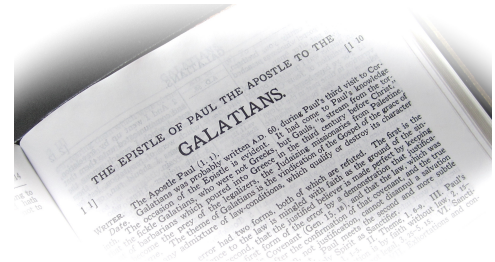


Books of The Bible

A Survey of The Epistle of Galatians

Introduction

It has been observed before that each New Testament epistle gives a particular avenue of truth relative to the Lord. In the broad view, Galatians presents Christ as our Liberator (ch. 2:4; 5:1), and to be such He Himself had to be, without reservation, free from every aspect of sin and its effects. How gloriously He is spoken of by the Psalmist when he wrote, "In thy majesty ride prosperously" (Psa. 45:4). The Lord alone could state without reservation or questioning conscience, "I have overcome the world" (Jn. 16:33). It is by His propitiatory sacrifice and resurrection that the believer is actually now "free from sin" (Rom. 6:18) and the law of "sin and death" (Rom. 8:2). Israel experienced a glorious freedom when they were liberated from the slavery of Egypt, and having seen the enemy dead on the shore, they praised God for His glorious victory (Psa. 98:1), singing of how He "triumphed gloriously" (Ex. 15:1). Yet, the spiritual liberation the Lord has provided for humanity is much greater than a physical deliverance (but it does entail such), but a spiritual deliverance from the "power of darkness" (Col. 1:13), and from the spiritual relationship with Adam which involved condemnation and death (Rom. 5:15-18). It is He who is our Standard Bearer and who causes us to triumph (2 Cor. 2:14).



That which is particularly interesting is that three times in Galatians Paul will speak of "the cross". He speaks of "the offense of the cross" (ch. 5:11); suffering "persecution for the cross of Christ" (ch. 6:12); and a reverse, "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" (ch. 6:14). However, another observation is that Galatians is one of only two New Testament writers who wrote of the Lord and the tree. Paul wrote, "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree" (ch. 3:13) and Peter wrote, "Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree (1 Pet. 2:24). I suggest the distinction being:

- a) When the emphasis is on the Lord and the cross, there is the truths of extreme humiliation (Heb. 12:2; Phil. 2:8). On that cross His position as King of Israel was mocked in His superscription. He was the object of scornful laughter (Psa. 22:7).
- b) When the emphasis is concerning Christ and the tree, the background is contrastive when the Lord is set in contrast to the rebellious son who rebelled against the father, and seemingly after death, was hung on a tree (Deut. 21:18-23). The rebellious son was a stubborn willful individual who rebelled not only against the moral law of Israel, but God's law, therefore God's justice had to be meted out. One can see how this is contrast with the Lord who never was rebellious to the will of God and the Father irrespective of how great the severity of pain or sorrows.

Christ the Liberator

- 1) In Galatians the Lord is presented in a number of different ways.
 - a) He is the sent One from God, who was made of a woman, and under the dispensation of law (ch. 4:4)
 - b) He was the "seed of David" (ch. 3:16)
 - c) "Who gave himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father" (ch. 1:4)
 - d) Was raised from the dead (ch. 1:1)
 - e) And is now glorified (ch. 1:12, coupled with Acts 9:5)
- 2) "Who gave himself"
 - a) In pondering the first three words, "He gave Himself", I realize this is different from, "The Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world" (1 Jn. 4:14). This goes even beyond the Lord offering, presenting Himself to be the Delivering Sacrifice. It is actually He himself who was the Liberating Sacrifice. In these three words there is a world of truths, such as:
 - i) The immeasurable unselfishness of Christ. It was love for the Father and us that caused Him to do this great work. He pleased not Himself, yet for the glory of God and the blessing of humanity, He gave Himself.

