

LESSON ON GALATIANS

May 15, 2019

Martin Luther

In his *Commentary on Galatians* Luther presents his case for two different uses of the Law. He starts with offering examples of various types of righteousness.

In civil righteousness we abide by the laws of the state.

In a ceremonial righteousness we pay attention to the manners taught to us by our parents.

From there Luther talks about the righteousness of the Law and the righteousness of faith.

Righteousness of the Law refers to a righteousness which actively seeks to fulfill God's Law.

Luther believed this is done in vain so then we turn to the passive righteousness of Christ.

Law is removed and the Gospel is placed before us.

Both the Law and Gospel are necessary but both must be kept within their bounds.

Righteousness of the Law applies to the *old man* and righteousness of faith to the *new man*.

Both exist within the believer.

Luther asserts that although we commit sin, sin should not plague our conscience.

We know we are in Christ.

Civil Use of the Law in Galatians

Law is given in order to restrain sin.

Restraint of sin does not lead to righteousness.

Very fact that there is sin to be restrained is an indication that we are unrighteous.

First use of the Law is to bridle the wicked.

So we have governments and civil ordinances ready to bind people who act against the law.

It does not produce salvation but it does provide for the preservation of all things.

Spiritual Use of the Law in Galatians

Law is used to reveal to us our sin and our contempt of God.

It reveals the judgment and wrath which we deserve from God.

It is meant to defeat the pride of an individual and to reveal sin.

It is to make us feel the burden of the Law so that we might despair.

Law causes us to seek the help which we cannot find in ourselves or elsewhere.

Formula of Concord distinguishes three uses of the Law in Article VI.

- 1) Outward discipline might be maintained against wild, disobedient men (and that wild and intractable men might be restrained, as though by certain bars)
- 2) Men thereby may be led to the knowledge of their sins
- 3) After they are regenerate they might have a fixed rule according to which they are to regulate and direct their whole life

Third use of the Law countered the belief that the Law was no longer needed.

Curb – the Law keeps the sinful nature under check but does not stop sin.

Mirror – the Law serves as a perfect reflection of what God created human heart to be.

Guide – the Law becomes the helper for all believers.

In Other Writings

In *Against the Heavenly Prophets* Luther talks about five different articles of the Christian faith.

- 1) Law of God
- 2) Gospel
- 3) Judgment – Work of putting to death the old man
- 4) Love toward the neighbor
- 5) Proclaim the law and its works so people will know works to do and those to be left undone.

In still other writings he offers ways to do good works:

to be chaste

to refrain from lying, from deceit, from stealing, from murder

to not act contrary to the Ten Commandments (true channel through which all good works flow)

In his *Lectures on Romans*, works of the Law are those that take place at the urging of the Law.

Works of faith are those things done solely for the love of God.

Same act could be either a work of the Law or a work of faith depending on the motivation.

We gain a genuine desire for the law so that everything is done with willing hearts (not in fear).

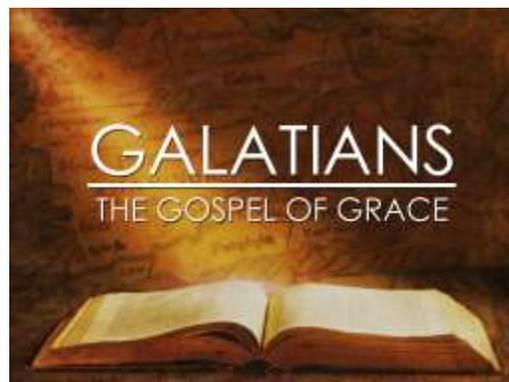
Adhering to the law does not justify us in the eyes of God.

However, there are good works to be done that flow out of the Ten Commandments.

For Luther the Law is a light that shows us our sin.

Gospel is a light that shows us the mercy of God through Christ.

Law makes us despair so that the Gospel may come and give us hope.



Galatians 4:8-11

Paul adopts a sober tone once more as he broods over the present threats to the Galatians.

He poses a question designed to expose the absurdity of their infatuation with the Law.

Galatians are contemplating a conversion in reverse (back to their former state of slavery).

Missionaries impressed on them the importance of keeping the Sabbath at appointed time.

