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Lectures on Galatians

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Lectures on Galatians

SEVENTH LECTURE

GLORYING IN THE CROSS

Gal. 6:13

(Concluded)

THREE CRUCIFIXIONS

I. The Crucifixion of Christ

Paul gloried in the Cross of Christ, in nothing but the Cross of Christ. By that he means the Gospel, by which we are saved, "Christ died for our sins." "We are justified by His blood." 1 Cor. 15:2, 3; Rom. 5:9.

As the sun radiates beams of light in all directions, so the Cross sheds light on all important things. It is a pillar of light flaming with unspeakable glory.

The Cross preaches God's love. There we see and feel His heart beating for us. The Cross in bright light shows God so loved the wicked world that He spared not His own Son, the Only-begotten, the Son of His love. So wondrous is this love that God Himself commends to us His love for us in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for the ungodly. God is Love.

The Cross preaches God's justice.

God is Love, yes, but mark you well, God is holy Love. His justice cannot brook sin. The cross in lurid light reveals the wrath of God against all ungodliness.

The rigidly righteous God must punish all unrighteousness. In the very beginning God said the sinner must die. And now we hear the crashing thunder and see the flashing lightning of Mount Sinai strike Christ on the cross on Mount Calvary.

The Cross in bright light shows the perfect harmony between God's boundless love and God's unbending justice. God is just and at the same time the Justifier of the ungodly. Seems impossible; how is it possible? By the cross Christ paid in full the fine of the sinner. Now God is just to forgive us our sins. God's justice is satisfied. 1 John 1:9; Rom. 3:21, 26. A glorious harmony in what seemed a clashing disharmony. The unsearchable wisdom of God!

Here is nothing of Shakespeare's "Mercy seasons justice" or Milton's "Temper justice with mercy." Christ gave Himself an offering and a sacrifice to God, and His blood saved us from the wrath of God, Eph. 5:2; Rom. 5:9. The full price being paid, now Mercy and truth are met together, Righteousness and peace have kissed each other, Ps. 85, 10.

The Cross proves in bright light the meritorious and victorious

death of Christ; by death He destroyed him that had the power of death, the devil.

The Cross preaches repentance. When we learn Christ died for our sins, we learn our sins caused His cross. When we learn the enormity of our sins, we learn to feel crushed by sorrow for our sins. With Luther we cry, "My sin! My great sin! My most great sin!"

The Cross preaches faith. When I hear God Himself commend to us His great love to us in that Christ died for the ungodly, I give up my distrust of God and now fully trust Him and trustfully take His pardon and take His hand of reconciliation.

The Cross preaches loving service. Christ bore His cross, and now I will take up my cross and join the army of cross-bearers, following the leading Cross-bearer.

The Cross preaches patience.

The Cross preaches hope.

The Cross preaches comfort.

For many years the missionaries preached about creation, the Fall, the Flood, and the hearts of the Greenlanders were as icy as Greenland's icy mountains. At last, one day, John Beck read them the story of the Cross of Christ. Then, with tears streaming down His face, Kayamak said, "Tell me once more, for I, too, would be saved." Since then Greenland is a fine Christian country.

David Brainerd, the apostle of our Indians, would make them sober by preaching the attributes of God, laying hold of the functions of conscience; but he did not make a single man sober. "Then I bethought me that I would go and preach Jesus Christ, and many a hard face relaxed, many an eye shed tears that had never wept before, and I found that the best way to make men sober is to make them spiritual." Henceforth he gloried only in the Cross of Christ.

The *Gospel Ethnology* proves from the missionary work of the past one hundred and seventy years that the Cross of Christ is the one power able to pierce heathenism.

II. The Crucifixion of the World

By the Cross of Christ the world was crucified unto Paul. What does he mean by "the world"? Not the world of nature; God Himself was pleased with that. And Christ loved nature and made telling use of it in His preaching. Paul loved God's book of nature and saw in it the heavenly Father working for the good of all His children. Rom. 1:20; Acts 14:17.

