

7 Gift Giving

It Is No Longer I Who Live, But Christ

Gal. 2:20

Introduction:

1. "Christ gave Himself up for me." Armed with this gift, Paul the persecutor had become Paul the preacher.
2. He had been commissioned in much the same way as Isaiah.
 - a. Isaiah had seen the Lord, been made aware of his sinfulness and had been forgiven by God. Understanding the gift that he had been given he took the message of God's graciousness to others. Cf. Isa. 6:1-8.
 - b. And so it was for Paul. Having received the gift and been personally transformed he became a harbinger of the gift to others.
 - c. He had communicated it to the Galatians but they were deserting Him who had called them by the grace of Christ (Gal. 1:6).
 - d. Paul is calling them back to the truth of the gospel, and we need to be reminded over and over again of the great gift and of its power.
3. Our study this morning is going to take us into Galatians chapters 3-6 as we make some on-going observations about this gift and its effect on those who are touched by it.

Discussion:

- I. The gift is received on the basis of faith, not on the standard of worthiness in the Law.
 - A. This is the point Paul has made clear in 2:16.
 1. This was the conclusion that had been reached before (2:1-10). Gentiles did not have to be circumcised and observe the Law of Moses in order to be saved.
 2. This was the conclusion reached in Acts 15, and necessarily implied by the episode in Cornelius' household (Acts 10, 11).
 - B. But Peter and some other Jews had not been straightforward about this (2:11ff) and so Paul opposed their withdrawing and holding themselves aloof from the Gentiles while fearing the party of the circumcision.
 - C. Paul asks in 3:1ff if they had received the Spirit by works of Law or by hearing with faith?
 1. Obviously they had received the Spirit by faith and not by works of Law. Their reception of the Spirit was marked by miraculous manifestation (5). It is interesting that miraculous manifestations were the transition point when Jews accepted Gentiles as having received the gift of Christ before (Acts 10:44-48; 11:15; 15:8-9, 12).

2. Faith had always been the appropriate way of responding to God.
 - a. Abraham was an example.
 - b. And more the promise to Abraham included “all nations (including Gentiles) being blessed in him.”
 - c. So the blessing is received by faith. The gift of God’s grace is accepted by the hand of faith.
3. But those insisting on accepting it through Judaistic tradition (the Law) missed the point that it was by faith.
4. Gal. 3:12 causes me some difficulty. But I believe that what Paul is saying in this text is that God’s revelation has always communicated that a right relationship with God is by faith as the means. Living by faith means that you act in trust in what God has said. When Paul says, “The Law is not of faith,” he means that allegiance to Judaistic tradition (ex. circumcision) is not of faith. When he says, “He who practices them shall live by them,” he means that those who live by faith practice what the Lord reveals. (There is no contradiction between the revelation of God in the O.T. and the N.T. as if the O.T. was based on works and the N.T. is based on faith. All are based on faith. The contrast is between Judaistic traditions (circumcision and observance of the Law of Moses) and faith.)

II. Receiving the gift of Christ has resulted in radical and magnificent changes.

- A. It had resulted in radical and magnificent changes for Paul—persecutor to preacher.
- B. And also for the Galatians.
 1. Every aspect of the Galatians new life grew out of the gift event.
 2. They were a part of a new community.
 - a. It was not the same as being a proselyte or a convert to Judaism. They were not being converted to Judaism. Therefore circumcision was not relevant. They were not under obligation to submit to Jewish traditions.
 - b. But believing Jews were a part of this same new community.
 - 1) Paul was no longer bound by his Jewish ancestral traditions (Gal. 1:13ff).
 - 2) Note how Paul expresses it in 3:26-29.
 - c. The new community is the family of God. It is by faith in Christ. We are baptized into Him. We are all now descendants of Abraham and heirs according to promise.
 3. Those in this new community have had the patterns of their lives changed.
 - a. Jews are no longer bound by ancestral traditions. Their allegiance is to God, not men and their ancestral traditions (1:10-14).
 - b. Gentiles are not under obligation to live like Jews, but neither can they serve those that are no gods (4:8-11).
 - c. “Neither circumcision, nor Uncircumcision means anything, but a new creation” (Gal. 5:6; 6:15).

- d. What matters is “faith working through love” (Gal. 5:6). What does that look like?
 - 1) Serving one another (5:13).
 - 2) Loving your neighbor, not biting and devouring (5:14-15).
 - 3) Walking by the Spirit, not carrying out the desires of the flesh (5:16-22).
 - 4) But executing the fruit of the Spirit (5:22-26).
- C. Once we have received the gift of Christ having received the Spirit of God we now walk in His statutes, keep His ordinances and do them (Ezek. 11:19-20; 36:26-27; 37:14). “Then they will be My people, and I shall be their God” (Ezek. 11:20).
 1. It is this gift of Christ that softens hearts.
 2. It is this gift of Christ is accepted by faith.
 3. It is this gift of Christ that brings us into the new community.
 4. And it is this gift of Christ that changes us in such radical ways that every aspect of our new life grows out of it.

Conclusion:

1. Do you understand now why Paul said, “I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me”?
2. Would you allow the gift to transform you?
3. Will you respond in faith?
4. Would you be baptized into Christ and become an heir to the promise made to Abraham?