

Christ in All The Scriptures

Galatians

Introduction

The problem in Galatia

- 1) Before there can be an appreciation of how the Lord is presented in Galatians, consideration must be given to the heretical teachings that were being held in that church. Those teachings were erroneous because:
 - a) They questioned the all sufficiency of the Lord's sacrificial work, and made their attack from at least two fronts:
 - i) Undermine Paul's authority and qualifications, where did he get it all from and was it a man made message?
 - ii) The insufficiency of the work of Christ to fully save and sanctify, the works of the law had to be kept.
 - b) It boosted human ego in believing that by adhering to the law they assisted the Lord in the provision of salvation and sanctification. They understood grace as a "loophole" by which they could continue in sin (Rom. 6:1). Grace does not allow that for the New Covenant speaks of the law being put into ones heart and mind (Heb. 8:10; 10:16).
- 2) To any right thinking individual the keeping of the law was an impossibility for the law demanded one hundred percent perfection without the slightest flaw, and man under sin could not keep it (Rom. 8:3). Furthermore, it had to be obeyed in love throughout the life of the individual. Add to man's weakness was the fact that the law was powerless to assist in that matter and indeed only made the evidence of sin in the life more clearly manifested. Finally, it put the individual under the curse of a broken law (Acts 15:1, 24). Those who taught these things demonstrated they were not willing to suffer any persecution from their very own people (the Jews) for the sake of the Gospel! Paul wrote, "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 [stake] of Christ" (ch. 6:12).
- 3) They completely misunderstood the purpose of the law which Paul describes as a schoolmaster.

The response from Paul

The problem was to stop the vain talkers and nullify the wrong teaching. This Paul does by:

- a) Presenting the evidence for his teaching and apostleship, as to its source, therefore he:
 - i) Gives his autobiography showing that his apostolic authority and commission came directly from Christ by a special revelation. It was not through any human intermediary, and least of all, through the apostles or other leaders of the Jerusalem church (ch. 1:12-2:14).
 - ii) At no time from his conversion onwards did he preach, practice or permit any deviation from the gospel of free grace, apart from the works of the law. The gospel which he proclaimed to the Galatians at the first is the only way for salvation and sanctification.

The Source of His Apostleship

Paul ascribes His apostleship to both God and Christ (ch. 1:1).

His Presentation of Christ

The Titles and Names of the Lord in Galatians: "Jesus Christ" (ch. 1:1; occurs 6 other times); "Lord Jesus Christ" (ch. 1:3, occurs 3 other times); "Christ" (ch. 1:10; occurs 21 other times); "His Son" (ch. 1:16, occurs 3 other times); "Son of God" (ch. 2:20, one other occurrence); "Christ Jesus" (ch. 3:26, occurs 5 other times).

- a) Of these the greatest truths connected with our Lord in Galatians are:
 - i) His joint equality with God in administration (ch. 1:1; 3)
 - ii) His resurrection (ch. 1:1)

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- iii) His vicarious sacrifice (ch. 1:4)
- iv) His immense love which caused Him to give himself for me (ch. 2:20)
- v) His being made a curse (ch. 3:13)
- vi) His redemptive work (ch. 4:4-5)
- vii) His liberation (ch. 5:1)

