

Clearing the Ground

Introduction to Galatians

Sin is still part of a believers life, but death itself finished sin.

Romans 6:6-7 For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body ruled by sin might be rendered powerless so that we may no longer be enslaved to sin, **7** since a person who has died is freed from sin.

And of course sin must be dealt with (there is a penalty to sin), but Jesus himself has dealt with the penalty.

Galatians 3:13 Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, because it is written, **Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree.**

2 Corinthians 5:21 He made the one who did not know sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

The sale of indulgences promised, “as soon as the coin in the coffer rings, the soul from purgatory springs.”

A hymn which captures the reformers response, “the vilest offender who truly believes, that moment from Jesus a pardon receives.” ~ To God be the Glory by Frances J. van Alstyne, 1870

This medieval question has been dominate in Christian thought for the past 500 years.

How do I get to heaven? How can I be sure? How do I know I've done enough? How do I know I won't go to hell?

These questions were extremely urgent considering the average life span of someone who lived in the 1500's.

What if Paul wasn't answering the question, “How do I get to heaven?”

What does it mean to live in the vision of a new heavens and a new earth?

How do we apply what Paul describes in Ephesians 1:9-10 in our everyday lives?

Ephesians 1:9-10 He made known to us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure that he purposed in Christ **10** as a plan for the right time—to bring everything together in Christ, both things in heaven and things on earth in him.

The point - the issue in Galatians is not work righteousness versus grace righteousness (justification by faith), but the relationship of Christianity to Judaism. As we zoom out it is about the movement of the gospel (the message of Jesus) in the world and how it relates to the narrower world of the Jewish nation.

What is the church? Is it a reform movement within Judaism or is it its own thing?

1 Thessalonians 1:9 for they themselves report[a] what kind of reception we had from you: how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God

The one God of Israel has revealed himself in a fresh way as the God who sent his Son and then sent the Spirit of the Son.

Galatians 4:4-5 When the time came to completion, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, **5** to redeem those under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons.

Terms of importance:

Legalism - in Galatians, was a religious system that combined Christianity with the Torah in a way that demanded total commitment to Israel's law as the climax of one's conversion to Christ.

Judaizers - Jews who had accepted Jesus as the Messiah and were seeking to supplement Christianity or perfect Christianity by adding the specific laws of Moses.

Paul isn't simply addressing a theological question. He is right in the middle of social, political, and theological confusion and upheaval.

When you place your faith in Jesus you become part of God's family. You become part of the Messiah-people. This is a unifying factor worldwide across traditional social and ethnic boundaries.

Galatians 4:19 My children, I am again suffering labor pains for you until Christ is formed in you.

As brothers and sisters are we living in unity and displaying the kingdom that Jesus has already inaugurated at his birth?

Do we live as a diverse, Jesus centered body?

Are we more concerned about who is going to heaven and who is not going to heaven (informed by the Enlightenment / extreme focus on the individual) wishing we could just escape the pain of this world?

Or -> Are we leaving our lives fully in the present declaring that Jesus is Lord and making a real difference in the lives of our neighbors? Are we actually living what we say we are praying, your kingdom come on earth as it is in heaven?