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Lectures on Galatians

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Lectures on Galatians

FIRST LECTURE

CHRIST'S GIFT OF HIMSELF

Gal. 1:1 to 2:10

1. Our Lord Jesus Christ Gave Himself

1. That majestic Lord gave Himself when He left His throne of glory in heaven for the lowly manger in Bethlehem in the days of Caesar Augustus, and Quirinius, the governor of Syria, and Herod the Great, the king of Judea.

He gave Himself up to a life of dire poverty, not having where to lay His head. He gave Himself up to the humbling temptation by insolent Satan in the wilderness. He gave Himself up to a life of preaching the Gospel to the poor and of doing good to all and everywhere. He gave Himself up to bitter persecution from His own people at Nazareth and from the heads of His own nation and Church at Jerusalem. He gave Himself up to the awful agony and bloody sweat in the Garden of Gethsemane. He gave Himself up to foul betrayal and base denial and cowardly flight of all His own chosen disciples. He gave Himself up to the shameful scourging and the dreadful death on the cruel cross on Calvary in the days of Pontius Pilate and Caesar Tiberius. He gave His all, and He gave Himself; He could give no more.

2. Our Lord Jesus Christ gave Himself up in respect to our sins, for our sins, for the sins of the world, the whole world, to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself, by giving Himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God—Himself the Victim and Himself the Priest. Heb. 9:26; 1 Cor. 15:3; 1 Pet. 3:18; Eph. 5:2.

3. Our Lord Jesus Christ gave Himself up for our sins, in our stead, as our Substitute, to make the vicarious atonement. He who knew no sin was made sin for us that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him. The Righteous died for the unrighteous in order to bring us to God. Christ His own self bore our sins in His body on the tree that we, having died to sins, might live unto righteousness; by whose stripes ye were healed, 1 Pet. 2:24; 2 Cor. 5:21.

Luther says: "Mark well the word 'for our sins.' For herein lies all the virtue, namely, that all that is said concerning us in the Holy Scriptures in such passages as 'for me,' 'for us,' 'for our sin,' and the like, we should know how to take well in mind and apply particularly to ourselves, and hold fast thereto by faith. For you have, no doubt, easily brought yourself to believe that

Christ, God's Son, was given for St. Peter's, St. Paul's, and other saints' sins, who were worthy of such grace; but, contrariwise, it is especially and thoroughly hard that you, for your own person, a poor, unworthy, condemned sinner, should from your own heart firmly believe, hold, and say that Christ, God's Son, was given for *your* so many and so great sins, who nevertheless have never been worthy yet of such grace."

2

Our Lord Jesus Christ gave Himself for us that thus He might rescue us for Himself from this present evil world.

Paul's age was very evil indeed. It was the world of Cyprus and Antioch and Corinth and Ephesus and Rome and Tiberius and Messalina and Agrippina and Nero. Paul knew his world and etched a sensational and realistic picture of it in Rom. 1:18-32. The princes of this world crucified the Lord of glory and treated Paul, the greatest man in the world, as the filth of the world, the offscouring of all things. The present world is still an evil world. It is viewed as a cruel tyrant holding people in prison. We are sold under sin. Rom. 7:14. See the drunkard in the deadly grip of the demon rum! See the slaves of opium! See the victims of sexual vice held as in a vise and ruining body and soul and their children! See how the cursed hunger for gold forces parents to kill their own children for the insurance money! See wives murdering husbands for their property!

From the day Cain slew his brother Abel this world has been one vast Aceldama, a field of blood. "Man's inhumanity to man makes countless thousands mourn." Think of the World War. The world has not yet come out of the depths of the depression, and yet the governments are taxing the blood out of their hungering people to pile up more deadly weapons to murder more countless millions and make more widows and orphans.

See how this evil world corrupts business, banking, politics, and society. See how it enslaves millions in idolatry, superstition, fanaticism, self-righteousness, infidelity, atheism, and satanic hatred of Christ. And this corruption breeds destruction.

Our Lord Jesus Christ gave Himself for our sins that He might rescue us out of this wicked world. The strong Son of God forced open the prison and proclaimed liberty to the prisoners. He loosed our chains and set us free in the glorious liberty of the children of God. Sin and Satan can rule us no longer. We have forgiveness of sins and, with it, life and salvation, final salvation in heaven.

Christ says: "Be of good cheer; I have overcome the world." And by faith in Him we overcome the world. For whatsoever is

born of God overcometh the world; and this is the victory that overcometh the world—our faith. We are in the world but not of the world, not conformed but transformed. John 16:33, 14, 16; 1 John 5:4, 5; 4:4; 3:13, 14; Rom. 12:2.

