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

Personal Study of the Bible-88 **Galatians 4:9 – The Grace of God**

Galatians 4:9 But now that you have come to know God, or rather to be known by God, how is it that you turn back again to the weak and worthless elemental things, to which you desire to be enslaved all over again?

Galatians 4:9 νῦν δὲ γνόντες θεόν, μᾶλλον δὲ γνωσθέντες ὑπὸ θεοῦ, πῶς ἐπιστρέφετε πάλιν ἐπὶ τὰ ἀσθενῆ καὶ πτωχὰ στοιχεῖα οἷς πάλιν ἄνωθεν δουλεύειν θέλετε;

“But now” (νῦν δὲ). The adversative conjunction (δὲ = de) sets up the contrast between the time when the Galatians first believed in Christ in a context of grace and their present status of no longer believing in Christ in the context of grace. They are now in legalism. They have been convinced by the Judaizers that human works are part of the salvation and spiritual life package. They should not be in this status. God’s will for every believer is progressive sanctification. However, it is very easy to go into reversionism and hard to recover. The spiritual life demands diligence. No believer can afford to be complacent in about the spiritual life—no one! Read Deut. 13:4; 10:20; Micah 6:8; Matt. 22:37; Rom. 12:11; Titus 2:14; Heb. 3:12; 4:1, 11; Rev. 3:19. If you do not have zeal for God and the things of God, you may need to take another look at what kind of God you think you have.

“that you have come to know God” (γνόντες θεόν). The Galatians did know God when they were first saved. They certainly had, at least, a personal relationship with Him. This is impossible for any person apart from supernatural infused grace. Why in the world would they give up that relationship for legalism? Why would anyone ever give up their Supreme Treasure for anything else?

“or rather known by God” (μᾶλλον δὲ γνωσθέντες ὑπὸ θεοῦ). The point Paul is making is that God knew them and accepted them long before they could ever do anything to please Him. They only knew God because they were first known by Him. What a blessed thought to know that God knew us personally before we were ever born; before this universe came into existence, He knew us each by name along with all of our issues. He knew us and provided everything we would ever need to grow in a loving relationship with Him.

“how is it that you turn again to the weak and beggarly elements” (πῶς ἐπιστρέφετε πάλιν ἐπὶ τὰ ἀσθενῆ καὶ πτωχὰ στοιχεῖα). The “turning” is one of turning one’s back on the grace of God. Remember, the Galatians were not licentious like the Corinthians. The Galatians were very moral: this is how they measured their “spiritual” lives. The “again” (πάλιν) shows that they were legalistic before they believed in Christ. Note that legalism is called “weak” and “beggarly.” Legalism is weak in that it provides no spiritual power for the spiritual life. Legalism is “beggarly” in comparison to the riches of God’s grace. Legalism, man’s efforts, cannot

provide salvation or sanctification. Man's efforts are not only feeble, they are trash compared to God's treasure (Philip. 3:8).

“to which you desire again to be in bondage” (οἷς πάλιν ἄνωθεν δουλεύειν θέλετε). Why would they desire to go back and “again” be in bondage? because in legalism people get the focus on themselves: e.g., ‘Look what I did.’ ‘Look how spiritual I am because of . . .’ Legalism always makes an issue out of man's efforts. Grace always puts the focus on God. Grace is the true treasure. It is the true, good, and beautiful.

A few principles (you should read each passage listed):

1. Salvation is all about grace (g-God's, r-riches, a-at, c-Christ's, e-expense).
2. Grace takes the believer to the realm of the supernatural. When I use the word “supernatural,” I am not speaking metaphorically or in some vague spiritual sense. I really mean supernatural in the strictest and most literal way. Grace enables a human being to go from their natural capacities as a human being to *supernatural* capacities. Grace literally enables a man to go far beyond his limited human capacities as a hylemorphic being. To use an analogy, it would be like making a tree into a human being. A tree does not have any natural capacities to be a human being. For me to transform a tree into a person would take supernatural power, like it would to take a human being and transforming him into a being with divine like capacities. I assure you there is a far greater divide between a tree and a man than there is between man and God. It is through grace that, in some way, man becomes partakers of the divine nature (2 Pet. 1:4), born again of the Spirit, not the flesh, into new beings called sons and daughters of God (John 3:6; 2 Cor. 6:18; 1 Jn. 3:2), and given capacity to peer into the deep things of God, which go far beyond what any human eye or human thought could possibly go (1 Cor. 2:9, 10).
3. The Bible teaches us that grace was not only given to save man by lifting him up to God, it was also given that “good works” may *result* in his life (Eph. 2:8-10). The believer is not saved by good works, but he is saved that he would produce good/divine works. These works are superhuman and only possible for those who are created in Christ. The believer's works, divine production if you will, are results of being saved. The Bible says that such production is good and profitable, Titus 2:14; 3:8. In our next few classes at FBC, I will spend more time on the importance of these works for building virtue (volition-1 on our chart).
4. The believer who truly grasps grace is always zealous for God, the spiritual life, and the things of God. How could it be otherwise? Grace truly is amazing. A true zeal for God and His truth is what characterizes any believer who is transformed by grace. The Bible explicitly says that God saved us so we would be zealous for good works (Titus 2:14). It is not in the knowing *alone* that transforms character. It is in the living (volition-1), that changes the character of the believer. The idea that spirituality is all about knowledge is more akin to the teachings of Plato than of Jesus Christ. We must have the knowledge, but it is the living it out that changes the character. One can study the doctrine of ‘Not-gossiping’ all of his life, but if he habitually gossips (volition-1), then his character is one of being a gossip. That is what *he is* regardless of how much doctrine he has. It is in our acts that we sow and reap our vices

and virtues. This is self-evident and undeniable and is why production is so emphasized throughout the Word to the very end, cf., Revelation 22:12 "*Behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to render to every man according to what he has done.*"

5. Grace and legalism cannot co-exist. They are mutually exclusive: Romans 11:6, *But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works, otherwise grace is no longer grace.* This was the problem with the Galatians, they wanted grace + human works. Consider my analogy with the tree: It would be like a tree doing enough works to become a human. Impossible! The tree needs to be supernaturally transformed, and it is out of this transformed nature that it can produce according to its new acquired nature. No one can produce divine good, which requires living before God, apart from supernatural grace. Anything that is not done unto the Lord is dead human works rather than divine works energized and motivated by God. Also, I would add, the spiritual life required for such divine production is far beyond the mere mechanics of 1 John 1:9 and learning. Again, it requires living out God's truths under the Holy Spirit.
6. Life under grace really is a supernatural life. It is a life that is alive with the presence of God. It is a life that loves the Truth, the Whole Truth. It is a life energized by God. It is a life filled with the *supernatural* virtues of faith, hope, and love. While an unbeliever can transform his character from being one of vice (e.g., being a liar and unloving) to great human virtue and love (being honest and loving), it is impossible for him to cultivate any supernatural virtue. These truly are supernatural and are only dispensed through grace, the grace of salvation and then a whole life that lives under grace. There is a vast difference between a virtuous and good man (unbeliever) who directs his life toward others on the basis of human integrity and love for others, and the believer whose entire life is directed by God under the umbrella of the teachings of Grace. They operate in totally different spheres. One is governed by duty and human integrity, the other by God's *supernatural* power, grace, and presence. One has a zeal for human integrity, the other has a zeal for God and the things of God; note the two different orientations of Paul in Philip. 3:4-14. Grace always makes a difference in the way we view God, ourselves, others, and the plan of God. Grace changes everything! How could it not?

In Him, we live, and move, and be! What a deal!

Pastor Don