

74 – Faith—Not Law—is Supreme

Last week, we began a journey of discovery in the Apostle Paul’s writings in their historical sequence. A few days later, Barbara asked me, “What would be the ‘Cliff’s Notes’ from your study?”

I thought, “That’s a great question,” and I had also been thinking about writing a quick summary of what we learned from looking into the first two chapters of his letter to the Galatians, primarily because I saw some things, after the study was over, that even expanded on what we learned.

So, let’s begin tonight with a quick overview of what Paul delivered to the Galatians, and now to us.

1. Galatians followed on the heels of the council in Jerusalem, during which so-called judaizers – believing, and presumably spirit-filled Jews – Pharisees, in fact – insisted that Christians – non-Jews – must be circumcized to be saved, and furthermore, must also keep the law. Paul and Barnabas, on the other hand, testified as to all that they had heralded and taught (as a result of Paul’s direct revelation of Christ), and about all that God had worked in the Gentiles. Peter reminded everyone that he had also seen that salvation had come, and that God’s spirit was poured out on Gentiles; he spoke against adding a burden on the nations that God had not put on them. James then settled the matter by recommending -- and later writing – a letter to be carried by Paul, Barnabas, and two other disciples from Judea (Silas was one), absolving Christians from the yoke of Judaism.
2. Peter, James, and John, during the same council, consecrated Paul and Barnabas as apostles to the Gentiles – the uncircumcision – for which the holy spirit had already severed them while they were in Antioch, in Acts 13; while they (that is Peter, James, John, and the other apostles in Judea, were consecrated for the circumcision.
 - a. This distinction between apostles to the circumcision and uncircumcision – Jews and non-Jews will prove invaluable when reading, studying, gaining insight, and in applying principles contained in the four gospel accounts and the apostolic writings throughout the New Testament.
3. The council in Jerusalem was necessary because of a great polluting, by judaizing Pharisees, of new believers in Christ who had heard Paul’s unique evangel of grace. Paul was obviously conscious of the powerful impartation that the holy spirit had given these fresh Christians, most of whom were Gentiles and, therefore formerly outside of God; because he “marveled” – Paul was aghast – that they had been so quickly swayed, turned toward any “gospel” other than his.

4. Paul declared that if anyone, including a messenger from heaven,” brought to them ANY other gospel than the one he preached, the person or messenger was to be ANATHEMA -- something devoted to God without hope of being redeemed; therefore a person or thing doomed to destruction – and Paul included himself in this declaration!
5. Paul was adamant that the gospel he preached was the only one with power and authority, and he established that it came from no one – he did not learn it from someone; no one taught it to him; it wasn’t submitted to anyone – but that it came through a revelation of Jesus Christ over an initial period of 3 years, followed by 14 more!
6. Paul concluded the second chapter by writing that if righteousness were to be found or gained through the law, then Christ died for nothing...and Paul would not be found “repudiating” the grace of God.
 - a. Repudiating is one of those incredibly rich Greek words. Remember that Paul writes simply, with the understanding that we know his full meaning. Here’s a great example. With one word, repudiating, Paul says that he will not be found **“having no place for, doing away with, setting aside, disregarding, thwarting the efficacy of, nullifying, making void, frustrating, rejecting, refusing or slighting”** the God’s grace poured out on us through the sacrificial death of God’s only begotten son, Jesus Christ.

Today’s installment in Oswald Chambers’ “My Utmost For His Highest” got me to thinking about the uncompromising words Paul used in his epistle to the Galatian ecclesia. Here’s part of what OC wrote for September 27:

The words of the Lord hurt and offend until there is nothing left to hurt or offend. Jesus Christ has no tenderness whatever toward anything that is ultimately going to ruin a man in the service of God. Our Lord's answers are based not on caprice, but on a knowledge of what is in man. If the Spirit of God brings to your mind a word of the Lord that hurts you, you may be sure that there is something He wants to hurt to death.

Luke 9:59-62

59 Now He said to a different one, "Follow Me!" Yet he said, "Lord, permit me first to come away to entomb my father."

60 Yet He said to him, "Let the dead entomb their own dead. Yet you, coming away, publish the kingdom of God."

- v. 59. This man did not want to disappoint Jesus, nor to hurt his father. We put sensitive loyalty to relatives in place of loyalty to Jesus Christ and Jesus has to take the last place. In a conflict of loyalty, obey Jesus Christ at all costs.