3

"According to the will of our God and Father" did Christ give Himself and rescue us. He said more than once: "I came not to do my own will, but the will of Him that sent me." John 4:34; 5:30; 6:38.

If our Lord Jesus Christ gave Himself for our sins, then how sure is our salvation! If we are saved according to the will of God, our Father, then what a fatherly God we have! Then we surely can cry: "Abba, Father!"

4

"To our God and Father the glory forever and ever! Amen." Staupitz told Luther, "It comforts me most that this teaching of the Gospel which is again coming to the light of day gives all honor and glory to God alone and none to man." Luther adds: "Thus he comforted me; and it's the truth. Then I cannot err nor sin; for I give to both, to God and to man, what rightly belongs to each."

"Lord, righteousness belongeth unto Thee, but unto us confusion of faces," Dan. 9:7-9. "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto Thy name give glory, for Thy loving-kindness and for Thy truth's sake," Ps. 115:1.

5

This is the Gospel of Paul. Well, what of it? Who is this man Paul? "Paul, apostle not from men, neither through man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised Him from the dead," whereby He was declared the Son of God. What an ambassador! August authority! Divine credentials!

And this Gospel is not after man, and it was not received from man, but it came through revelation of Jesus Christ. It was the good pleasure of God to call Paul, and to reveal His Son in him, to preach Christ among the Gentiles. In like strain Paul's pupil Luther wrote his elector, Frederick the Wise: "I have not received the Gospel from men, but from heaven, through our Lord Jesus Christ, so that I may well glory, as I henceforth shall do, in being able to style myself a servant and an evangelist." Furthermore, when the Christians heard the persecutor of the faith is now a preacher of the faith, "they glorified God in me." They rejoiced in justification by faith alone. Still more, when Paul on his way from Antioch to Jerusalem told of the conversion of the Gentiles, he caused great joy unto all the brethren in Phenicia and Samaria,

Acts 15:3. Still more, it was by direct revelation that born-out-of-time Paul took the uncircumcised "dog" Titus to the sacred soil of Jerusalem under the very shadow of the Temple. There "false brethren, who came in privily to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage," demanded that Titus be circumcised. "To them we gave place in the way of subjection, no, not for an hour, that the truth of the Gospel might continue with you." Titus was not circumcised. These Judaizers were crushed under the guidance of the Holy Spirit by Peter, and James, and John, and others, Acts 15. These three, "who were reputed to be pillars" of the mother Church at Jerusalem, did not lay their hands on Paul in ordination, or confirmation; "they gave to me the right hands of fellowship." Paul, John, Peter, James — what a quartet of world historic giants! And the world's most epochal clasping of hands! Paul was an equal among equals. He stood on his own feet, wholly independent of any man on earth. If there was any distinction, it was in his favor. While the others were called by Christ in the days of His humiliation on earth, Paul was called by Christ in His exaltation in heaven at the right hand of God the Father Almighty. Paul was not an autodidact, self-taught, but a theodidact, God-taught. And so his is the genuine Gospel. It is justification by faith alone, not faith plus works. And so he calls every other "gospel" a different "gospel," which is not another gospel at all but which perverts the Gospel of Christ. And so he adds: "But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach unto you any gospel other than that which we preached unto you, let him be anathema!" — accursed.

Terse and trenchant, tremendous and terrific words to startle the world! Yes, but they did not escape him in the heat of passion. He means every word, and so he repeats: "As we have said before, so say I now again, If any man preaches unto you any gospel other than that which you received, let him be accursed."

Why these words of burning emotion? Because of his burning devotion. "I marvel that ye are so quickly deserting Him that called you in the grace of Christ, unto a different gospel." And that is: "Except ye be circumcised, ye cannot be saved," Acts 15:1. "If ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing," replied Paul, Gal. 5:2. The terms were clearly defined and the issue joined. It was a pitched battle of life and death between justification by faith alone in Christ and justification by works. He warns his converts of their deadly danger and rallies the wavering ranks to make a firm stand against their subtle foe. As a good soldier of Jesus Christ, he was fighting the good fight of faith. He dashed

off the most astounding letter of all literature, and this sword of the Spirit he thrust into the very heart of Antichrist.