The Greco-Roman world with its unspeakable vileness and debauchery, the Grove of Daphne at Antioch, of Venus at Paphos on Cyprus, of Diana at Ephesus, of Corinth, of Athens, the world

of Tiberius and Nero and Agrippina and Messalina and Caligula—that world was crucified to Paul. In fact, that world never had any attraction for the blameless Pharisee.

The world of bloody, butchering, world-conquering monsters like Alexander and Caesar and Augustus, Rome with her iron heel on an enslaved world—that world was crucified to Paul. In fact, that world never had any attraction for a peaceful student like Paul, and he exulted over its persecutions.

The world of pagan culture and sculpture and painting and song and music and architecture and theater and religious games and gladiatorials—that world was crucified to Paul, if it ever had any attraction for him.

The world of philosophy at the great universities of his home town, Tarsus, and at Athens was crucified to Paul. If it ever had any attraction for him, it was lost. He determined to know nothing save Jesus Crucified. God made foolish the wisdom of the world. The world through its wisdom knew not God. All the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hidden in Christ. 1 Cor. 1:20-31; 2:6-9; 3:19; Col. 2:3.

The world of pharisaic self-righteousness, which is in the Law, was crucified to Paul. Time was when he boasted of being of the seed of Abraham; a Hebrew of the Hebrews; of the tribe of Benjamin; touching the righteousness of the Law, blameless; of his zeal for God, persecuting the Christians. That time was past. What things he boasted of, he flung away as dung. Yea, all the world was crucified to Paul in order that he might gain Christ. Now for him to live was Christ, and Christ lived in him. The world was judged and condemned by the Cross. The world passeth away and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth forever. Phil. 3:8, 9; John 12:31; 1 John 2:15-17. To Paul the world was condemned and contemned as an abomination and as a curse. Gal. 3:13; Eph. 2:1, 2; 1 Cor. 11:32.

III. The Crucifixion of Paul

Time was when Paul was a highly respected Pharisee, having sat at the feet of the great Rabbi Gamaliel; and he had before him a most honorable career. Time came when Paul was called by Christ Himself, and now he preached Christ Crucified. The world crucified Christ, and now the world would crucify the preacher of Christ Crucified. He was treated as the filth of the world, the offscouring of all things. Yes, "the disciple is not above his master." 1 Cor. 4:13; Luke 6:40.

Paul preached Christ Crucified at Syrian Damascus, and they would kill him; at Jerusalem, and they would kill him; at Pisidian Antioch, and they drove him out of the country; at Iconium, and

they would stone him; at Lystra, and they stoned him till they thought him dead; at Philippi, and they scourged and jailed him; at Thessalonica, and they would mob him; at Berea, and they persecuted him; at Athens, and they scorned him; at Corinth, and they blasphemed and dragged him into court as a criminal; at Ephesus, and the city was in an uproar against him; in Greece, and they plotted to kill him; at Jerusalem, and they would kill him. "I die daily." At last they took off his head at Rome. Acts 13:14, 16-23; Gal. 6:17; 1 Cor. 15:31; 2 Cor. 11:23-33; 2 Tim. 1:16, 17.

Crucified does not mean simply dead, but dead with shame and contempt. Paul despised the world, and the world despised Paul. They hated each other with a perfect hatred.

The world was crucified to Paul, and Paul was crucified to the world. He had cut the tablecloth between them; he had burned his ships behind him; there was a deep gulf fixed between them. He expressed the separation in the strongest words possible. Luther says: "I account the world damned, and, in turn, the world counts me damned; thus we condemn one another. I curse all its human righteousness, doctrine, and work as the very poison of the devil, and in turn the world curses also my doctrine and work, counts me a wretch."

Paul glories in the Cross of Christ, for neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything; the only thing that counts is a new creature—one reborn of God. Luther says: "A new creature does not mean a change of clothes or manner, but a renewal of the mind, which is brought about by the Holy Spirit. From that there follows a change of the outer life. For where the heart through the Gospel gets a new light, there it never fails that the outward senses also are changed. The ears no longer have pleasure in hearing human dreams and fools' news, but God's Word alone. The mouth no longer boasts of man's own work, righteousness, and monkery but of God's grace in Christ Jesus. This, then, is a change which consists not in words, but in work and in power."

