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<http://www.fbcweb.org/doctrines.html>

Personal Study of the Bible-73
Galatians 3:6-9 – Blessedness of Faith/Humility vs. Woefulness of Pride/Arrogance

In the first three chapters of Galatians, we have noted, among other things, Paul's blistering language against negative volition of the Galatians and the Judaizers. The harshness of Paul's tone in dealing with those who compromise God's Word on grace is unmistakable. With this in mind, reread Galatians 1:6-10; 2:3-13; 3:1-5. In regard to those who opposed the Word of God, especially about grace, Paul had no problem invoking on them divine curses and calling them deserters and idiots. I wonder how many of those listeners would say something like: "What happened to Paul?" "Where is his love?" "He must have a problem!" "I am not going to let him beat me up like that!" Whatever the number, I am certain there were a lot more who said stuff like this than those who responded to his correction with true repentance with regard to God and His plan. Paul made a lot of enemies precisely because he served the Lord rather than man (reread Galatians 1:10), and by doing so was committed to truth first and foremost. A teacher who will not fight for truth is not worth listening to. A teacher who teaches to please the congregation neither loves truth nor is striving to please the Lord, Galatians 1:10.

The next section to read is Galatians 3:6-9. Note how Paul demonstrates the doctrine of justification by faith apart from the works of the Law through the example of Abraham, who lived long before the giving of the Law, the Ten Commandments. Paul goes so far as to call church age believers "sons of Abraham" to point to, not being physical descendants, but to being spiritual descendants. Like Abraham who believed in Yahweh for salvation (read Gen. 15:6), all true believers are saved by faith alone apart from any human works—period! As Paul puts it in verse 9, "those who are of faith are blessed with Abraham the believer." The person who believes in Jesus Christ receives the perfect and permanent righteousness of God at the instant of regeneration totally apart from any works. Salvation is a grace gift (read Eph. 2:8-10). As long as a person thinks he can save himself by his works, he will never place trust in Christ alone. It is only by trust in Christ that man enters into union with Christ and all that Christ accomplished in His human obedience and salvific work on the Cross.

It was the arrogant Judaizers who had infiltrated the Galatian church who made an issue out of human works and therefore inserted human righteousness and pride in the plan of God. In our study of the spiritual virtues of the Beatitudes, we have been noting the first virtue apart from which there is no entrance or growth in the plan of God: being "poor of spirit," in a word "humility." I attempted, to the best of my ability, to drive the point home about the ubiquity and perniciousness of pride. We all live in the modern atmosphere of pride—it is in very air (Zeitgeist) that we breathe. Pride is our favorite vice—there are no exceptions. To be clear: God absolutely hates pride; it is listed first in *His* list of things that He detests the most, read Proverbs 6:17-19. One of the reasons He hates pride so much is that it blocks the grace of God (read James

4:6). The more pride a person has the less he is going to be able to believe and live out the Word of God and its spiritual truths. Skepticism is simply a symptom of a deep problem with pride.

Not only does God hate pride, so does Paul. Paul understood all too well that pride decimates the spiritual life by destroying respect for God, the plan of God, and love for the Word of God. Pride rejects rebuke, correction, and instruction in righteousness, and “sound doctrine,” as typified by believers “wanting their ears tickled and accumulating for themselves teachers in accordance with their own desires, and will turn away from truth, and will turn aside to myths” (read 2 Tim. 3:16-4:4)—the myths are always associated with arrogant trends of the negative believer in the area of “strengths” with regard to that believer’s *natural* talents. I have pointed out in previous PSBs how livid and scathing Paul was at these Galatians as well as at Peter and Barnabas who caved in to human pressure to water down the Word of God, reread Galatians 2:11-13. I am certain that Peter did not like Paul “opposing him to his face” in front of everyone! However, Peter did love the truth enough to get over his hurt feelings from Paul calling him on the carpet. Years later Peter spoke of the beloved Paul and the wisdom God gave to him, read 2 Peter 3:15-16.

In Galatians 3:9 Paul speaks of the *blessings* on those who come to God in faith *alone*. At FBC, we have been noting the eight states of blessedness in the Sermon on the Mount where Christ gave a series of blessed, beatitude states for those who bow before the grace of God, recognizing their own sinfulness and need for God’s grace. However, arrogance always *thinks* it does not need to bow before God. Rather, the arrogant are always offended at any and all correction.

