

The Fruit of the Spirit

From the Letter to the Galatians

Part 1: The Revolution

When we look back at America's founding fathers, we are often impressed with how much they sacrificed in order to create this "experiment in democracy". Breaking away from the yoke of England was actually dangerous, immortalized in the words usually attributed to Ben Franklin, "If we don't hang together, most assuredly we will all hang separately". And, as you know, many lost their lives. They knew that it was important enough to risk one's life for *political* freedom.

Similarly, the early church fathers also risked their lives in order to get across the message of *spiritual* freedom. They not only risked their lives relative to the state, but also from many in the Jewish community, and even from false brethren. They knew that it was important enough to risk their lives for *spiritual* freedom. Although the Bible teaches salvation through faith without works in the Old Testament, many had distorted its message to one of works righteousness (cf. Gen. 15:6; Hab. 2:4).

It was in this context that the apostle Paul wrote the book of Galatians. This morning, I will begin a two-part message from the book of Galatians, focusing next week on the fruit of the Spirit. But we need to look at the issue Paul was facing to see the need for the book of Galatians. In Acts 15:1-2 we find a group of folks who held some false doctrine whom we typically refer to as Judaizers. They taught a form of works righteousness. Apparently, there were various forms of Judaizers, teaching as we just read, or teaching full-blown works righteousness. In Acts 15, the controversy resulted in Paul and Barnabas meeting with the apostles and elders of the church in Jerusalem. They needed to deal with the issue head on. In 15:10-12, we can see that, after much discussion, Peter summarized the issue and Paul and Barnabas gave a "missionary report". The result was a letter signed on to by the entire leadership, the essence of which we can read in 15:28-29. This was to be read by all the then-new Gentile churches. It became their way to combat works righteousness.

The book of Galatians was actually written *before* this council, as there is no mention of this letter from the Jerusalem Council, the first of many church councils. So, this letter is perhaps the earliest of Paul's letters, written about 48-49 AD. But Paul was dealing with the same issue of works righteousness, because the Judaizers were troubling the Galatians.

Let's look at the book as a whole. It falls into two sections. The first four chapters are more theological. The last two are more applicable. The first four chapters are more doctrinal, while the last two are more practical. But, as we often see, doctrine can be very practical, and practice can be doctrinal.

In the first four chapters, Paul argues that one is *declared righteous* through faith *alone*. In the last two chapters, he argues that one is *set apart* through faith alone. We might call the last two chapters an application of justification, or founded on justification. We call the first doctrine, justification. We call the second doctrine, sanctification. This is extremely important, as many believers are confused on these issues. Personally, I consider the subject matter of this book to be very exciting! We will spend some time defining these terms shortly.

Chapter one and most of chapter two are a long introduction. It is a mini-history of how Paul and the Galatians arrived at this point. He began with defending his apostleship in 1:1-5. He later explained that he received the same gospel as the other apostles, only through direct revelation. In 1:6-10, he used very strong language about how the Galatians listened to a different gospel. He calls out the group spreading a gospel of works righteousness, and in verse nine basically said that they were condemned.

In 1:11 all through the end of chapter two, Paul gave a little of his testimony, of how he flipped 180 degrees from *persecuting* the church and gospel, to becoming a *defender* of the church and gospel. His goal was to demonstrate that the gospel he preached was not from any human agency, but directly from God. After fourteen years, he went to Jerusalem and compared notes with the other apostles, finding that they had all received the *exact same teaching directly from the Holy Spirit*. Paul, who was apparently a very blunt person, had to even take Peter to task, because Peter compromised regarding the Gentiles and fellowship.

He came to the heart of the matter in 2:16-21, where in one verse, sixteen, he expressed justification through faith alone three times in a *positive* manner, and three times in a *negative* manner. And you see this contrast between Law and grace throughout the little book. Then he rebukes the Galatians for listening to these Judaizers, with a brilliant argument in Galatians 3:1-5. Their *initiation* in Christ did not happen by the works of the Law, but by the Holy Spirit through faith. Therefore, their *growth* in Christ would not continue by the works of the Law, but *also* by the Holy Spirit through faith.

In 3:6-9, he used Abraham as a case history, who was declared righteous through faith alone. Further, Paul points out that the Abrahamic covenant promised spiritual blessings to the Gentiles. Then, in 3:10-22, he demonstrated the total depravity of man from Deuteronomy and *faith* righteous from Habakuk (by the way, this verse from Habakuk led to the spiritual birth of Martin Luther and John Wesley).

In 3:23-29, Paul explained the reason for the Mosaic Law, that it was a pedagogue, a tutor or child-conductor, given to lead us to faith out of frustration with not being able to earn favor with God through works righteousness. (In Romans, he had to explain that there wasn't anything wrong with the Law, but that its purpose was never to justify). Paul continued in 4:1-11 by explaining that Christ redeemed them from the Law, so he asked why they would return to the Law and idolatry.

In 4:21-31 he developed a figurative comparison between Sarah and Hagar, one representing freedom through faith in the promise, the other representing bondage according to the old covenant.

Beginning in chapter five (:1-12), Paul confronted the issue of circumcision which we saw in Acts. The Galatians should *not* view this as necessary in addition to faith alone. Then, in :13-15, he clarified that grace doesn't mean license. We will actually focus in on 5:16-26 next week. So, I won't steal my own thunder here.