61 Now a different one also said, "I shall be following Thee, Lord! Yet first permit me to take leave of those in my home."

62 Yet Jesus said to him, "No one, putting forth his hand on a plow and looking behind, is fit in the kingdom of God."

V. 61. The one who says - "Yes, Lord, but . . ." is the one who is fiercely ready, but never goes. This man had one or two reservations. The exacting call of Jesus Christ has no margin of good-byes, because good-bye, as it is often used, is pagan, not Christian. When once the call of God comes, begin to go and never stop going.

I'm convinced that Paul was only as uncompromising and vocal as the Lord Himself instructed Him. Jesus, the man, chose 12 disciples, 11 of whom became the first apostles. He educated them while he walked among them on the Earth as a man. Christ, the risen Lord, chose AND educated Saul of Tarsus, who became Paul – a Pharisee, a zealot for Judaism who didn't just persecute Christians, but, as we saw in our last study, he "ravaged" the ecclesia. His conversion was as radical as was his dedication to Judaism. Christ deliberately recruited a zealot. Paul would need every shred of zeal, channeled toward Christ and those He was calling out of the nations, to survive the price Paul would pay for the evangel he received from the Lord Himself.

We begin tonight in Galatians, **Chapter 3:**

1 O foolish Galatians! Who bewitches you, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was graphically crucified?

"bewitch" means literally, "one who kills with his eyes; also to fascinate with evil intent. The "evil eye" is greatly dreaded in the orient. In Paul's time, people in the provinces in Asia, now in the area of modern Turkey, were considered oriental, as compared to the people you and I would consider oriental today. When Barbara and I were on our missionary journey in New England, we met a young man whose family was originally from Sicily. He told us about growing up with the fear of something he called "moloceech," which in Sicilian is "the evil eye." My take on it is that it is akin to Central and South American Voodoo.

In his first sentence of this chapter of his letter to the Galatian ecclesia, Paul puts the very serious charge on the Judaizers, who were among those witnessing Jesus crucifixion and, therefore could not claim ignorance of Who He was. Paul named them here as "evil eye" practitioners; those who "kill with their eyes and fascinate with evil intent."

Let's continue now . . .

Galatians 3:2:

2 This only I want to learn from you: Did you get the spirit by works of law or by hearing of faith? I have just one question for you; did you do something—anything—to receive the spirit, or did you get it by simply hearing of faith?

3 So foolish are you? (what, are you kidding me?) Undertaking (having begun) in spirit, are you now being completed in flesh?

4 So much did you suffer feignedly? Since, surely, it also is feignedly!

Did you endure your own persecutions and suffer without purpose, success or effort?

5 He, then, who is supplying you with the spirit, and operating works of power among you—did you get the spirit by works of law or by the hearing of faith, (here's Paul's question a second time? He's about to drive a point home here by introducing Abraham as the "father of faith")

6 according as Abraham believes God, and it is reckoned to him for righteousness?

7 Know, consequently, that those of faith, these are sons of Abraham.

Commentary: "God's covenant with him was unconditional and included all nations in its scope."

8 Now the scripture, perceiving before that God is justifying the nations by faith, brings before an evangel to Abraham, that In you shall all the nations be blessed.

9 So that those of faith are being blessed together with believing Abraham.

10 For whoever are of works of law are under a curse, for it is written that, Accursed is everyone who is not remaining in all things written in the scroll of the law to do them.

11 Now that in law no one is being justified with God is evident, for the just one by faith shall be living. Habakkuk 2:4

12 Now the law is not of faith, but who does them "shall be living in them."

13 Christ reclaims us from **the curse of the law**, becoming a curse for our sakes, for it is written, Accursed is everyone hanging on a pole,

14 that the blessing of Abraham may be coming to the nations in Christ Jesus, that we may be obtaining **the promise of the spirit through [the] faith.**

So let's see, those of faith are blessed together with Abraham – a pretty thorough blessing I'd say – and those of the law are cursed. Not only that, but the law is powerless to justify anyway – even if it's kept. That wasn't even its purpose, remember. No, the purpose of the law was to call attention to sin – yes to set down rules; that no one could follow completely, by the way, and even if they had, it couldn't save them after all! This is the contrast Paul paints here. OK, so which do you choose, Paul asks here in a subtle way, law or faith?