And as many as shall walk according to this anti-Judaizing rule, peace and mercy be upon them, the real Israel of God.

Henceforth let no man trouble me: For I bear in my body the stigmata of Jesus—the scars to prove I belong to Him, my Master, my Captain, my God.

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit, brethren. Amen.

Estimates of Galatians

Did Paul write this most astonishing letter to people in the northern or in the southern part of the great Roman province of Galatia in Asia Minor? The keenest pens have used tuns of ink

and tons of paper to answer the question, and the end is not yet. The present writer leans to the South Galatian theory, which makes this world-historic little letter the earliest book in the New Testament.

Marcion in Rome, about 140, held Galatians the greatest epistle of the greatest apostle, "the principal epistle against Judaism." Tertullian says: "The separation of Law and Gospel is the proper and principal work of Paul." He is the first in the chain of reformers, of whom the last and the greatest is Luther.

The greatest spiritual son of Paul says: "The Epistle to the Galatians is my epistle. I have betrothed myself to it. It is my Kate." Just by the way, what other tribute to a wife so truly beautiful?

Martin Bucer called Luther's commentary "a treasury full of the dogmas of pure theology."

Melanchthon says: "No one known to me of all the Greek and Latin writers has gotten nearer Paul's spirit," and he classically calls Luther's commentary the "clue of Theseus through the maze of Biblical science."

Prof. Albrecht Oepke of Leipzig, in his commentary of 1937, holds Luther, as it were, rediscovered Galatians. Luther lectured on it in 1516 and again in 1531. This monumental commentary had a wide and deep influence on the Church. It was Englished by men who refused "to be named, seeking neither their own Gain nor Glory, but thinking it their happiness, if by any Means they may relieve afflicted minds and do good to the Church of Christ, yielding all Glory unto God, to whom all Glory is due."

On April 28, 1575, Edwin, Bishop of London, commended it "to the Reader as a Treatise most comfortable to all afflicted Consciences exercised in the *School* of Christ. The Author felt what he spake and had Experience of what he wrote, and thereby able more lively to express both the Assaults and the salving, the Order of the Battle, and the Mean of the Victory. *Satan* is the Enemy; the Victory is by only Faith in Christ, as *John* recordeth. If Christ justify, who can condemn? saith *St. Paul*. This most necessary Doctrine the Author hath most substantially cleared in this Commentary."

The Introduction says in this book "as in a mirror or Glass, or rather as *St. Stephen* in the Heavens being opened thou maist see and behold the admirable Glory of the Lord, and all the Riches of Heaven, thy Salvation freely, and only by Faith in Christ; his Love and Grace toward thee so opened, thy Victory and Conquest in him so proved, the Wrath of God so pacified, His Law satisfied, the full Kingdom of Life set open; Death, Hell and Hell Gates, be they never so strong, with all the Power of Sin, Flesh and the

World vanquished; thy Conscience discharged, all Fears and Terrors removed, thy spiritual Man so refreshed, and set at Liberty, that either thy Heart must be heavier than Lead, or the Reading hereof will lift thee up above thyself, and give thee to know that of Christ Jesus, that thyself shalt say thou never knewest before, though before thou knewest him right well.

“Such Spiritual Comfort, such heavenly Doctrine, such Experience and Practice of Conscience herein is contained, such triumphing over Satan, and all his Power infernal, such Contempt of the Law compared with the Gospel, such an holy Pride and Exaltation of the Believing Man (whom he maketh a Person Divine, the Son of God, the Heir of the whole Earth, Conquerer of the World, of Sin, of Death, and the Devil) with such Phrases and Speeches of high Contemplation, of Christ, of Grace, of Justification and of Faith (which Faith, saith he, transfigureth a Man into Christ, and coupleth him more near unto Christ than the Husband is coupled to his Wife, and maketh a Man more than a Man) with such other Voices, full of spiritual Glory and Majesty, as the like hath not been used lightly of any Writer since the Apostle’s time, neither durst he ever have used the same himself, had not great Experience and Exercise of Conscience by inward Conflicts and profound Agonies framed him thereunto, and ministered to him both this Knowledge of Spirit and Boldness of Speech. . . .

