

Galatians & Ephesians

Sunday Class 11/5/2023

Plan

1. Big scale - Look at the book as a whole
2. Magnifying glass - Important theme, argument, and/or verses
3. Zoom out again - Impact



Galatians as a Whole

First impressions?

- What are some of the most important themes or concepts in Galatians?
- What is a verse (or verses) that stood out?
- Where do you see Law? Where do you see Gospel?
- Is there anything that is hard to understand? Or hard to put into practice?

Galatians as a Whole

Recipients:

- Galatia was visited by Paul in his first journey (Acts 13-14, 46-48 AD)
- Acts 15:1-2, 5 — this issue sounds a lot like what Paul is addressing!
- Probably written before the Council of Jerusalem since Paul doesn't mention it

Galatians as a Whole

Content:

- Kind of severe (No thanksgiving section)
- Some self-defense by Paul
- What is Christianity's relationship to Judaism?
- What does it look like to be a Christian?
- What does Jesus mean in all of this?
- How am I saved?

Important Theme in Galatians - Law

How can we reconcile the way Paul talks in Gal. 3:23-26 and 5:1-2 with Gal. 5:19-21 and 6:2?

Is the Law good or bad?

Important Theme in Galatians - Law

“We therefore unanimously believe, teach, and confess that in its strict sense the law is a divine teaching in which the righteous, unchanging will of God revealed how human beings were created in their nature, thoughts, words, and deeds to be pleasing and acceptable to God.”

Book of Concord, Formula of Concord, Solid Declaration, Art. V, 17.

Important Theme in Galatians - Law

1. Since the Fall, the Law encounters people as a holy power of curse and condemnation because of humanity's sin.
2. When the Law uncovers and condemns sin, this isn't in opposition to God's grace in Christ but actually serves it.

Important Theme in Galatians - Law

3. Jesus, being born a Jew, took on the Law and its demands and succeeds in following them. When he is killed by the so-called keepers of the Law, he broke the reign of sin and redeemed all the sinners who were under the curse of the Law.

4. The holy Law is not abolished but fulfilled, removed from the power of sin, and restored with fresh power. By the power of the Spirit, the Law is on believers hearts and makes them capable of deeds of love.

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Important Theme in Galatians - Law

So is the Law good or bad?

The Law is good! Sin is bad, and fallen humans are bad.

- When the Law is convicting us of our sin, it is good
- When the Law is showing us how badly we need Jesus, it is good
- When the Law is showing us that even Christians are still sinful, it is good
- When the Law is guiding us to love God and our neighbor, it is good

Significant Passage - Gal. 4:21-31

What does “allegorically” mean? Is it...

- “This story isn’t true and I’ll find symbolism to mean whatever I want.”
- “I’ll use the rest of Scripture to help me understand more about this passage than what meets the eye.”

Significant Passage - Gal. 4:21-31

In 4:27, Paul quotes Isaiah 54:1

“Rejoice, O barren one who does not bear; break forth and cry aloud, you who are not in labor! For the children of the desolate one will be more than those of the one who has a husband.”

Significant Passage - Gal. 4:21-31

Why does Paul tie this to Sarah and Hagar?

- It's possible that the Judaizers were using Sarah and Hagar in their arguments
- Typology, seeing something in the Old Testament that has a greater fulfillment in Christ
- Sarah is only ever mentioned once in the OT outside of Genesis, Isa. 51:1-2
 - She's the one who gave birth to those "who pursue righteousness."

Impact of Galatians

- Accepted as Scripture from the early days
 - “There is no other letter which has any better claim to be regarded as Paul’s work than Galatians.”
- Used in ongoing Law-Gospel debates
 - Third use of the Law
 - “What if Paul only meant cultural laws when he talked about the Law?”
- Luther’s Commentary on Galatians (1535)

Impact of Galatians

- How is Galatians and its message particularly important now?
- Who needs to read this book/hear this message?
 - Don't just say "everyone"
- How does reading this book change the way Christians live?
- How does reading this book change the way Christians speak about their faith?

Ephesians as a Whole

First impressions?

- What are some of the most important themes or concepts in Ephesians?
- What is a verse (or verses) that stood out?
- Where do you see Law? Where do you see Gospel?
- Is there anything that is hard to understand? Or hard to put into practice?

Ephesians as a Whole - TLSB Imagery

At an early Christian Baptism, cool water would stream down people's heads and necks when they stepped away from the font. As they shivered through the baptismal prayers, droplets would fall from the tresses of their hair and land in puddles at their feet. The droplets would draw circles on the puddles' surfaces as the water slowly rolled across the floor, uniting with other droplets and puddles. Though the people baptized were different—and even from different ethnicities, ages, and social levels—the water and the Word of Baptism united them to share new life, sealing, enlightening, and washing in Christ.