There is only one denunciation of legalism and religious hypocrisy that I can think of in Scripture that exceeds Paul’s, and that is Christ’s, read Matthew 23:11-33. In contrast to the blessedness of those with humility, even *during* the most adverse circumstances in the Beatitudes, note how many “woes” Christ heaps on the religious legalist in what could be called the “Woe-attitudes.” Woes pass judgment on apostate people who refuse to recognize and bow before the full will of God, before total truth. Christ’s woes on them describe their character as well as a divine pledge of judgment if those lives continue in their wicked pride. What a stark contrast to Christ’s blessed message for the humble in the Beatitudes where He praised the humble for their character and pledged divine rewards for it. The only difference between those who move into the category of “blessedness” and those who persist in the category of “woes” comes down to humility versus arrogance. The point in this discursive paragraph is to illustrate that Paul’s love for the Truth as reflected in his vehement attitude toward pride and human self-righteousness is perfectly in line with Christ’s. Every believer should examine his own life and with God’s help do all that he can to progressively remove pride. Failure here means failure everywhere as far as growth in the plan of God. One of the most blessed sights for a teaching pastor is to see the *blessed* state of positive believers and their excitement about the Word of God, and one of the most painful things for him to see is believers whom he dearly loves persist in a state of temporal *woes* (usually manifested in the ongoing woeful vexations, instead of intensified blessedness, in the face of tests and challenges of life) due to pride and arrogance—i.e., living their lives according to what they want instead of embracing the blessed plan of God. Only pride has the destructive power to take believers who once loved *all* of Bible doctrine and reduce them to apathy and negativity toward the Word or perverting the Christian way of life

into a Word of Faith philosophy, which sees Bible doctrine *mainly* as a means to remove problems so more temporal and material *treasures* can be gained (call this what you want, but it is not true love for God as such).

Ever wonder why the virtues in the Beatitudes do not resonate with much of contemporary Christianity? Or wonder why they have even been laughed at by those who call themselves doctrinal believers? Why is it that one of the most profound messages of Christ, one that has been recognized as such by believers and unbelievers for two thousand years as one of the greatest messages the world has ever heard, is such a hard sell to contemporary Christianity? It should not be that hard to answer that question. God help us all!

In Galatians 3:6 Paul notes that Abraham believed in God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness. This does not mean that Abraham was not righteous to others before salvation. Abraham may have had a fairly good standing with men; he may have had a fair amount of integrity. However, in God's sight, Abraham was a condemned sinner. You see: righteousness was imputed (an accounting term), not imparted, to Abraham on the ground of faith, not his works. It was not his integrity with others or lack thereof that had anything to do with his salvation. Paul's point in this section is that if faith without works was sufficient for Abraham, why should we turn from faith to law and human works? "Abraham believed." That is faith. Faith says to God, "I believe what you say." Apart from such faith no believer will follow the Lord. There is no such thing as a skeptical or unsure believer who will ever be motivated to really live out the Christ-centered life, let alone pick up his cross *daily* (read Luke 9:23). A believer must live in absolute assurance of the reality of God and Christ before these truths are more real than the details of life and kosmos diabolicus.

It must have startled the Jewish legalists when Paul told them that these Gentiles, not Jews with the same blood, who were true sons of Abraham, read 3:7, 14, 26, 27, 29. Through the new birth all can sit down with Abraham as a son of the father of the faithful. All it takes is faith alone in Christ alone to gain a perfect and permanent righteous standing with God. However, to grow to maturity like Abraham requires a life of progressive spiritual growth. For a good look at Abraham's humility or grace orientation to God that made his growth possible, read Genesis 18:27 = *so much for the modern myth and cultish attitude in much of contemporary Christianity that believers just need to get more human self-esteem!* What a contrast between the pride with its inevitable frustration/woes caused by pop psychology/culture and humility and blessedness caused by living in plan of God! Read Matthew 11:25-30 (among other things, note the ones to whom God does not reveal spiritual truths, vs. 25—once again the spoiler of the spiritual life is always pride; it is the silent killer!).

*In 'Ehyeh,
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