Paul is afraid that all his work of preaching and teaching will be subverted and come to nothing.

Galatians 4:12-20

Paul now makes a different appeal to the people based on their past relationship with him. He is passionate that he does not want them to forsake the bond they once shared. Paul (like an aggrieved mother) sees his children going astray. He implores them to remember their birth and early upbringing.

For the first time in this letter, Paul addresses the Galatians with a direct imperative. Because he has previously become like the Galatians, they should now become like him. In other letters Paul presents himself as an example to be imitated. In the ancient world moral teachers were expected to provide a model for followers to emulate. Paul also urged his readers to be conformed to the example of Christ.

But in this verse Paul gives the imitation a different twist. He highlights that he made a decision to reject the practices of Torah to live like them. For the sake of his mission as an apostle to the Gentiles, he tore down barriers between them. Ironically the Galatians were now starting to observe Jewish laws. Paul wanted them to stop and imitate him in living a life that was not subject to the Law.

Whatever the reason, his physical condition required him to travel to Galatia. Galatians received him graciously as if he were a heavenly messenger. Rather than despising Paul they saw through his outward affliction and received him with joy. In vs. 15 Paul is not asking the Galatians what happened to the feeling of blessedness they had. He is asking what happened to the word of blessing they once pronounced on him.



Why are they now criticizing him?
Once they held Paul in high esteem but now they see Paul as an enemy.
Paul portrays himself as a straight-shooter.
His Law-free gospel is the truth of God.
Truth of God is vision of one table where Jews and Gentiles sit together with Christ.
They are not divided by the barriers of the Law.
He challenges the others who are preventing the Galatians from living in the truth.
In principle, Paul has no objection to other teachers coming in for a good cause.
He did not need to monitor everything that happened in his absence.

In other letters Paul speaks of his relationship to the community as that of a father to a child. In this case he fears he has to start all over with them. It is as though they had never been born into their new life in Christ. It was as though the birth process was incomplete. So Paul pictures himself as a mother in labor pains, struggling to give birth to the Galatians. His vision is for the community as a whole to take on the character of Christ. Christ will live in the community just as Christ lives in Paul.

Galatians 4:21-5:1

In this final argument, Paul wants to win over the readers. He demonstrates that the Law-free mission to the Gentiles is prefigured in the Torah. It is important to remember that his argument is not directed against Jews or Judaism. Target is Jewish-Christian missionaries. With sarcasm, Paul suggests that even the Law supports his gospel message. Paul wants to force the Galatians to hear the story another time and in another way.

If the Galatians listen to the Law then they will know that it says –
Throw out the slave woman and her child
For the missionaries, the true descendants of Abraham (through Isaac) should be circumcised. Gentiles converted by Paul who remain uncircumcised would be like Ishmael (illegitimate). Eventually they would be sent away without inheriting the promise. Paul claims that it is the uncircumcised Gentile converts who correspond to Isaac.

The two women are two covenants.
Covenant of promise is God's covenant with Abraham.
When rightly understood the Law teaches the covenant of promise and freedom.
Difference between two covenants is their results.
One bears children for slavery and the other for freedom.
In 4:24c the NIV reads: *One covenant is from Mount Sinai.*
Hagar represents the Law and is the covenant proclaimed by the Jewish-Christian missionaries. They are bearing children for slavery by preaching a Law-observant gospel.
Hagar is the mother of Ishmael, who is known as the progenitor of the Arab people.

In Greek the word *corresponds* does not mean *represents*.
Its root meaning is *to stand in line with* something.
Paul is lining up the symbolic elements of the Genesis story in two columns of opposites.

Hagar	Sarah
Ishmael	Isaac
Flesh	Promise / Spirit
Mt. Sinai –	
Present Jerusalem	Jerusalem above

Mt. Sinai stands in the same column as the present Jerusalem.
He can therefore link the Sinai covenant with the city of Jerusalem (in slavery with her children). Both are associated with the rigorous adherence to the Law.
But the Jerusalem above is the free woman (Sarah) and she is their mother.