15 Brethren – up to now, Paul has not addressed the Galatians as Brethren! – (I am saying this as a man), a human covenant likewise having been ratified, no one is repudiating or modifying it. Paul is building a case here . . .

16 Now to Abraham the promises were declared, and to his Seed. He is not saying "And to seeds," as of many, but as of One: And to "your Seed," which is Christ.

Paul establishes here that Christ is the "Seed" that God promised Abraham in Genesis 22:18: "and blessed, in your seed shall be all the nations of the earth, inasmuch as you hearken to my voice."

17 Now this am I saying: a covenant, having been ratified before by God, the law, having come four hundred and thirty years afterward, does not invalidate,

18 so as to nullify the promise. In other words, “just because the law came around 430 years later God’s promise to still stands! For if the enjoyment of the allotment is of law, it is no longer of promise. Yet God has graciously granted it to Abraham through the promise.

Commentary: The sacrifice of Christ made provision for all classes and all contingencies. For those under law He bore its curse so that they may receive the blessing of Abraham. And He bore the sins of those not under law that they, too, may obtain the righteousness of Abraham. So both through faith receive the spirit by which they may exceed the righteous demands of the law. The Abrahamic covenant contained no conditions to invalidate it. It did not depend on obedience to confirm it. It depended solely on God, who swore by Himself that He would carry it out.

19 What, then, is the law? *On behalf of* transgressions was it added,

This is important and easily overlooked: Notice the text reads “on behalf of,” not “because of” as in many other versions” – the law was given to give rise to transgression – that is, sin that was once simply “missing the mark,” became a violation of statute. Recall that apart from law there is no transgression. In other words, there can’t be transgression until there’s a law to violate. Law does not justify but only condemns; and it begs a savior as the only hope of righteousness. Grace alone justifies through faith—Christ’s, not ours!. This was Paul’s exclusive evangel – justification through Jesus Christ’s faith)

until – remember that word – until the Seed should come to Whom He has promised, being prescribed through messengers in the hand of a mediator. **(MOSES)**

Law was added, to call attention to sin and create, literally, transgression **UNTIL** the Seed, Christ, should come. What then? We’re about to see . . . The point here is that law, and thereby transgression and righteousness by works was always intended to be temporary...indeed a poor imitation, a faint type and shadow of what the Father did because of Jesus Christ’s faith.

20 Now there is no Mediator of one. Yet **[the]** God is One. (the God here is the Father, who has no need of an intermediary to deliver His promise, as opposed to requiring Moses as the mediator to deliver His law. He is fully able to fulfill His promise all by Himself.)

21 Is the law, then, against the promises of God? May it not be coming to that! For if a law were given that is able to vivify, really, **[the]** righteousness were out of law.

22 But the scripture locks up **[the]** all together under sin, that the promise out of Jesus Christ’s faith may be given to those who are believing.

23 Now before *the coming of [the] faith* (which refers back to verse 19, “until the Seed should come” – **THE faith is out of THE Seed, so to speak** – we were garrisoned (protected under military force) under law, being locked up together for the faith about to be revealed.

24 So that the law has become our escort *[in]to* Christ, that we may be justified by faith. Boys from affluent Roman families were escorted to and from school by a slave. Christ fulfilled the law, becoming the slave escort for children of Israel who had lived under its terms, and by /His escort come into justification by faith, which

could never be obtained otherwise – i.e. **“I am the way, and the truth and the life. No one is coming to the Father except through Me.”** (John 14:6)

25 Now, at the coming of [the] faith, we are no longer under an escort, (when you think of “THE faith” think “The Seed—The Christ— **the way, and the truth and the life**—the fulfillment of God’s promise to Abraham.” Those who believe are no longer under law and no longer need an escort)

26 for you are all sons of God, through [the] faith in Christ Jesus.

27 For whoever are baptized (cleansed and untied ceremonially) into Christ, put on Christ,

“Whoever are baptized” indicates that not all in Galatia were.” Paul did not make it a requirement, but rather acknowledged those who were by admonishing them, as a result of the act of ceremonial cleansing and uniting with Christ to “put Him on.” Kind of like, if you’ve joined with yourself to him, don’t be stupid anymore, but for His sake, get your stuff together and BE Jesus throughout your life!