Paul's words cursing the false teachers have been nailed to the mast, and they are flying at the head of our Formula of Concord of 1580. The curse that crowns the 135 curses of the holy fathers of Trent is the curse that curses Christ's and Paul's and Luther's justification by faith. "If any one shall say that justifying faith is nothing else but a trust in the divine mercy, remitting sins for Christ's sake, or that it is this trust alone by which we are justified, let him be accursed." Sess. 6, Can. 12.

A sad case of so quickly deserting Him who called him in the grace of Christ is that of Bishop Bricconnet of Meaux. In 1576 he told his people, "Even should I, your bishop, change my speech and teaching, beware that you change not with me." Alas! he could not endure the papal persecution, and so he quickly deserted Him who had so graciously called him and fell back into the "gospel" of Romanism, which is not a gospel at all. Thank God! the people remained faithful and suffered persecution.

A fine case of standing fast.

Henry III said, "I shall be compelled" to give the famous Bernard de Palissy up to his popish enemies to be killed unless he changes his Protestant faith. The bold reply was: "You have often said to me, Sire, that you pitied me; but as for me, I pity you, who have given utterance to such words as, 'I shall be compelled.' These are unkingly words; and I say to you, in royal phrase, that neither the Guises nor all your people nor yourself are able to compel a humble manufacturer of earthenware to bend his knee before statues."

SECOND LECTURE

THE GOSPEL

Gal. 2:11-21

1. The Saving Gospel

The Son of God loved me.

The Son of God, true God, begotten of the Father from eternity, very God of very God, begotten not made, being of one substance with the Father, by whom all things were made—this majestic Son of God loved me. He loved me, the ungodly rebel, who persecuted the Church of God. He loved me, the chief of sinners. "Strong Son of God, immortal Love!"

The Son of God loved me and gave Himself up for me. He gave Himself all the way from the cradle at Bethlehem to the cross on Calvary. He gave His all, and He gave Himself for me. He gave Himself up for my sins.

He gave Himself up for me an Offering and a Sacrifice to God to save me from the wrath to come. He put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. He who knew no sin was made sin for me, that I might become the righteousness of God in Him. He gave Himself for me, the Righteous for the unrighteous, to bring me to God.

He gave Himself for me, in my stead, as my substitute, to receive the punishment for me and make expiation for my sin, to make the vicarious atonement. This is a most personal matter between my Savior and my own soul alone. Eph. 5:2, 6; 2:3; 1 Thess. 1:10; 5:9; 1 Pet. 2:24; 3:18; Rom. 8:2, 5; 5:9.

Jesus paid it all, all the debt I owe;
And nothing, either great or small,
Remains for me to do.
In my place condemned He stood,
Sealed my pardon with His blood.
Alleluia, what a Savior!

Germany's greatest artist made a fine copper plate of the Birth with these words, "The holy Child has been born for my people also, and also for me, Albrecht Duerer of Nuernberg. A. D. 1504." Can you sign that?

2. The Effect of the Gospel

The effect is twofold—death in Christ and life in Christ. It is given in a threefold paradox, or seeming contradiction.

1 a. I have been crucified with Christ.

Christ is the Head of His body, and by faith I am a member of His body. Eph. 1:22, 23; 5:30; 1 Cor. 6:15, 19. And so what happened to Him also happened to me. 1 Cor. 12:12-27. Christ, my Head, was crucified, and so I have been crucified with Him. Again, we thus reckon, that, if one died for all, then were all dead. Therefore reckon yourselves dead to sin. I died legally to the Law, as the Law demanded, and thus satisfied all its demands. Death discharges all debt. He that is dead is free from sin. Gal. 5:24; Rom. 6:4-11; 7:4-6; 8:16, 17; 10:4; 14:8; 2 Cor. 5:4, 15; 1 Thess. 5:10; Heb. 9:14.

b. Nevertheless I live.

Through the Law I legally died to the Law. Not indeed that I might live to sin, but live unto God, live a godly life, pleasing to God, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. Crucified with Christ, buried with Christ, quickened with Christ, raised with Christ, live with Christ. 1 Pet. 2:5, 20; Rom. 6:1-14; 7:4-6; 12:1; 8:10, 11; Eph. 2:1-10; Phil. 3:10.

2 a. But it is no longer I that live—

b. On the contrary, Christ liveth in me.

Christ, my Head, rules me, His body. Jesus Christ is in me, in my heart, by faith. The mind of Christ is in me. For me to live is Christ. As a slave has no will but his master's, as a soldier has no will but his captain's, as a priest has no will but his god's, so I have no will but Christ's. Eph. 3:17; 5:30; 1:22, 23; Phil. 1:11; 2:5; 2 Cor. 13:5; John 15:2-5; 6:67.