At their Baptism, the Ephesians became something more than cold and damp. Baptism unites believers into one Body as easily as water meets and merges on a floor. Paul's Letter to the Ephesians shows that Baptism united Jews and Gentiles, leaders and followers, and all believers across all generations.

Ephesians as a Whole - TLSB Setting

Ephesus was well situated as a trade center, with its harbor, access to the Cayster River, and location close to the Maeander Valley. It was a free city, famous for its temple to the Greek goddess Artemis and also for its thriving Jewish population, which enjoyed considerable privilege (see Ant 14:223–30). See map, p 1886.



Ephesians as a Whole - TLSB Central Issue

According to Ac 18–20, Paul spent nearly three years with the Ephesian congregation, more time than with any other mission congregation he served. He first visited a group of disciples at Ephesus during his third missionary journey (AD 52–55).

The depth of his relationship with the Ephesians shows through in the theological depth of this Pastoral Letter and its liturgical character. The key problem Paul addresses is division between the congregation's Jewish and Gentile members. His opening prayer, written in the traditional Jewish Berakah pattern (see note, 1:3–14), addresses the issue of unity and thanks God for His answer in Christ. Paul returns to the themes of unity, Baptism, and prayer repeatedly in the Letter (see Luther and the outline below).

After Paul wrote Ephesians in c AD 60, he sent Timothy to Ephesus as a leader because false doctrine afflicted the congregation (1Tm 1:3). It eventually became a leading church in Asia Minor (Rv 2:1–7). According to the early Christian historian Eusebius, the apostle John settled in Ephesus for his final years of ministry (NPNF 2 1:132).

Important Theme in Ephesians - Election

Eph. 1:3-5

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love he predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will.”

Important Theme in Ephesians - Election

Election comes up a lot...

- Romans 8:28-30, 9:9-26
- Ephesians 1:3-5, 11, 2:10
- 1 Peter 1:1-2
- Acts 2:23
- Genesis 50:20

Important Theme in Ephesians - Election

Election goes hand in hand with:

- Grace by faith
- God's judgment

“Why are some saved but not others?”

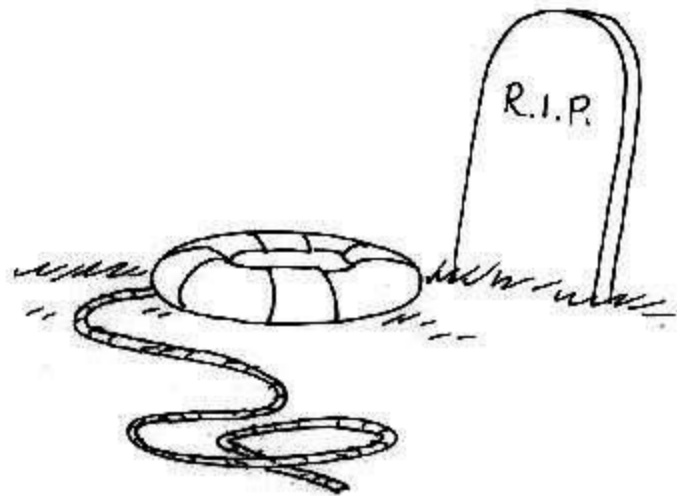
Important Theme in Ephesians - Election

Solution #1 - Synergism

- “People are only saved because they choose to believe in Jesus.”
- “You can only be elected if you choose to run.”
- “Just because God knows in advance doesn’t mean he’s making it happen.”

Held by:

- Baptist
- Some Roman Catholics (especially in Luther’s day)



SYNERGISM



MONERGISM

Important Theme in Ephesians - Election

Solution #2 - Double Predestination

- “If God’s in total control and some people go to Hell, then God must choose for them to go to Hell.”

Held by:

- Calvinist Tradition (Reformed, Presbyterian)

Important Theme in Ephesians - Election

Solution #3 - Universalism

- “God is in complete control, but he wouldn’t let people go to Hell”
- “We must believe that there is a Hell, but we can also hope that it is empty.”

Held by:

- Mainline protestant
- Some Roman Catholic theologians

Important Theme in Ephesians - Election

What's our solution?

NONE

Important Theme in Ephesians - Election

What's our solution?

- It's a paradox
- Those who are saved are saved completely by God alone
- Those who are damned are damned completely by their own fault

Important Theme in Ephesians - Election

How is that helpful?

- Because YOU are elected
- It's all Gospel. It's all God's grace through and through. No need to worry about your own strength
- No boasting! (Eph. 2:9)

Significant Passage - Ephesians 5:22-33

God has a plan

- Even (or especially) in our home lives
- Wives, live for your husband. Husbands, die for your wives.

Submission

- More than anything else, something that Jesus does!
- Eph. 5:21 says it's something we all do!

Impact of Ephesians

- How is Ephesians and its message particularly important now?
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