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- ii) The unparalleled love of the Lord. Paul reminds us that we love “because” He first loved us. “While we were yet sinners, when we were enemies (Rom. 5:8, 10), guilty before God (Rom. 3:19)”, it was then Christ loved us so much that, “He gave Himself”.
 - iii) The full understanding of that which He was undertaking. Christ was exceedingly aware of that which would be involved in the securing of our deliverance. He was aware of the intensity of the divine hatred of sin and the fierceness of His judgment on those who did so, yet He stepped into my place and “He gave Himself”.
 - iv) Furthermore, He knew the lack of appreciation I would have for the greatness of that deliverance and with what haste I would fall back into sin. Many years ago I got into waters too deep for me. I called out for help and my cousin Ashley jumped in and brought me safely to the shore. I have never forgotten that deliverance. In pondering the uncircumscribable greatness of God’s deliverance secured eternity for me through Christ, the wonder is, “How can I grow casual about it or fail to respond with fullness of gratitude. What a comfort to know that He, knowing my many failings, would do it all over again, “He gave Himself”.
- 3) “For our sins”
- a) To bear the penalty and the executing of God's justice because of our rebelliousness.
 - b) By His death to release us from the power of sin within each of us.
 - c) By His death to break our biological and spiritual relationship, under and with Adam (Rom. 5:12-19).
 - d) However, that which is particularly emphasized is the “deliverance” (ch. 1:4), liberation and freedom (ch. 5:1) offered to humanity.
- 4) “To deliver us”
- a) The word translated deliverance indicates a rescuing, which indicates that those to whom it applies were in great danger and unable to extricate themselves.
 - i) Joseph was rescued out of all his afflictions (Acts 7:10)
 - ii) Israel was rescued from Egypt's house of bondage (Acts 7:34)
 - iii) Peter was rescued from Herod's hand (Acts 12:11)
 - iv) Paul was to be delivered (rescued) out of the hands of the Jews and Gentiles (Acts 23:27; 26:17)
- The greatness of the deliverance or rescuing is magnified because those who are rescued were without merit and interest in being rescued. Furthermore, it was a deliverance or rescuing that could only be accomplished by Him bearing the full penalty for sin. For Christ that meant being bereft of God.
- 5) “This present evil age”
- a) When the Holy Spirit connects the delivering work of Christ on the cross and this present evil age, He is describing our present world in every age and its attitude toward God and Christ. The words to describe man’s attitude to Christ are exceedingly graphic.
 - i) He was “killed” (Mk. 12:8; Acts 3:15)
 - ii) They “slew” Him (Acts 5:30)
 - iii) He was “hanged” on a tree (Acts 5:30)
- The world had no time for Christ, as is evident by the superscription above His head which was written in Greek, Latin, and Hebrew (Lk. 23:38). That which is particularly emphasized here is not the world and its morality, but the world in its corrupt religiousness. The emphasis is on the fact of Christ's offering of himself is all that was needed for salvation. There must never be any attempt or suggestion to have it supplemented by the works of man.

Other Notable Statements:

There are two other notable statements concerning Christ and the believer in Galatians. They are:

- a) “But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother’s womb, and called me by his grace, To reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen” (Gal. 1:15, 16).

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- i) To my mind, this is one of the statements which ought to cause more heart trembling than any other verse of the scriptures. Its message is not to the unsaved, but particularly to the individual who is preaching the gospel. Paul knew that for the gospel to be effective, the risen Christ had to be manifested in every aspect of his life. This is transformation before presentation. To Paul, preaching the gospel was not fulfilling an obligation to a request to take a meeting, much less was it suddenly feeling “exercised” or having to take the meeting because whoever was responsible failed to fulfill their obligations. Too often there are “gospellers” who one would never know by their behavior or speech that they were a Christian. From such, the gospel will be as a tale that is told, and void of spiritual power.
- b) “I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me” (Gal. 2:20). This is transformation through imputation. Christlikeness is the fruit the Lord spoke of when He told of Him being the Vine and we the branches. It is not copying, and by human endeavor, manifesting certain graces. It is “Christ liveth in me”, putting it another way, Godliness is God manifest in flesh, which is the ideal for the Christian life. Let me illustrate: I have bad eyes and once tried to play golf which turned out to be an utter disaster. However, if by some miracle Tiger Woods or some other world class golfer indwell me so that automatically all the art they had learnt through years of experience, the brilliance of eye and hand coordination, etc., was controlling me, I would not have to try to play good golf, it would be an automatic. So if Christ was let to live unhindered in an individual with all the beauty of His character, His resolute faith in God, His unreserved devotion to God, if that life permeated the individual then Christ would be revealed in them, and what a power such would be for God.

**May God grant us good understanding as He, by His Holy Spirit, deigns to guide us into all truth.
John 16:13**

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