

¹Lecture on Galatians for The Presbytery of Southwest Florida

David B. McWilliams

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Introduction:

- Thanks for your interest
- It is a pleasant surprise – I have been writing for most of my ministry
- This is the first thing of this sort that I have published
- 27 newly converted Muslims have used it and are now teaching others from it; I have heard from a theological student in South America that had an interest in acquiring it and of others that have benefited. This thrills my heart since my goal was to serve the Lord in the spread of the good news of the justifying righteousness of Christ.
- Wrote for the preacher and serious Bible student; there are technical issues about which I try to write with clarity.

I. Backdrop For Writing The Commentary

- A. My own intense interest in Paul and Pauline studies
- B. My concern to understand grace.
- C. My chief concern: preaching – high view of preaching
- D. The prevalence of the “new perspective on Paul”

II. Methodology and Approach

- A. Lucid Brevity – but density on the page. Much said in a little space.
- B. Translation, Summary, Comment – to be read through
- C. Introduction: setting, clear presentation of South Galatian origin and early date
- D. Sustained emphasis on justifying righteousness and eschatology
- E. Relationship of Paul’s defense of the gospel and his own apostleship and how they relate (When Paul mentions his apostleship his emphasis is not so much to defend his apostleship as it is to stress that his gospel is not from man).

III. Some Interesting Issues

- A. Translation questions; examples:
- B. Interpretative issues:
 - 1. Adoption in Gal. 4:1-7 (ancient world, Greek, Roman, local, Old Testament background) (152-157)
 - 2. Elementary principles in Gal. 4:1-7 (146-149; 152)
 - 3. Covenant in Gal. 3:15-25 (123-125)
 - 4. “Allegory” in Gal. 4:21, ff. (177-178)
 - 5. “Flesh” Gal. 5:16, ff. (199-201)
- C. Use of Sir William Ramsay (my sources researched comprise 5 pages of very small print in the back of the book)

IV. Wright On Justification (sub theme with which I deal in the book, always in the backdrop)

(At certain points I will reflect the PCA’s study paper on the New Perspective)

¹ These are notes only, uncorrected, for my use only in delivering the lecture.

- A. Holds that the Reformation's view on justification needs correction and revision
- B. Contrast: The Westminster Standards to which we subscribe.
- C. Wright: Wright reads the forensic (courtroom) language in Paul as corporate. He argues that the Jews viewed the coming vindication of Israel as occurring at the end of the age but Israel's expectation is overturned by the coming of Jesus who showed God to be "righteous" in his resurrection – righteous, meaning faithful to his promises. God has established a covenant people and justification is seen to mean membership in the covenant community. Justification, Wright insists, is not about salvation- personal forgiveness, acquittal, and acceptance - but about membership in the church, not about soteriology but about ecclesiology.
- D. Wright thinks that we have misread Galatians; that Paul is concerned with membership in the covenant community and not with how people get saved. He says: "Justification is not about 'how people get saved' but 'how I am declared to be a member of God's people'" (*Paul*, 122; *What Saint Paul Really Said*, 119). The crucial point is that there is no place in NTW for the imputation of Christ's righteousness. "If we use the language of the law court, it makes no sense whatever to say that the judge imputes, imparts, bequeaths, conveys or otherwise transfers his righteousness to either the plaintiff or the defendant. Righteousness is not an object, or substance or gas which can be passed around the courtroom" (*What Saint Paul Really Said*, 98, 99, 129, 131). Wright says that Paul does not mean to suggest that Jesus obedience was meritorious, earning 'righteousness' for others (*Romans*, 467). So the idea of "gracious transfer" (what we call the 'great exchange') is not found in the biblical texts according to NTW. Wright says Romans 4:3-4 ("For what saith the Scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness. Now to him that worketh not is the reward not reckoned of grace but of debt") refers to membership in the community and does not represent the "imputation" of Christ's righteousness to the ungodly (*Romans*, 491, 492; 501). Many of the leading proponents of the FV agree with NTW.
- E. One additional point: NTW believes that the works of believers contribute to his acquittal at the last day; not as evidences of grace, but actual essential contributions to acquittal. (cf. *Romans*, 438-439). (Compare my commentary on Gal. 5:5, page 188).
- F. To Summarize:
 1. NTW denies the imputation of the righteousness of Christ
 2. NTW does not think that justification is primarily about the forgiveness of sins but membership in the community of believers
 3. NTW confuses ecclesiology with soteriology; that is, he puts membership in the church in the place of justification and fails to see that ecclesiology is the fruit of justification not its root.
 4. NTW believes that the works of believers contribute to our acquittal at the last day. NTW: "Present justification declares, on the basis of faith, what future

