

THE PARENTHETIC EPISTLES – FAITH

GALATIANS

Paul's epistle to the Galatian Ecclesia is the Divine commentary of the doctrine of JUSTIFICATION, as set forth in the first four chapters of his Epistle to the Romans.

PAUL'S SEVERANCE

Sometime after Paul had been severed (Acts 13:2) and had gone among the nations preaching justification by faith,(Acts 13:39) and had returned to Antioch, Judaizing teachers came down from Jerusalem teaching that " If you should not be circumcised after the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved " Acts 15:1. Gk.

The matter was taken up in the Council of the Apostles in Jerusalem, and Paul and Barnabus were sent with the decrees, which made it clear that circumcision was not necessary for the nations who believed.

After they had delivered these decrees, Paul passed through the province of Galatia (Acts 16:6). He founded the Ecclesia to which this Epistle was addressed. Some years later he visited the province of Galatia again, establishing the disciples. (Acts 18:23)

CLARIFICATION

We never again here that the Judaizers taught that circumcision was essential to salvation. The decrees of the twelve effectually forbade this, now, however, they tried to graft the Law on to the Evangel and make circumcision and the keeping of the Law a further privilege and a means of perfection for the believers among the nations. We in these days should take note of this, for we, the flesh, always seek to add to the Evangel. "WHAT CAN I DO"

The works of the flesh belong to the Dispensation of the Law – Do this and live!

In this Dispensation of Grace it is " By faith the just shall live"! It is against this subtle form of error that this Epistle is directed. Paul shows that spirit and flesh, grace and works, faith and law cannot be reconciled.

PAUL'S DEFENCE

Paul is called upon to present a defence of his Evangel. This is divided into three distinct lines of thought.

IT'S ORIGIN. He proves that it was quite independent of Peter and the Apostles.

IT'S ESSENCE. He demonstrates that it is incompatible with keeping the Law.

IT'S FRUITS. He further shows it cannot be produced in legal bonds.

DOCTRINAL DEFENCE

The origin of the Evangel involves Paul's personal history after his call, and his points of contact with the twelve, especially Peter. He carefully rehearses the details of his three meetings with Peter, showing that he had no opportunity to receive his Evangel from him, but that, in each case he communicated HIS Evangel to Peter and to the others.

The doctrinal defence discusses the difference between the Abrahamic and the Siniatic Covenants, showing the priority of the Abrahamic promise, and the subordinate and temporary function of the Law. It acted as an escort, during the minority of the chosen nation, Israel, to lead them to the Messiah. It was as a guardian suitable for those under age. It was not to continue.

FAITH VERSUS LAW

If faith came four hundred years before the advent of Law, it is in no need of Law. When Law utterly fails then faith remains. Hence, the utter folly of the Galatian Ecclesia, to whom the Law was never given by God, in voluntary subjecting themselves to its demands, when they already had far more than the Law could ever give them.

Before Law came and after it failed through the weakness of the flesh, the just lived by faith. It never could give either righteousness or life. Through faith in Christ the Galatian believers had both.

In practice the law is powerless through the flesh, but grace working through faith, can overfill the Law's demands by ignoring its commands and curses. Romans 8:3,4.

" For at the Law's impotence (in which it was infirm through the flesh), God, when sending His own Son in the likeness of sin's flesh and concerning sin, condemns sin in the flesh, that the just requirement of the Law may be fulfilled in us, who are not walking in accord with flesh, but in accord with spirit.