28 in Whom there is no Jew nor yet Greek, there is no slave nor yet free, there is no male and female, for you all are one in Christ Jesus.

29 Now if you are Christ’s, consequently you are of Abraham’s seed, enjoyers of the allotment according to the promise.

Why has Paul gone to such lengths to make such an exhaustive case here for faith’s righteousness as opposed to works of law? We’re seeing the extent of the damage resulting from religious interference with what the spirit of God began in the Galatians. It seems to apply just as well to us today, doesn’t it? Christians today still struggle with an emphasis on what they DO, rather than who they ARE in Christ; and so become caught in the snare of winning God’s favor or working out their salvation through DOING, rather than BEING members of the Body of Christ.

Don’t misunderstand, doing good is wonderful. Paul wrote about “*works which are wrought in righteousness which we do,*” in **Titus 3**. Works wrought in righteousness – these are an extension of who we are in Christ. They are a natural, inevitable outflow of the richness of God’s superabounding grace in us through faith, displayed in the transforming activity of the holy spirit in maturing sons and daughters of our God and Father. It is very different from works that are required by some set of rules handed down by someone other than the Spirit of God and the Lord Jesus Christ Who are making their home in us!

Otherwise, we are little more than the product of judaization – legalization – that threatened the realization of Grace through faith in the first century ecclesias, and still threatens Christians today.

Chapter 4

1 Now I am saying, for as much time as the enjoyer of an allotment is a minor, in nothing is he of more consequence than a slave, being master of all,

2 but is under guardians and administrators until the time purposed by the father.

3 Thus we also, when we were minors, were enslaved under the elements of the world.

Israel

4 Now when the full time came, God delegates His Son, come of a woman, come under law,

5 that He should be reclaiming those under law, that we may be getting the place of a son.

6 Now, seeing that you are sons, God delegates the spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying "Abba! Father!"

7 So that you are no longer a slave, but a son. Now if a son, an enjoyer also of an allotment from God, through Christ.

8 But then, indeed, having no perception of God, you were slaves of those who, by nature, are not gods.

9 Yet now, knowing God, yet rather being known by God, how are you turning back again to the infirm and poor elements for which you want to slave again anew?

10 Days are you scrutinizing, and months and seasons and years.

11 I fear for you, lest somehow I have toiled for you feignedly.

12 Become as I, for I am even as you, brethren, I beseech you. In nothing do you injure me.

13 Now you are aware that during an infirmity of the flesh I bring the evangel to you formerly.

14 And your trial, in my flesh, you do not scorn, neither do you loathe it, but as a messenger of God you receive me, as Christ Jesus.

15 Where, then, is your happiness? For I am testifying to you, that, if possible, gouging out your eyes, you would give them to me.

16 So that I have become your enemy by being true to you!

17 They are jealous over you, not ideally, but they want to debar you that you may be jealous over them.

18 Now it is ideal for you to be jealous in the ideal always, and not only in my presence with you.

19 Little children mine, with whom I am travailing again until Christ may be formed in you!

20 Yet I wanted to be present with you just now, and to change my voice, for I am perplexed about you.

21 Tell me, you who want to be under law, are you not hearing the law?

22 For it is written, that Abraham had two sons, one out of the maid and one out of the free woman.

23 But the one, indeed, out of the maid is begotten according to flesh, yet the one out of the free woman through the promise:

24 which is allegorizing, for these women are two covenants; one, indeed, from mount Sinai, generating into slavery, which is Hagar.

25 Yet Hagar is mount Sinai in Arabia; it is in line with the Jerusalem which now is, for she is in slavery with her children.

26 Yet the Jerusalem above is free, who is mother of us all.

27 For it is written, "Be glad, barren one, who art not bringing forth! Burst forth and implore, thou who art not travailing! For many are the children of the desolate, Rather than of her who has the husband."

28 Now you, brethren, as Isaac, are children of promise.

29 But even as then, the one generated according to flesh persecuted the one according to spirit, thus also it is now.

30 But what is the scripture saying? Cast out this maid and her son, for by no means shall the son of the maid be enjoying the allotment with the son of the free woman.

31 Wherefore, brethren, we are not children of the maid, but of the free woman.