justification will affirm publically...on the basis of the entire life” (*What Saint Paul Really Said*, 129). In the Presbytery examination committee we have been asking this question among others (in view of the error of NTW and the Federal Vision): “Is this a correct/incorrect view of justification: At the end the books will be opened and believers will be justified on the basis of their works – works that are produced by the Holy Spirit and done out of the believer’s union with Christ.” If someone holds that this is a correct view I for one will have nothing to do with ordaining him. Another question: “Is ‘righteousness of God’ in Paul always a reference to God’s ‘Covenant Faithfulness’ or does it relate to our status before God?” If one denies that this relates to our status before God he should not be ordained. God’s people must seek to live holy lives but must ever be warned against seeking peace of conscience in a holy life.

- G. To put it plainly, our hymns such as *Jesus Thy Blood and Righteousness* or *Fountain of Never Ceasing Grace*, or *Thy Works, Not Mine, O Christ*, must be put in the garbage pail if NTW is correct and so must the preaching of the Reformers and the leaders of the Reformed churches through the centuries – along with the Confessions, e.g., Belgic, H.C., Canons of Dordt, Westminster documents. These are all wrong if Wright is right.

V. Paul on Justification

- A. Justification is an act of God that does not change us morally but does change the sinner’s relation to God’s law. Romans 5:17, 18: “For if by one man’s offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ. Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life.”
- B. No one can be justified by God on the basis of his own personal righteousness. Romans 4:5 - God justifies the ungodly.
- C. The righteousness of Christ is the sole ground of a sinner’s justification before God. 2 Cor. 5:21. Romans 5:19: “For as by one’s man’s disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.” Galatians 3: 13: “Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us...” Philippians 3:9 “not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith.”
- D. The sole instrument of justification is faith: Romans 4:6 explicitly says that God imputes righteousness without works and Galatians 2:16: “Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.” (Through faith; not “on account of faith” – not the ground but the

instrument; Paul never says *dia pistin* ‘because of, on account of faith; and, faith is the antithesis of ‘by works of the law’ ... the ground of justification is completely in Christ and His work).

- E. Judicial righteousness is imputed. *Logizomai* is Pauline language, e.g., Romans 4:3 against the backdrop of Gen. 15:6, repeated in Gal. 3. It is clearly the idea of Romans 5. Righteousness is alien and forensic. Romans 4:5 God justifies the ungodly; 4:6 God credits righteousness apart from works; D. A. Carson: “In other words, ‘justifies’ is parallel to ‘credits righteousness’; or, to put the matter in nominal terms, justification is parallel to the imputation of righteousness.”
- F. You see then, that justification is indeed the standing or falling doctrine of the church, indeed the standing or falling doctrine of the soul. There can be no compromise on justification; it is the core of the gospel message. The view of the New Perspective on Paul held by many proponents of the Federal Vision cuts the heart right out of the gospel. I could fellowship with the Baptist minister down the road who preaches justification by grace alone through faith alone through the work of Christ alone despite our differences; but, I cannot have ministerial fellowship with a minister who calls himself Reformed and Presbyterian who holds to or tolerates the New Perspective viewpoint on justification.
- G. Paul defines the gospel in terms of justification, the work of Christ, and makes plain that new covenant ministry is ministry of righteousness as over against condemnation. In other words, Paul puts justification at the core of new covenant ministry. Romans 5:16 *And the free gift is not like the result of that one man’s sin. For the judgment following many trespasses brought justification.* 2 Cor. 3:9 *For if there was glory in the ministry of condemnation, the ministry of righteousness must exceed it in glory.* You see the significance: righteousness must answer to condemnation, it is forensic. Moreover, Paul defines New Covenant ministry in this passage as preaching forensic righteousness! About this, in the teaching ministry of the church, there can be no dialogue; only faithful proclamation of justification by grace through faith. We do nothing to be accepted by God; Christ has done it all.