In chapter six, the rubber meets the road so to speak. He addresses restoration of a sinning brother (:1-5), some principles of giving (:6-10), and he concludes with a final warning against the Judaizers.

So, because so many folks are confused about these issues, let's look at some terms. These days we have Bible teachers that are saying we should no longer use theological terms. Because they can't

understand them and they might be confused. But I would like to push back on that, as I think that we don't give enough credit to the folks in the pew. They are more intelligent than supposed by these folks, as Yogi Berra used to say, "smarter than the average bear". You learn medical terms from your doctor and pharmacist. And you learn automotive terms from your mechanic. Also, I intend to define these, repeatedly over time:

- Law: *nomos* or law is sometimes used in the sense of "principle". It can be used in the sense of the law of man, like a speed limit. It has a narrow usage of commandments even under grace. There are spiritual laws under grace. Nine of the ten commandments are repeated in the New Testament. But for our purposes here, it is used of the Mosaic Law, the 613 commandments handed down by Moses. Paul contrasted life under the Law with the life of the Holy Spirit.
- Flesh: *sarx* or flesh is used of the physical stuff we see when we look at each other. It is also used of that of animals. It is used of nations or mankind. But here in Galatians it is used of sinful man attempting to make himself righteous or what he thinks is righteous through his own efforts.
- To justify: *dikaioo* or to justify means to *declare* righteous. It does not mean to *make* righteous, which some other groups have unfortunately defined the word (Rom. 3:20, 28; 4:5). We won't be *made* righteous until glorification. Another wrong definition, incomplete actually, is, "just as if I never sinned". I appreciate the attempt at rhetoric, but it only gets us halfway. To justify means to *declare* righteous. It describes a legal standing or position of the one who has faith in Christ. The nanosecond that you trusted Christ, you were declared as righteous as God Himself (II Cor. 5:21). Let's say that you get pulled over by the cops and issued a ticket for speeding. And when you go to court, you bring an advocate with you. The advocate argues your case, and you plead guilty as charged. But suppose that the judge does something unheard of in the world of law. He or she says, "I am going to declare you not guilty. I am going to pay your fine. And, in addition, I will give you a million dollars, and it's already in your account." That may sound farfetched, but that is exactly what God did for you in Christ. Not only is our debt erased, but we are, by legal declaration, as righteous as God Himself. It is an alien righteousness to be sure, but ours is imputed or accounted or credited to us.
- To sanctify: we talked about this word on July 7th. But by way of reminder, it is *hagiozo* which means to make holy or set apart. It is part of a family of words that are rendered, to set apart, to make holy, and to sanctify. The noun versions are holy ones, saints, or those set apart. Typically, we talk of our growth in Christ as sanctification, the *present* tense of our salvation. We don't usually struggle with the past tense of salvation, our justification, as God's work, not ours. We also don't struggle with knowing our future tense of salvation, glorification, is God's work, not ours. But for some reason we get it into our heads that it is up to us in the present to bring about our growth in Christ. There is a verse that I think that every believer needs to memorize, Phil. 1:6. You see all three tenses of salvation mentioned here, past, present, and future. Notice that it doesn't say that it is Lance who will complete his salvation. The Lord provides the initiative start-to-finish. Talk about an amazing salvation!
- Faith: *pistis* or *pisteo* is easier for us to understand. It means trust, belief, or confidence. It doesn't just mean mental ascent, like I believe that George Washington was the first president. Chair example. Surgeon example. The Great Linguini.

After demonstrating the truth of justification through faith alone in the first four chapters, he then explains that one is also *sanctified* by faith (3:1-3; cf. Col. 2:6). Our regeneration, or new birth, was the work of the Holy Spirit, and the Christian life is lived in or through or by the Holy Spirit. Our section here in Galatians focuses on that very subject, how to *apply* justification through faith, or sanctification, our present tense of salvation.

The book of Galatians constituted a great push-back against the Judaizers. But we still have Judaizers with us. They might have different names or titles. As a student of church history, I can tell you that Judaizers have always been with the universal church. They have constantly added to faith alone, misleading folks, whether unconsciously or otherwise. I have always said that false teachers usually don't *know* that they are false teachers. They can be extremely sincere. They don't knock on your door and say, "Hi, I'm your local neighborhood false teacher". Typically, they have error relative to the person and work of Christ. The Galatian issue falls into the later, His work. Because if we need to add something to the work of Christ, then His death isn't all sufficient. As we read in Gal. 2:21..., Jn. 19:30.

These days, we might encounter a group that teaches that you must be baptized to be saved. This is remarkably similar to the Judaizers' requirement of circumcision. Though there are also even those who teach that one must be circumcised. Two churches ago, I ran into this, on a CE committee of all things. So, it's still out there, but more often you might encounter someone who adds baptism to faith alone. Now baptism is important. I encourage everyone to submit to believer's baptism. But it *follows* salvation as a symbol of salvation.

The fella on the CE committee who believed in circumcision as a requirement for salvation actually had a medical degree. I referred him to the book of Galatians. But he had been heavily influenced by a cult leader, and was as firmly entrenched as a dog tick. Only the Holy Spirit can open such a mind and heart.

You probably know someone who holds some form of works righteousness. It could be a friend, a neighbor, or a family member. The book of Galatians is a great push-back to works righteousness. But leave the results to the Lord and His timing. Be diligent in praying for this person that the Lord might remove the scales over their eyes, a figure Paul used with the Corinthians.

Communion

Benediction