3 a. That life which I now live in the flesh—yes, I am still in my frail human body, and I must attend to its daily needs like everybody else. But that physical life is not my real life. Really and truly and at bottom my life is a spiritual life in faith.

b. I live in faith, the faith which is in the Son of God. That faith is the atmosphere in which I live and move and have my being. We walk by faith, not by sight. Acts 17:28; 2 Cor. 5:7; 4:18. Christ is the Life and the Bread of Life, and His words are life, and He giveth life. By the Gospel He breeds and feeds that faith and life. I am a pilgrim in the world, but my citizenship is in heaven. I live in the world, but my mind is fixed above where Christ is. I live in the world, but the life of Jesus is to be made manifest in my body. I live in the world, but for me to live is Christ. To live for Christ is life indeed, the only life. "She that giveth herself to pleasure is dead while she liveth." I died, and my life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is my Life, shall be manifested, then shall I also be manifested with Him in glory. Phil. 1:21; 1 Cor. 3:3, 4; 2 Cor. 4:10, 11; 1 Tim. 5:6; Luke 15:24; Rev. 3:1; Rom. 8:10.

Luther urges: "Teach right as to faith, that through it you and Christ are so united that out of you and Him there comes one person, so to speak. Then you may dare to say cheerfully, 'I am Christ'—not personally, but Christ's righteousness, victory, life, and all He has is my very own; and that Christ may also say, 'I am this poor sinner'; that is, all his sin and death are My sin, My death, since he by faith clings to Me and I to him, yea, live in him."

3. The Gospel Defended

This blessed, saving Gospel Paul had to defend. Against whom? Against Peter! Yes, Peter!

When Peter came to Antioch he was eating with the uncircumcised Gentile Christians. Then came certain—note the scorching scorn in the "certain"—from James of the mother church in Jerusalem and taught the brethren: "Except ye be circumcised after the custom of Moses, ye cannot be saved," Acts 15:1, 2. Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and questioning with them. Now Peter drew back and separated himself gradually from the Gentile Christians, fearing them that were of the circumcision. And the rest of the Jewish Christians dis-

sembled likewise with him; insomuch that even Barnabas was carried away with their hypocrisy. "Even Barnabas"—what a world of pathos in that little "even." You, too, Barnabas? Heartbreaking!

Buergermeister Guericke of Magdeburg built a huge barometer, thirty feet high, the index being the figure of a man. In fair weather he stood grandly above the roof of the house; but when a storm was brewing, he dropped out of view for safety. That is what Peter was doing. It is easy to imagine how the Gentile Christians must have been deeply offended by such hypocrisy of Peter and Barnabas and the others. And justly so. For by his action Peter sided with the false brethren, who insisted the Gentile Christians must be circumcised according to the custom of Moses or they could not be saved.

Here was the first great crisis in the Christian Church. The vital question at issue was justification by faith in Christ Crucified or justification by the works of the Law of Moses. Peter was a friend; Barnabas was a friend; but a greater friend was truth.

Paul rushed to the rescue, Paul against the world. "I resisted Peter to his face, because he stood condemned." He stood self-condemned, condemned by his own action. He acted against his better knowledge; he acted against his own former words; he acted against his own former action. Acts 10 and 11; 15:6-11.

"When I saw that they walked not straightforward according to the truth of the Gospel, I said to Peter before all, If thou, though a Jew, livest like the Gentiles and not like the Jews, how is it thou forcest the Gentiles to Judaize?" By his hypocrisy Peter was really morally forcing the Gentile Christians to be circumcised in order to be saved. Really a rejection of the Savior. Paul puts a world-historic single simple question. There was simply no answer to it. A single question virtually settled the most momentous question in the infant Church. Paul's question was sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and quick to discern the thoughts and intents of the heart, Heb. 4:12.

Going on, Paul with fine tact includes himself: "We, though Jews by nature and not sinners of the Gentiles, have come to know that man is not declared righteous by works of Law, but only through faith in Jesus Christ; even we believed in Christ Jesus that we might be justified by faith in Christ, and not by works of Law, because by works of Law shall no man be justified." And this is nothing new, for the psalmist had taught the same precious truth hundreds of years ago, and so Paul triumphantly clinches his argument by pointing to Ps. 143:2. The same passage he uses again to prove his justification by faith in Rom. 3:20, 28.