Now, let’s turn a couple of crucial passages on Paul and justification, a test case if you will of what Paul taught as over against what NTW holds.

VI. Test Case: Gal. 2:11-21 (Read portions of my chapter) (Read v. 16)

- A. Rehearse the setting of the passage.
- B. Paul says the “truth of the gospel” is his chief concern (2:14) We know what that means for Paul. He defines for us the central issues in the gospel in I Cor. 15:3, 4. N. T. Wright, however, finds the starting point for interpreting this passage in the question, “What does it mean to be a member of God’s people?” He interprets Paul’s very first direct reference to justification (v.16) to mean “*the way in which God’s people have been redefined.*” **Righteousness** (v. 21), therefore, according

to Wright, means “*one’s status as a member of God’s people*. It means “covenant status” or “covenant membership”. Paul is denying that this covenant status is defined by Torah – which it would still be if Peter and the others had their way. He is denying that Christians should separate for meals, with the Jews at one table and the uncircumcised Gentiles at the other. The doctrine of justification by faith was born into the world, says Wright, as the key doctrine underlying the *unity* of God’s renewed people.” Wright thinks “justification” in Paul is “not a statement about how someone becomes a Christian” but is “a statement about *who belongs to the people of God, and how you can tell that in the present.*” Accordingly, the point about “works of Torah . . . is not about the works some might think you have to perform in order to *become* a member of God’s people, but the works you have to perform to *demonstrate that you are* a member of God’s people.” Wright’s misunderstanding of Paul fails to comprehend that Paul’s entire concern up to this point has been and continues to be that the gospel is not according to man (1:1; 1:11)! Paul’s concern is with the **truth of the gospel** (2:14). Wright substitutes ecclesiology for soteriology by failing to see that the gospel is the issue and that ecclesiology is epiphenomenal. In other words, Wright makes an important result of the gospel, namely the unity of God’s people both Jew and Gentile, into the gospel itself and, in the process, loses the gospel.

- C. However, for Paul the language of justification refers to a forensic act and is essentially related to man’s salvation from sin. Paul defines justification as over against condemnation. Romans 5:16 *Again, the gift of God is not like the result of the one man’s sin: the judgment followed one sin and brought condemnation, but the gift followed many trespasses and brought justification.* 2 Cor. 3:9: *If the ministry that condemns men is glorious, how much more glorious is the ministry that brings righteousness!* In Romans 3 the *righteousness of God, apart from the law* comes through the propitiatory sacrifice of Christ and *is credited to (the believer) as righteousness* (Rom. 4:3). That is why Paul cites Psalm 32:1, 2 in the context of Romans 4 – *Blessed are they whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man whose sin the Lord will never count against him.* “Law brings wrath” (Rom. 4:15), but justification answers to that wrath by the imputation of righteousness, a righteousness that Paul pointedly affirms “comes from God and is by faith” (Philippians 3:9). Negatively, justification is “not counting men’s sins against them” (2 Cor. 5:19). If it is correct to range Paul’s epistles to determine his doctrine of justification one thing is apparent: Paul is vitally concerned with how men are saved from their sin!
- D. Focusing on 2:16 we read of “works of law”. The NP sees the “works of law” as boundary markers (circumcision, special days, dietary restrictions) and that our preaching of justification over against the sinner’s merit seeking is a misapplication of Paul. To which I answer:

1. Romans 4:1,2 “For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God” - Abraham’s faith and justification are prior to the giving of the law. Works cannot there mean only circumcision, food laws or special days.
2. Schnelle rightly observes that Paul makes the insufficiency of Torah his point of departure. Paul is not criticizing a certain style of Torah observance but is concerned with a whole orientation of life (not just observance of circumcision, or special days). This is indicated in 2:16 by ek (out of, from) and dia (through, by means of) – that is, understanding ones’ relationship to God to be out of one’s own act rather than through faith in Christ.
3. Paul says in Gal 5:3: *I testify again to every man who accepts circumcision that he is obligated to keep the whole law.* He is not simply referencing boundary markers.
4. Bultmann (Theology of NT, I. 283) responds to Mundle: “He maintains that when Paul rejects works, only the works demanded by the Mosaic Law are meant...Against this interpretation must be said...Mundle does not ask himself *why* it is, according to Paul, that ‘works’ do not rightwise. If the reason they do not is that man must not have any boast before God (Rom. 3:27; 4:2), then ‘works *of the Law*’ on which Paul naturally concentrates in this discussion with the Jew, represent works in general, any and all works as works-of-merit.” Then entire section is helpful.
5. So, the Reformers were right to apply Paul’s doctrine of justification to the works righteousness system of Rome and we are right to apply it to the merit systems of our day.
6. An addendum. There is much discussion over whether in 2:16 we should read: “through faith in Jesus Christ” or, “through the faithfulness of Jesus Christ” (a subjective genitive). The later is not likely though it is grammatically possible. “We have believed in Jesus Christ” clearly corresponds to “faith in Jesus Christ.” Paul’s point is that Christ is the object of faith. I have some interesting material footnoted on this in my commentary (Page 85 especially footnote 20).

