessary to urge the brethren that they would go on ahead to you and arrange beforehand your previously promised bountiful *gift*, so that the same would be ready as a bountiful *gift* and not affected by covetousness. (6) Now this I say, he who *sows* sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who *sows* bountifully will also reap bountifully.”

We have seen that Gal. 6:6-8 evidence that the Christian who *gives good things* to the person teaching the Word exemplifies a Christian who *sows* to the Spirit. And here at 2 Cor. 9:5-6, *sowing* is associated with giving *money* to the Jerusalem church. Thus, 2 Cor. 9:5-6 *permit the inference that money is among the good things which, according to Gal. 6:6, Christians can give to the person teaching the Word*. Therefore, at Gal. 6:6-10, Paul taught that Christians should give “good things” to those teaching the Word, and there is evidence from 2 Cor. 9:5-6 that those “good things” can include money.

### III. *Christians Should Not Give To Those Teaching The Doctrine Of The Judaizers.*

But Gal. 6:6-17, read in context with other verses in the Galatian epistle, suggest that Paul was teaching something else as well. As we will see, these verses, read in context, provide evidence that *Paul was teaching that Christians should not give to anyone who was teaching the doctrine of the Judaizers, a doctrine which included the teaching that Christians were under obligation to the law of Moses*. Three facts provide evidence of this.

A. Gal. 6:6 And Previous Verses Suggest That Christians Should Not “Communicate” To Those Who Taught The False Doctrine Of Judaizers.

First, Gal. 6:6 and previous verses suggest that Christians should not give to those teaching the false doctrine of the Judaizers. When Paul said at Gal. 6:6, “Let him that is taught in the word communicate unto *him* that *teacheth* in all good things,” Paul clearly taught that Christians should give good things to those *persons who teach the Word*. Paul thus focused on, among other things, *persons*, and what those persons were *teaching*. But, as we will see, Gal. 6:6, read in context with *previous* verses, suggests that Paul was also concerned with what *other* persons were *teaching*. That is, these verses suggest that Paul was also concerned with *persons* who were *teaching false* doctrine instead of the Word, i.e., the Judaizers who were teaching a doctrine that Christians were required to keep the law to be justified by God, a doctrine which implied that Christians were under obligation to the law of Moses.

As we have seen, *the Galatian epistle was written to the Galatian churches in large part as a response to the false teaching spreading throughout the Galatian churches that the gospel obligated them to keep the law of Moses to be justified before God*. Paul pointed to a particular group of persons, the Judaizers, who were spreading this poisonous legalism and troubling the church. The anguish they caused Paul is evident throughout the Galatian epistle.

Thus, Paul told the Galatian churches that “there be *some* that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ.” (Gal. 1:7, italics added.) Paul said, “if *any man* preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let *him* be accursed.” (Gal. 1:9; italics added.) Before scolding the Galatian churches for their return to “works of the law” (Gal. 3:2), Paul asked them, “*who* hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth . . . ?” (Gal. 3:1, italics added.) After teaching that neither circumcision nor uncircumcision were relevant (Gal. 5:6), Paul, at Gal. 5:7, wrote, “*who* did hinder you that ye should not obey the truth? (Italics added.) He added, “*he* that troubleth you shall bear *his* judgment, whosoever *he* be.” (Gal. 5:10, italics added.) And after rejecting an apparent claim of others that Paul taught circumcision (Gal. 5:11), Paul, at Gal. 5:12, wrote, “I would *they* were even cut off which trouble you.” (Italics added.) As mentioned previously, the term “Judaizers” is commonly used to refer to these troublemakers.

Therefore, when Paul said at Gal. 6:6, “Let him that is taught in the *word* communicate unto *him* that *teacheth* in all good things,” this verse and previous verses suggest that Paul was teaching that Christians should *not* give to “*him* that *teacheth*” false doctrine *instead* of the Word. And previous verses in the Galatian epistle evidence that the *Judaizers* were on Paul’s mind as *persons* who were teaching false doctrine. But if

so, this suggests that, at Gal. 6:6, read in context with previous verses of the Galatian letter, Paul was teaching that Christians should *not* give to anyone who was teaching the doctrine of the Judaizers that Christians were required to keep the law to be justified by God, a teaching that included the teaching that Christians were under obligation to the law of Moses.