At this point is the great victory; all that follows is commentary. Luther says: "In these few words Paul puts the chief article of the whole Christian teaching, which alone makes real Christians understand this article rightly and purely. Then we have the true heavenly sun. But if we lose it, we have nothing else than a hellish darkness."

Comes now the objection, If the sinner is declared righteous by faith in Christ without works, does that not open the door to sin? Nay, does it not make Christ Himself a helper of sin? With holy horror Paul indignantly spurns the detestable blasphemy, "God forbid!" Luther says: "Every one who teaches that faith in Christ does not justify unless a man also keep the Law, such a man makes Christ a minister of sin; he makes out of Him a law-teacher, who teaches just that and nothing else than Moses teaches. So can Christ, then, be no Savior and grace-giver, but would be only a cruel tyrant, who demands of us merely impossible things, not one of which any man can fulfil."

Paul now kindly puts his mailed fist into a velvet glove, going on as if speaking of himself: "By faith-righteousness I tore down the prison of work-righteousness; and if I now go back to the Law of Moses, I again start building up what I had torn down. And then I prove myself a transgressor of the Law, and so I am condemned by the Law. That is what Peter was doing. I do not make void the grace of God; for if righteousness is through Law, then Christ died for naught," without a cause. Heb. 10:29. That is actually done by Peter in observing the Law of Moses. God's grace in Christ Crucified is all, or it is nothing at all. But we are justified by faith in Christ.

If eloquence is logic on fire, here was eloquence. Demosthenes against Philip, Cicero against Catiline, Burke against Warren Hastings, Webster against Hayne—all beggarly compared with Paul against Peter. Only second to it is Luther's speech before Kaiser and Reich at Worms.

What was the effect of this amazing and volcanic Antioch speech? Did Peter again go out and weep bitterly? Paul writes, "I resisted," and the Greek implies, "with success." There is no record that Peter replied. What in all the world could he have replied? He could take the rebuke. Later he praised "the wisdom of our beloved brother Paul" and put "all his epistles" on the same level with "the other Scriptures," 2 Pet. 3:15, 16.

Let us with Luther say very humbly: "If Peter fell, I can fall." Then let us with Luther say very trustfully: "If Peter rose, I can rise."

Ernest Renan calls these two chapters "the two most important

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pages for the study of nascent Christianity," and Sir William Ramsay holds them "the most wonderful preface to the most remarkable letter that ever was written."

P. S. Neither with microscope nor telescope nor periscope nor hydroscope nor fluoroscope can we detect a Pope in Peter at Antioch.

Milwaukee, Wis.

WILLIAM DALLMANN

(To be continued)

The Means of Grace from the Administrative Angle

The topic which is here to be briefly treated, chiefly on the basis of a problem which has recently been suggested for discussion, has been broached in the columns of this journal before, although not in an exhaustive manner.* It is clearly not a mere academic question, nor may it be placed in the category of the *adiaphora* or *a priori* included in the field of casuistry, although certain situations may cause it to be placed under that heading. The problem, as it is before us, involves chiefly three *loci* in dogmatics, namely, *De Ecclesia*, *De Ministerio Ecclesiastico*, and *De Sacramentis*. As we take up the questions concerned, we become increasingly aware of the fact that we are not dealing with a matter of scholasticism, but with a problem that touches closely upon doctrines that are in no way in controversy in the Lutheran Church.

If we want to see and judge clearly in this matter, we must acknowledge chiefly two facts, both clearly set forth in Holy Writ. The first is this, that a Christian congregation (local church) is not a mere casual, occasional, or temporary gathering of Christians, but the permanent organization of Christians professing the same faith who have locally established the ministry of the Word in their midst and exercise the Office of the Keys. The truth of this statement is apparent to any one who so much as takes a concordance and reads the passages in which the word *ἐκκλησία* occurs in the New Testament. Scripture clearly associates this term, if applied to a corporate or visible entity restricted to one city or locality, with the concept of the local church (*Lokal-gemeinde*). Paul and Barnabas arranged to have every congregation along their route of travel elect its elders. Acts 14:23. Cp. Acts 8:1; 15:22; Rom. 1:7; 16:5; 1 Cor. 4:17; 16:19; Phil. 4:15; Col. 4:15; 1 Thess. 1:1; 2 Thess. 1:1; Philemon 2; 1 Pet. 5:13; Acts 13:1; 20:17; Rev. 2:1, 8, 12, 18; 3:1, 7, 14; 1 Cor. 1:2; 2 Cor.

* See Vol. I, 588—590; II, 818—825.