VII. A Test Case: Galatians 3:10-14 (I read only part assuming that we all remember the larger context)

- A. NP writers tend to see this against the backdrop of the continuous exile theory. According to this theory, the Jews of second temple Judaism, though they had returned from Babylonian captivity, nonetheless considered themselves as still in exile due to foreign domination. In this context the threats and promises of Deut. 27-30 are foundational. It is thought that Galatians 3:10 “for all who rely on the law are under a curse” is Paul’s proclamation that the Jewish nation is under the curse for its disobedience and Gal. 3:13 “Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law” is a promise of restoration. Redemption from the curse of the law means

redemption from exile. I think that this is wrong; it is not consistent with a plain reading of the text and would, in any case, misapply the curses and blessings of Deut. 27-30. The opposite of Deut. 27: 26 must be assumed; that is, that all who are *not* of works of the law are under a curse. This would play into the hands of Paul's opponents in Galatia. We must look elsewhere for an explanation of this passage.

- B. This section in chapter 3 needs to be seen against the backdrop of the epistle's theme. Paul founded the churches and had preached that there is only one way of acceptance with God. In chapter one he expresses his astonishment that they were deserting the gospel. In chapter 3:1 he cries out in exasperation: O foolish Galatians....Moffat *O senseless Galatians!* REB *you stupid Galatians!* Phillips: *O you dear idiots of Galatia.*
- C. Is it not foolish to: exchange the gospel of grace for the bondage of works? To exchange what is free for relentless demands? Is it not foolish to exchange good news from heaven for the bad news of my sin and failure? To exchange the infinite merit of Christ for my infinite demerit?
- D. When Paul says "consider Abraham" in verse 6 he is pointing out that the Galatians are forgetting the gospel by which father Abraham was saved. The Jews saw Abraham as a proto-law keeper. Was Abraham saved by works? No! Paul cites Genesis 15:6 ...*credited*...Abraham believed in Jesus and was accepted on the basis of Christ's merit. Abraham was justified by faith and not by works. Moreover, it was God who justified Abraham and not faith. Faith is not creative but receptive. Faith looks outside – the answer to our need of acceptance with God cannot be found within. As Calvin says, faith is an empty vessel. You are not justified on the basis of the strength of your faith but on the basis of the Christ that faith receives. Abraham's acceptance with God points to the fact that there has only been one way of acceptance with God: Christ, His obedience and blood.
- E. So, Paul will, as a faithful pastor, preach the cross again. There is nothing as basic as the cross, His substitutionary atonement. But, in order to preach the cross Paul must remind them why they need the cross. In verses 10-14 he reviews their plight. And here we emphasize two things: *First*, to rely on the law for acceptance with God is a fatal mistake. V. 10 = condemned. Under its power, rule, sovereignty. To "Abide" in works of law means that lapses and oversights cannot be overlooked. The demand of the law is perfect, inflexible, personal obedience. So, here is Paul's logic: **There are people committed to keeping the law – all things written in it. But, despite their commitment they do not keep "all things written in the law". The unstated, implicit premise is: they do not keep all things in the law because they cannot keep all things in the law.** He anticipates his explicit statement in 5:3: *I testify again to every man who accepts circumcision that he is obligated to keep the whole law.* Circumcision and calendrical observances demand a different view of the matter of how one is saved. So, Paul points to Deut. 27:26 to show that anyone who doesn't perfectly perform the law is condemned by the law. Have you read Machen's comments on the Pharisees? A low view of the law makes a man a legalist in religion; a high

view of the law makes a man a seeker after grace. Only in seeing this will a sinner cry out for grace. If a person doesn't know that he is lost he doesn't know that he needs a Savior! *Second*, about our plight: law and gospel are incompatible ways of relating to God for acceptance. Vv. 11, 12. By faith is contrary to the law with its curse. Faith is by free grace, hence, unconditional. Law is conditional through and through. Faith says "done"; law says "do". Faith says "Jesus paid it all." Law says "you pay it all."