Remember that the Jerusalem church was the source of many conflicts and troubles for Paul. Jerusalem church remains in bondage to the Law. Political captivity of Jerusalem also provides real-world background for this identification. By contrast, Paul believed those who are in Christ are free citizens of a heavenly commonwealth. People of God are children of a heavenly Jerusalem that will be revealed in the life to come. Paul includes his Gentile readers among the children of this heavenly Jerusalem.

In support of his assertion Paul cites a passage from Isaiah 54:1. Reference to a barren woman recalls the story of Sarah before the birth of Isaac. Deutero-Isaiah associates the increase of Zion's children with the gathering of Gentiles. Therefore Sarah (allegorical figure for the heavenly city) will cry out joyfully. Birth of many children will include Gentile converts. It is the ultimate fulfillment of God's promise to Abraham and Sarah. Quote affirms the central theme of God's gracious restoration of Israel. It includes a universal embrace of the nations.

His own Gentile mission was blessed by God with remarkable fruitfulness. It stood in contrast to the Law-observant Jewish mission to Gentiles (symbolized by Hagar). It has not been met with the same success. Galatians are to remember their status as children and heirs of the promise. It is bound by their relationship with Isaac. In the Greek the language is not *like* Isaac but *in the line of* Isaac. They are heirs for whom the promise was destined from the very start.

For Paul the Torah-observant Jewish Christians are persecutors of Paul and his converts. Paul is still being persecuted because he refuses to preach circumcision. And the Jewish-Christian missionaries are excluding uncircumcised Gentiles from fellowship. Jewish-Christian missionaries are placed in the same column as Hagar and Ishmael. Gentile Christians are identified as Sarah's free children.

Galatians 4:30 is a quote from Genesis 21:10. It is Sarah's command to Abraham. Paul lifts it out of context and treats it as a command for the hearers of his letter. Scripture is telling them to throw out the rival missionaries and their converts. Inheritance belongs rightly to the children of the free woman. They should not tolerate the presence of troublemakers who lure them into slavery. They should expel the missionaries from their churches. Because Christ has set us free, we are to take a firm stand in the freedom we have been given.

Children of the Heavenly Father

Karolina (Lina) Wilhelmina Sandell was the daughter of a pastor. She was born on October 3, 1832, at Froderyd, Smaland, Sweden. When she was twelve years old she was stricken with a paralysis. She was declared incurable by physicians but later recovered her health.

When she was 26 her father fell from a boat and drowned before her eyes.
In the fall of 1860 her mother also died.
In 1861 she joined the editorial staff of the Evangelical National Foundation (publishing house).
In 1867 she married C.O. Berg, a temperance man and wealthy Stockholm merchant.
She died July 26, 1903.

Lina started to write hymns at an early age.
Present text was written while she was still in her teens.
Translation was done by Ernst William Olson (a graduate of Augustana College, Rock Island).

Context: By the end of the 1840s and the beginning of the 1850s Europe was changing.
In France there were riots in Paris that had spread to Stockholm.
In 1850 Sweden sent troops to help Denmark.
Conservative ideas of the king were replaced with the strong liberal forces.
They wanted to completely change Swedish society.
In 1848 Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels published *The Communist Manifesto*.

“In the midst of these revolutionary and turbulent . . . times a small and sick Lina Sandell sat in her favorite ash tree in the garden of the vicarage and wrote about the safety of the faithful crowd. Her first version of the text said nothing about children only about the faithful crowd of Christians throughout history. The first verse started:
No one can be safer than the faithful little crowd.

Later an editor changed her text and put in the image of children.

The English-language translator of the hymn, Ernst Olson, was born in Sweden.
He came to the United States at an early age with his family.
Olson made his translation in 1925 for the LBW
Mistakenly he thought the origin of the hymn was a response to the death of Lina’s father.
He entitled the hymn – *A Hymn Born of a Broken Heart*.

One of the omitted stanzas reflects more the political situation of the time:
*Praise the Lord in joyful numbers.
Your Protector never slumbers.
At the will of your Defender
Every foeman must surrender.*

Children of the Heavenly Father was put in the context of contemporary Swedish life.
Today it is the baptism hymn in Sweden although it says nothing about baptism.

Assignment for May 22

Read Galatians 5 and 6