B. *Paul Suggested That One Who Gives To Judaizers “Sowed To His Flesh.”*

Second, Paul suggested that one who gives to the Judaizers “sowed to the flesh.” As we have mentioned, at Gal. 6:8, Paul distinguished between the person who “soweth to Spirit” and the person who “soweth to his flesh.” As we show below, there is evidence that Paul was teaching that a person who gave money to the Judaizers for their teaching was a person who “soweth to his flesh.”

As we have noted, Paul drew from farming principles: the sower sows seed to the ground, and reaps from the ground a harvest. Relying on these principles, Paul taught at verse 8 that a person who “soweth to his flesh” shall, of the flesh, reap corruption.

But what does it mean to say that a person “soweth to his flesh”? Again, Paul did not expressly say. The reference to sowing obviously is metaphorical; again, Paul did not expect a person literally to sow grain to his flesh. Nonetheless, the fact that sowing involves the “doing” of something points to the truth Paul sought to convey by his metaphor. The meaning of the phrase requires examination of its context.

Paul used the word “flesh” 18 times in the Galatian epistle.<sup>7</sup> In the Scriptures generally, Paul can use the word “flesh” to mean simply the physical or material part of the human body (e.g., 1 Cor. 15:39). But other times, Paul used the term “flesh” in a special sense to refer, generally speaking, to *sin-corrupted humanity at enmity with God*. (Rom. 7:18, 8:3, 7; Gal. 5:17.) That is the sense in which Paul used the word “flesh” here at Gal. 6:8. When a person “soweth to his flesh,” he sows to his sin-corrupted humanity which is at enmity with God.

How does one then “soweth to his flesh” in this sense? If, as we have noted, sowing involves *doing* something, i.e., some kind of *work*, it is noteworthy that, in the Galatian epistle, two kinds of “works” are associated with the “flesh” in the special, negative sense of the latter word. Those two kinds of “works” are “works of the flesh,” and “works of the law.”

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<sup>7</sup> Gal. 1:16; 2:16, 20; 3:3; 4:13, 14, 23, 29; 5:13, 16, 17 (twice), 19, 24; 6:8 (twice), 12, 13. Wigram and Winter, p. 681.

As to the “works of the flesh,” Paul warned the Galatian Christians at Gal. 5:19-21:

(19) Now the *works of the flesh* are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, (20) Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, (21) Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.”

(Italics added.)

But, apart from these inherently evil works, Paul also taught that “works of the law,” i.e., works done based on obligation to the law of Moses, were associated with the “flesh.” For example, at Gal. 3:1-3, Paul wrote:

“(1) 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? (2) This only would I learn of you, Received ye the Spirit by the *works of the law*, or by the hearing of faith? (3) Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the *flesh*?”

Here, Paul clearly associated the “hearing of faith” with “the Spirit,” and “*works of the law*” with the “*flesh*.”

Moreover, the verses we are examining in this section are Gal. 6:6-17, and, in these very verses, Paul associates a particular work of the law with “flesh” in the special, negative sense of that word. Thus, at Gal. 6:12, Paul wrote, “As many as desire to make a fair shew in the *flesh*, they constrain you to be *circumcised*[.]” Here Paul taught that the Judaizers required Christians to be circumcised because the Judaizers wanted Christians to make a “fair shew in the flesh.” Paul thereby associated a particular work of the law, i.e., circumcision, with the “flesh.” Again, Paul wrote at Gal. 6:13: “For neither they themselves who are *circumcised* keep the law; but desire to have you *circumcised*, that they may glory in your *flesh*.” Paul here again associates circumcision, a work of the law, with “flesh.” (See also Gal. 5:11-13.)

Thus, when Paul used the phrase “soweth to his flesh” at Gal. 6:8, he used the word “flesh” in its special, negative sense. If sowing involves doing something or works, it is significant that Paul associated works with “flesh” in two contexts. The first context is his discussion of the works of the flesh at Gal. 5:19-21. *The second is when he discussed work(s) of the law at Gal. 3:1-3, 6:12, and 6:13.* Indeed, the connections set forth at Gal.