- F. Back up a minute and take in what Paul says about our plight. What does this mean for us? Mtt. 5:21-22; 27-28. Our problem is not just *sins* but *sin*. There is something wrong at the core of who we are. Can you imagine a worse dilemma? The law is held up as a mirror to show us what we are really like. Naked before the all seeing eye of Almighty God. If I stand in my own righteousness I am lost...eternally.
- G. Now, the exposition takes another turn.
- H. In light of these things Paul preaches the cross. We need grace. Where do we find it? Grace finds us! V. 13. A reference to Deut. 21:23 – exposure of a criminal's corpse. When a crime deserved death the criminal was hung in open as one accursed by God. In Numbers 25 the wrath of God is averted during the apostasy of Baal Peor when the chiefs were hanged in the sun before the Lord. In an infinitely greater way this is what Christ has done for us! He took the penalty of my plight. Radical need; radical remedy. v. 13 is so shocking that some commentators try to maneuver around it. One of the most astounding examples of this is Ernest De Witt Burton. To me this is one of the most remarkable moments in the history of Pauline comment, a stellar example of making Paul say exactly the opposite of what he means. How astonishing to read in Burton on this passage: *this is not the judgment of God. To miss this fact is wholly to misunderstand God's attitude towards men, neither is the deliverance from it a judicial act in the sense of release from penalty, but a release from a false conception of God's attitude, viz. from the belief that God actually deals with men on a legalistic basis.* Astonishing. I am reminded how Machen referred to Burton's book, despite its erudition, as a thoroughly Medieval book. But Paul means exactly what he says. Christ bore the sinner's doom. God has never and will never lower His standard of holiness – the law must be perfectly fulfilled and its penalty perfectly paid – the Father sent His Son who willingly bore the wrath of God: the curse bore down on Him in my place! (Cunningham: the righteousness that God's righteousness required Him to require).
- I. 2 Cor. 5:21 – the closest parallel. Vicarious, penal, substitutionary atonement. Great exchange! Luther: 'you be Peter the denier, Paul the persecutor, David that adulterer, that sinner that ate the forbidden fruit, that thief that hung on the cross' – you be *me*. How can this be? Christ's infinite nature gave to His finite sufferings infinite value. So, the cross turns the curse into blessing.
- J. I should mention in passing that NTW finds it necessary to reject the traditional interpretation of 2 Cor. 5:21 as well, I think, in the interests of his theory since

there is no place for the imputation of forensic righteousness in his thinking. How does he read the verse? He paraphrases thus: “The one who knew no sin, God made sin for us... that in the Messiah, we might embody God’s faithfulness, God’s covenant faithfulness. God’s action in reconciling the world to himself.” He sees Paul’s purpose in apostolic ministry reflected in the verse (given the context in which Paul is defending his apostleship), thinks that “righteousness of God” means God’s covenant faithfulness having nothing to do with imputation and that the verb “become” would lend itself to infusion rather than to imputation. Well, Paul is defending his apostolic ministry and apostolic gospel and Paul is saying in verse 21 that this is how we proclaim the gospel and call sinners to be reconciled to God. NTW does not take v. 19 into consideration, that is, that “not counting men’s trespasses against them” is the negative presupposition requiring that God does count the righteousness of Christ to believers. God can reconcile sinners because he because he did not impute their sins to them, but did impute them to Christ. Further, to say that the verb “become” implies infusion is simply not true: We become righteous in the same manner in which Christ became sin – not by infusion but by imputation. I think that NTW’s approach to this text is desperation, it is isogenesis. Despite Wright’s undoubted abilities, I am often unimpressed with him as an exegete.