“What Man would ever have thought that *Paul* in the raging Heat of his persecuting Spirit, would have turned from a Persecutor to such a Professor; from such Infidelity to such a Faith? Insomuch that *Ananias* would scarce believe the Lord when he told him. Such is the Omnipotency of the Lord our God, ever working lightly by the contrary, especially when he hath any excellent thing to work to his own Glory.

“After like sort may we esteem also of *Martin Luther*. . . .

“Most true it is, that no greater Comfort to the Soul of Man can be found in any Book next to the holy Scripture than in this Commentary of *M. Luther*. . . .

“How many of them do we see, for all their auricular Confession, which puffeth them up in all Security, but at length they lie at the Point of Death, where Death on the one side, and God’s Justice on the other side is before their Eyes, for the most Part either they despair, or else leaving all other Helps, they only stick to Faith, and the Blood of **JESUS CHRIST**, and in very deed many of them are glad to die Lutherans, however they hated Luther before. And what shall we say then of this Doctrine of Luther? If the Papists themselves be glad to die in it, why are they unwilling to live in it? . . .

"As we commend this good Work to thy godly Studies: So we commend both thee and thy Studies to the Grace of Christ Jesus the Son of God; heartily wishing, and craving of his Majesty, that thou maist take no less Profit and Consolation by reading hereof, than our Purpose was to do thee good in setting the same forth to thy Comfort and Edification, which the Lord grant. Amen. Amen."

The edition before us is a folio of 440 pages, London, Printed and Sold by John Lewis (Printer to the Religious Societies) in Bartholomew-Close, near West-Smithfield. 1741.

Luther's Commentary on Galatians had three English translations and many reprints. The Rev. Erasmus Middleton made one translation, and recently another, condensed, was made by Professor Theodore Graebner.

On November 11, 1883, at Exeter Hall, the Baptist Spurgeon preached his "Luther Sermon." He shows how the Pope had overlaid faith in the Gospel with outward observances, ceremonies, masses, indulgences, and what not. Like Paul, Luther had been enslaved by works of the Law. Like Paul, Luther found freedom in justification by faith in Christ alone, apart from the works of the Law. With Paul's Galatians Luther burst the prison-doors and set free the Church of Jesus Christ.

In *Grace Abounding* Bunyan "must let fall before all men, I do prefer this book of Martin Luther upon the Galatians (except the Holy Bible), before all the books that ever I have seen, as most fit for a wounded conscience." The Presbyterian James H. Brookes of St. Louis said the same to our Professor Bischoff. Charles Wesley found it "nobly full of faith."

Ernest F. Scott writes: "In the century succeeding Paul the Gospel was construed as a *nova lex* (new law) similar in its demand and character to the Law of Moses; and the whole system, against which Paul made his protest, was established again in the Catholic Church. Luther rediscovered the central Pauline idea; but in Protestantism also the religion of the letter, of submission to some outward yoke of bondage, has never ceased to maintain itself over against the religion of the Spirit. The Judaism, which was the ultimate of Paul's attack, had its ground in certain permanent tendencies of human nature; and for this reason, if for no other, the epistles are of lasting significance and value. A time will never be in which it will not be necessary to fight Paul's battle over again, and the Christian apologist must always go back to Paul for his truest guidance and inspiration." — *Apologetic of the N. T.*, p. 109.

Wieseler says: "Through the famous exposition of its doctrinal contents rendered by Luther has it become forever part and parcel of the Church of the Reformation."

Professor Findlay writes: "Buried for a thousand years under the weight of the Catholic legalism, the teaching of this epistle came to life again in the rise of Protestantism. Martin Luther put it to his lips as a trumpet to blow the *reveille* of the Reformation. His famous commentary summoned enslaved Christendom to recover 'the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free.' Of all the great Reformer's writings this was the widest in its influence and the dearest to himself. For the spirit of Paul lived again in Luther as in no other since the Apostle's day. The Epistle to the Galatians is the charter of evangelical faith."

Sir William Ramsay writes: "It is not a carefully framed series of sentences and paragraphs, but an absolute unity, a single expression, a crystallization of Paul's mind at a moment of intense feeling; or, to change the metaphor, it is a volcanic flood poured forth in one moment and in one effort. . . . Freedom in one direction tends to produce freedom of mind in general."