6:12 and 6:13 between (1) circumcision, which is a *work of the law* and (2) “flesh,” are but a few verses away from the phrase “soweth to his flesh” at Gal. 6:8.

If “works of the law,” i.e., works done based on obligation to the law of Moses, are associated with the “flesh,” then *teaching* that Christians are required to do “works of the law” is associated with the “flesh.” The above provides evidence that a person who “soweth to his flesh” includes a person who gave money to the Judaizers for their teaching that Christians were required to do “works of the law.” Therefore, if Paul was teaching that a person who “soweth to his flesh” included a person who gave money to the Judaizers for their teaching, Paul was teaching that Christians should not give to the Judaizers for their teaching.

### C. Gal. 6:11-17 Support Christians’ Financial Independence From Judaizers.

A third fact provides evidence that Paul was teaching that Christians should not give to anyone who was teaching the doctrine of the Judaizers. That fact is the relationship between, on the one hand, Gal. 6:6-8 (read in the context of previous verses) and, on the other, Gal. 6:11-17.

At Gal. 6:6-8, Paul taught that Christians should give to those who are teaching the Word, Christians should sow to the Spirit, and Christians should not sow to the flesh. Moreover, as we have seen, there is evidence from Gal. 6:6-8, read in context with previous verses, that Paul was teaching that a person who gives money to Judaizers for their teaching was a person who sows to the person’s flesh.

Gal. 6:6-8 and 6:11-17 are interrelated. They are interrelated, in part because, at Gal. 6:6-8, Paul used the phrase “soweth to his *flesh*” and, at Gal. 6:11-17, Paul twice used the term “flesh” in the context of Judaizers and a work of the law (circumcision).

But Gal. 6:6-8 and 6:11-17 are interrelated for another reason. The entire Galatian epistle was, in a sense, Paul’s “Declaration of Independence” concerning his apostolic authority and doctrine concerning the gospel (see esp. Gal. 1:11-2:16; 6:17). As we have mentioned, the epistle was written to the Galatian churches in large part as a response to the false teaching of Judaizers who were distorting Paul’s gospel. Gal. 6:6-8 provide evidence that a person who gives to the Judaizers is a person who “soweth to his flesh.” Gal. 6:6-8 are part of Paul’s great Declaration of Independence, thus, those verses may be viewed as *a declaration of the Galatian churches’ financial independence* from the Judaizers. Moreover, Gal. 6:11-17 support that declaration of financial independence. For in Gal. 6:11-17, Paul, in a fitting conclusion to the Galatian epistle, emphatically berates the Judaizers and their legalism.

We previously have quoted Gal. 6:11-17. At Gal. 6:11, Paul says, “Ye see how large a *letter* I have written unto you with mine own hand.” The Greek word translated “letter” at Gal. 6:11 is “grammasin” (Gk.: “γραμμάσιον”),<sup>8</sup> which is plural in number.<sup>9</sup> Thus, the NASB translates Gal. 6:11, “See with what large *letters* I am writing to you with my own hand.” (Italics added.)

Although all of Paul’s epistles are the inspired Word of God, Paul did not himself manually write each word in his epistles. For example, Paul clearly used an amanuensis, a person who took dictation, to write Paul’s epistle to the Romans. The epistle came from Paul (Rom. 1:1), but he dictated it to an amanuensis named Tertius to do the actual manual writing (Rom. 16:22). Nonetheless, Paul’s practice was to *conclude* his epistles by writing the salutation in his own “hand,” not using an amanuensis. (See 1 Cor. 16:21; Col. 4:18; 2 Th. 3:17.)

This is why Paul wrote at Gal. 6:11, “See with what large letters I am writing to you *with my own hand.*” (NASB; italics added.) By this verse, Paul was signaling that he himself was physically writing the conclusion of the Galatian letter, i.e., Gal. 6:11-17, and that he was using large letters to do so.

Accordingly, F. F. Bruce, a well-known Biblical commentator, wrote concerning Paul and Gal. 6:11, “here [Paul] took the pen in order to write the *concluding* comments, and to write them *in large letters for emphasis*, as likely as not. Some of these comments recapitulate the main emphases of the letter. . . . Paul used unusually large letters here, said Theodore of Mopsuestia, ‘to show that he himself was neither ashamed of what he was saying nor inclined to deny it’ . . . .”<sup>10</sup> Paul’s use of large letters for emphasis to write the conclusion of Galatians 6:11-17 reminds one of John Hancock, who wrote his signature at the conclusion of another Declaration of Independence in letters so large that King George could “read it without his spectacles.”