Christ Was Made a Curse For Us

- 1) There are five references in the New Testament of our Lord being on “the tree” (Acts 5:30; 10:39; 13:29; Gal. 3:13 and 1 Pet. 2:24). It is only in Galatians that the Holy Spirit makes reference to the Old Testament indicating the solemnity of being hung in a tree. While the other references in the New Testament indicate the hatred of humanity, Galatians forces one to consider the background of the quotation when it was written, “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” (Gal. 3:13), and then in Gal. 3:14 why it was a necessity for the Lord to be made a curse for us.
- 2) The context:
 - a) It is quite easy to understand that this refers to both Jews and Gentiles, but the Gentiles were never under the law, except the law of conscience (Rom. 2:15). Paul is arguing to those who would insist on keeping the law, and has shown that those who are of the “works of the law” are under its curse (Gal. 3:10). However, since he is writing to a Gentile church, while Gentiles were not under the law they broke the moral law of God. Consequently, in its broader sense, it applies to both Jews and Gentiles.
 - b) Or, when our Lord was made a curse, was that only for the Jews and having no relevance to us Gentiles? Of course not. Many today put themselves under law by trying to gain salvation. This then applies to such as the way of salvation.
- 3) There are some statements in the scriptures in which the depth of them is unfathomable and this is one of them. Another is, “He was made sin for us” (2 Cor. 5:21). In such as these we are led into the incomprehensible happenings when our Lord was on the cross in the three hours of darkness. When Moses stood at the burning bush it was holy ground but that which is now considered is thrice holy as we see the background of this reference and consider the punishment for our sins, “and not our’s only, but also for the sins of the whole world” (1 Jn. 2:2) being vented on Him. 2 Corinthians 5:21 declares, “He hath made Him to be sin for us”. Note who the “He” is. It is God. Paraphrasing we could read, “God made Him to be sin for us”. Isaiah 53 prophesies of the attitude of Israel in a future day when they will cry, “But he was wounded, bruised, chastised, bore our iniquities” (Isa. 53:5, 6). These verses have nothing to do with what man did to the Lord, but in human language, declare what God did to Him. Peter will repeatedly remind us of the fact Christ suffered. That which He endured was not just a mental or emotional experience, it went into the very depths of His soul and extreme physical sufferings (1 Pet. 1:11; 2:21; 23; 3:18; 4:1, 5:10).
- 4) When dealing with any aspect of our Lord and His vicarious work, there is no room for error. The Son of God was, of His own volition, in full awareness of the severity of suffering He would endure when the execution of divine justice was in full and righteously executed on Him. He was made as one who was under the curse of all humanity. It is my hearts understanding that such a subject is exceedingly holy ground and on this theme I can think of none better than Charles Spurgeon who said (paraphrase):
 - a) God, the great Lawgiver, when giving the law has appended certain penal consequences to the breaking of it. It is not the curse of the mere law of itself; rather it is a curse from the great Lawgiver. Several observations then come to the fore:
 - i) The law-curse must be supremely just and morally unavoidable. It was not possible that God could find any other method by which:
 1. His holiness and purity can be maintained without a curse. Had there been such it would have been found. When in the Garden praying the Lord said, “O my Father, if it be

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possible let this cup pass from me” (Matt. 26:39) but there was no other way. The sword of divine justice must come upon the Lord in its fulness. There could not be a lessening or minimizing of its severity.

2. The curse of God is never causeless, and it comes with overwhelming power. Sin must be punished, and when by long continuance and impenitence in evil, God is provoked to execute the divine judgment, and He executes it. (One might say, without mercy for there is no longer after death any mercy for the unbeliever). Such a thought is horrific beyond human comprehension when the omnipotent God executes a curse upon a transgressor. How much more frightening and overwhelming it is when God vented on His Beloved Son the execution of the curse for all humanity. None can ever say there was no provision made for me. Unsurpassing love for humanity led God to execute that curse on His beloved Son.
3. To be accursed of God is terror, dismay, sorrow and anguish. Death is involved in it and that second death, which John foresaw in Patmos and described as being cast into a lake of fire (Rev. 20:14). We learn from Scripture that God is angry with the wicked everyday. He is a God that will certainly execute vengeance upon every evil work. A curse implies something more than mere anger. It is suggested by burning indignation. God will not suffer sin to go unpunished, and when the fulness of time shall come, and the measure shall be filled to the brim, and the weight of iniquity shall be fully reached, and the harvest shall be ripe, and the cry of wickedness shall come up mightily into the ears of the Lord God of Sabaoth, man will learn that the curse of God is not mere threatening. When that curse was vented on Christ and on the unbeliever, it is an anguish never to be measured, an agony never to be comprehended. To God only were His griefs fully known. Well does the Greek liturgy put in, “Thine unknown sufferings,” for they must for ever remain beyond the grasp of human imagination. Wonder of wonders, Christ bearing the curse instead of His people. Here He is coming under the load of their sin, and God does not spare Him but smites Him as justice demands we should be smitten, laying all His full vengeance on Him, launching all His thunderbolts against Him, bids the curse wreak itself upon Him, and Christ suffers all and sustains all.

Well might we sing:

Amazing love, How can it be
That Thou my God, should'st die for me.

**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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