Professor Moorehead of Xenia Theological Seminary writes: "What the Emancipation Act was to the slaves of our Southern States, what the Czar's edict was for the freedom of the serfs of Russia, the Epistle to the Galatians was to the primitive Church. It was the manifesto of the enfranchisement which Christ had won for all believers. It was by the study and the appropriation of the mighty truths of Galatians and Romans that Luther, the hero of the modern era, was enabled to strike off the fetters by which the Church of God had been so long bound."

Dr. Peter Bayne says of the Introduction: "Irony of this order is, so far as I know, unique in literature. . . . The defiant and leonine Luther, the Luther who, like the horse in Job, scents the battle from afar and the snorting of whose nostrils is terrible, always triumphs over the meek and lamblike Luther. How much prettier had it been otherwise! Yes, and where then had been the Reformation?"

Professor Godet: "This was the pebble from the brook with which, like another David, he [Luther] went forth to meet the papal giant and smite him in the forehead. . . . This epistle marks an epoch in the history of man; it is the ever precious document of his spiritual emancipation."

G. Campbell Morgan: "This was Luther's letter, the letter that found him and revealed the true meaning of Christianity and made him the flaming prophet of liberty, breaking the chains of cruel oppression from the captive people of God."

Schmiedel says: "Galatians will in all times be the charter of freedom not only from the Mosaic Law, but from every yoke that is imposed upon the religious life as an external condition of salvation."

Donald Fraser: "The truth as it is in Jesus, where not denied, is often badly adulterated. A religion is taught which derives all its strength from form and tradition; and the only thing that avails in Christ Jesus—viz., the new creation—is unthought of or referred to some sacramental ceremony. To combat these errors the Epistle to the Galatians is fresh and powerful as ever. It was a true instinct which led Martin Luther to give much of his time to the exposition of it in order to establish the doctrine of faith; and we want it still to smite self-righteousness and religious externalism root and branch and to teach that a man, in order to be justified, must believe in Christ, and, in order to be sanctified, must be crucified with Christ. The epistle is full of animation, argument, and reproof; but above all and best of all, it is full of grace. So it teaches a lesson for all time—that sinners are saved by grace and saints are preserved by grace. Just because it impresses these great truths, the Epistle to the Galatians can never fail to hold a place of honor in the lips of faithful preachers and in the grateful appreciation of all enlightened children of God."

Farrar judges: "In vehemence, effectiveness, and depth of conviction this epistle is only paralleled by Luther's *Babylonian Captivity*, in which he realized his saying that his battle with the Papacy required 'a tongue of which every word is a thunderbolt.'

"A thousand years of papal usurpation had been built, like a pyramid upon its apex, on the inch of argument seized by Romanism in the text 'Thou art Peter, and on this rock will I build My Church.' But in time, by reading the Epistle to the Galatians, a light burst upon the soul of Luther, and he nailed his theses to the cathedral door of Wittenberg and flung the papal bull into the flames. Every nail he used that day was a nail in the coffin of tyrannous priestcraft; every flame he kindled that day was a flame to consume the chaff of false inferences from false assumptions. What he burned was the right of designing tyrannies to build themselves upon isolated texts. It was the Epistle to the Galatians which thus became to Luther a weapon for the emancipation of mankind.

"What Luther did at Wittenberg and at Worms and at Wartburg and more than that St. Paul did when he wrote the Epistle to the Galatians. It was the manifesto of that spiritual reformation which was involved in the very idea of Christianity. More than any book which was ever written these few pages marked an epoch in history. It was, for the early days of Christianity, the Confession of Augsburg and the Protest of Spires in one. But it was these combined with intense personality and impassioned polemics.

"The words scrawled on those few sheets of papyrus were destined to wake echoes which have lived and shall live forever

and forever. . . . They were the Magna Carta of spiritual emancipation."