And, in Gal. 6:11-17, Paul emphasized the independence of Christianity from the doctrine of the Judaizers, including their doctrine that Christians were under obligation to the law of Moses. We see this in Paul’s repeated implied references in these verses to the *Judaizers* and *the law of Moses*. Thus, in these verses, Paul associated the *Judaizers* with the flesh (Gal. 6:12-13), and taught that the *Judaizers* distorted Christianity because they

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<sup>8</sup> Berry, p. 500.

<sup>9</sup> Barbara Friberg and Timothy Friberg, eds. Analytical Greek New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1981), p. 587.

<sup>10</sup> F. F. Bruce, “Commentary On Galatians,” New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1982), p. 268, italics added. Theodore of Mopsuestia was a Syrian Christian bishop and theologian who lived during the 4th and 5th centuries A.D.

were afraid of persecution for Christ's sake and wanted to glory in the flesh of those who were circumcised. Circumcision was a ritual of the *law*, and Paul taught that in Christ Jesus, neither circumcision nor uncircumcision was relevant, but only a new creature. (Gal. 6:15.) The *law of Moses* was delivered to the natural Israelites, but Paul taught that the *Galatian churches* (which were comprised of Jewish and Gentile Christians) were the *Israel of God*. (Gal. 6:17.) Paul taught that circumcision, a single mark in the flesh required by the *law*, was irrelevant, that Paul bore multiple marks in his body as a result of his being persecuted for Christ, and that Paul would not be troubled by *Judaizers*. (Gal. 6:17.)

Therefore, if, at Gal. 6:6-8, Paul declared to the Galatian churches their *financial* independence from Judaizers, Paul, at Gal. 6:11-17, underscores both this point, and the message of the Galatian epistle as a whole, by condemning the doctrine of the Judaizers, a doctrine which included the teaching that Christians were under obligation to the law of Moses.

#### IV. *Concluding Observations.*

As the above discussion demonstrates, Gal. 6:6-17, read in context, illuminate our discussion of principles of Christian giving in at least two ways. First, in those verses, Paul taught that Christians should give good things to those who are teaching the Word of God, and there is evidence that those good things included money. Second, those verses provide evidence that Paul was teaching that Christians should not give to anyone who was teaching the doctrine of the Judaizers, a doctrine which taught that Christians were justified by works of the law and implied that Christians were under obligation to the law of Moses.

Some final observations are appropriate. The Judaizers taught that Christians had to be circumcised under the law of Moses to be justified before God (see Gal. 5:2-12) which implied that Christians were subject to the obligations of the law of Moses. Many Christian churches today correctly recognize that Christians are not required to keep the law of Moses pertaining to circumcision, and are not required to keep the law to be justified before God. To that extent, such churches commendably reject the teaching of the Judaizers.

Nonetheless, many Christian churches today, including those which correctly reject the teaching of the Judaizers concerning circumcision and justification, nonetheless embrace the error of the Judaizers to the extent such Christian churches teach that Christians are subject to the obligations of the law of Moses. And Christian churches that teach that Christians are required to tithe pursuant to Malachi 3:8-12 are, to that extent, teaching that Christians are subject to the obligations of the law of Moses.

Churches that reject the Judaizers' teachings concerning circumcision and justification cannot accurately be characterized as equivalent to the Judaizers with whom Paul contended. However, to the extent such churches rely on obligations of the law of Moses to teach that Scripture requires Christian tithing, such churches err in at least three ways. First, such churches rely upon some of the very obligations of the law which were embraced by the Judaizers. Second, such churches teach obligation to *part* of the law, a teaching which *risks* the twin heresies of teaching obligation to the *whole* law, and *justification* by law. (Gal. 5:2-4.) Finally, such churches rely upon obligations to the law from which Paul, in perhaps his earliest epistle, and in Gal. 6:6-17 in particular, declared Christians financially and doctrinally free.