- K. Now, that’s the basic idea in the passage. And, for the Christian it means everything. We are so often tempted to fall back on the quality of our contrition for our acceptance. Belgic Confession: *Our consciences would be continually vexed if they relied not on the merits of the suffering and death of our Savior. So? If thou my discharge hast procured and freely in my room endured the whole of wrath divine, payment God cannot twice demand, first at my bleeding Surety’s hand, and then again at mine.* I remember reading in the biography of D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones that Mrs. Lloyd-Jones sat under his ministry for two years with no personal consciousness of the forgiveness of sins, no inward joyful communion with God. When MLJ supplied her with reading to help her understand the gospel better she said: *It showed me how wrong was the idea that my sin could be greater than the merit of the blood of Christ. His death was well able to clear all my sin away. There at last I found release and I was so happy.* Calvin: *it is no light evil to quench the brightness of the Gospel, lay a snare for consciences and remove the distinction between the old and the new covenants. (Paul) saw that these errors were also related to an ungodly and destructive opinion on the deserving of righteousness. And this is why he fights so earnestly.*

It was for preaching truths such as these that Paul was accused of antinomianism. No one will accuse NTW or the adherents of the Federal Vision of Antinomianism. Why not? Because they don’t preach sovereign, free grace. For the F.V. everything is conditional: the covenant is conditional, election is conditional, regeneration is reversible, and perseverance depends upon man’s work. This is where it leads. Take for example this quote from Steve Wilkins (The Covenant of God, 193): “Those who ultimately prove to be reprobate may be in covenant with God. They may enjoy for a season the blessings of the covenant, including the forgiveness of sins, adoption, possession of the kingdom, sanctification, etc., and yet apostatize and fall short of the grace of God... The apostate doesn’t forfeit ‘apparent blessings’ that were never his in reality,

but real blessings that were his in covenant with God.” And that is why in my little book I have pressed the sustained emphasis on grace that I believe is there in Paul’s thinking. Law and Gospel are antithetical as ways of acceptance with God.

Conclusion:

Well, that is why I have written this commentary and more importantly, why Paul wrote Galatians. There is so much that I would like to speak about but I thought it important, especially in view of the controversy over justification, to focus here. If you benefit from my little book I would be so grateful to God.

It is this doctrine of justification that should motivate our ministries, brothers. Again, Paul defines new covenant ministry as the ministry of forensic righteousness. J. Gresham Machen: *Paul was not devoted to the doctrine of justification by faith because of the Gentile mission; he was devoted to the Gentile mission because of the doctrine of justification by faith.*

I wonder if we have anything like Paul’s love for the Gospel that would result in an age of tolerance in our proclaiming anathemas after Paul’s pattern – anathemas on false gospelizers out of love for the truth and for our flocks. The Judaizers were not simply misguided about some applications of the gospel. As serious as some misapplications may be, such misapplications are not Paul’s principle concern. His dominant concern is that the Judaizers have willfully perverted the gospel and desired to draw others into that fundamental and fatal error. *Anathema* originally meant something offered to deity but came to mean something given over to God’s wrath and curse. There is a tendency among commentators now to see *anathema* as a reference to excommunication. But, that is not Paul’s meaning. His use of the term in I Cor. 12:3 is helpful: *Therefore I tell you that no one who is speaking by the Spirit of God says “Jesus be cursed” (anathema Iesus).* For Paul, *anathema* refers to the infinitely just curse of the infinitely just God.

And, we must beware of compromise on this great theme in the interest of some sort of unbiblical unity. Robert Trail: “Such men that are for middle ways in points of doctrine have a greater kindness for that extreme to which they go halfway to, than for that which they go halfway from.”

The apostle insists that anyone who alters or modifies the truth of the gospel deserves damnation. Legalistic attachments to the gospel, supplements, so alter its character as to make it no gospel at all. To Paul, denials and modification of justification by grace through faith means that everything is at stake. Therefore, we as Teachers, preachers and elders in Christ’s church need to so understand the gospel and its implications that we may mark when (in Luther’s words) there is “a present danger that the devil may take away from us the pure doctrine of faith and may substitute for it the doctrines of works and of human traditions.” And so, believers should not doubt that “this doctrine can never be discussed and taught enough!”

And that, I think, was reason enough to write another commentary on this grand epistle of the apostle Paul.

Thank you.