W. M. Macgregor, principal of Trinity College, Glasgow, in his *Christian Freedom*, calls Luther "a man of supreme genius. . . . In the great fight for the Gospel appointed for him Luther found in Galatians his most effective weapon. The central part of Galatians is Paul's assertion of the divine initiative in our salvation and of man's utter indebtedness. That is a notion which strong men have commonly welcomed and which the peevish self-assertiveness of weak men will always resent. They do not like to be told by Paul or Augustine or Luther that they must come to God with empty hands, that in their renovated life He must count for everything, and that all their virtuous busyness must be regarded as the consequence and not as the occasion of what He does."

G. L. Robinson writes: "Luther, by rediscovering and expounding the Epistle to the Galatians, gave back to the Church its lost palladium of spiritual freedom and independence. This letter has been very appropriately called 'The Epistle of Protestantism.'"

In Douglas's *Structure of Prophecy*: "The mind of Paul is rapid as the lightning and yet strikes, by its zigzag impetuosity, every projecting point that approaches its path and, still, undelayed by these deflections, attains instantly its goal."

Dr. Davidson: "A fiery energy pervades the epistle; an impetuous love marks it. Yet the matter is well arranged. The order is clear. Idea after idea and proof after proof are consecutively disposed. . . . The character of the Apostle is strikingly impressed on it. Strong emotion, manly earnestness, a tone emphatic and sharp, alternating by easy transitions with mild, affectionate sympathy, bespeak the energetic Paul."

The judicious Beza puts the letter above Plato, Demosthenes, Aristotle, and Galen.

Benjamin Kidd, in *Social Revolution*: "The doctrines of the Reformation deepened the character of the people, reacted on their habits of life, and gave a tone to their industry. Latin Christianity has always tended, as it still tends, to treat as of the first importance not the resulting change in the character of the individual, but rather his belief in the authority of the Church and of an order of men and in the supreme efficacy of sacramental ordinances which the Church has decreed itself alone competent to dispense. On the other hand, the central idea of the Reformation was the necessity of a spiritual change in the individual, the recognition, in virtue thereof, of the priesthood in his own person. As Professor Marshall (the economist) states, 'man was ushered straight into the presence of his Creator, with no human intermediary; life

became intense and full of awe, and now, for the first time, large numbers of rude and uncultured people yearned towards the mysteries of absolute spiritual freedom. The isolation of each person's religious responsibility from that of his fellows was a necessary condition of his higher spiritual progress.' But Dr. Marshall goes on to show in detail how this creation, through a personal experience, of free men furnished the community with a new race of energetic and serviceable citizens and thus set the world forward on the way even of material progress. For a healthy society the awakening of the individual is indispensable."

Dean Milman declares: "No Pelagian ever has worked or will work a religious revolution."

Sabatier finds "the moral crisis of conversion is the first and best initiation into the truths of Paulinism."

He tells of an eminent professor of history at the Sorbonne who first learned the meaning of Paul's theology from a Christian shoemaker at Lyons.

Six martyrs at Scilli in 180 had in their box "the books we use and, in addition, the letters of that holy man Paul." Harnack holds them not scholars but "certainly mere plebians."

Yes, the common man can read and understand. Read!

Oak Park, Ill.

WM. DALLMANN

Sermon Study on Rom. 8:24-28

First half of Eisenach Epistle Lesson for New Year's Day

The theme of the first part of Paul's Letter to the Romans is the very heart of the Christian religion, the doctrine of the justification of sinners by grace, for Christ's sake, through faith, chap. 1:18-5:21. Beginning with chap. 6, the apostle speaks of the necessary fruit of justification, sanctification of life, and admonishes his readers to unflagging zeal in striving for holiness. This sanctification requires a constant struggle of the spirit, the new man, which delights in the Law of God, against the flesh, in which dwelleth no good thing, chap. 7. In order to encourage his readers to fight this battle courageously and faithfully, Paul reminds them of the aid of the Holy Spirit, 8:1-17. In the closing verses of this section he calls attention to another factor that might discourage the Christian and tempt him to give up the fight, the many sufferings of this time. Over against this temptation Paul points forward and upward to the glory awaiting Christians, a glory both great and sure, a glory so great that all creation anxiously looks forward to it (vv. 19-22), so great that all Christians groan for it (v. 23), so great that even the Holy Spirit within them supports them with unutter-