



Part 35: Paul Stands Tall



Wielding faith



Background Notes ▾

PURPOSE: To present both Paul's defensive letter (Galatians), and his calm letter (Philippians). Judaizing Corinthians had questioned his authority and his gospel. Now Judaizing Galatians denied them as outright insufficient. The Philippians, on the other hand, apparently received Paul and his message most wholeheartedly.

AUTHOR: Paul, the great Apostle to the Gentiles.

DATE: Paul wrote both letters in the late fifties to early sixties.

STYLE: The style of Galatians is fighting, passionate, disjointed, and pleading. The style of Philippians is serene and free flowing, which is ironic, considering that he wrote it in prison. Paul opens up his innermost sentiments to them. This letter is also disjointed, not out of defensiveness but out of spur of the moment inspiration.



Opening Quotes

“I went up to Jerusalem to get to know Cephas.” Gal 1:18

“A man is not justified by legal observance but by faith in Jesus Christ.” Gal 2:16

“All of you who have been baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with him.” Gal 3:27

“When the designated time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of a woman, born under the law.” Gal 4:4

“The proof that you are sons is the fact that God has sent forth into our hearts the spirit of his Son which cries out ‘Abba!’ (‘Father!’).” Gal 4:6

“Henceforth, let no man trouble me, for I bear the marks of Jesus in my body.” Gal 6:17

“Your attitude must be Christ’s: Though he was in the form of God, he did not deem equality with God something to be grasped at.” Phil 2:5

“God exalted him so that at Jesus’ name every knee must bend... and every tongue confess, to the glory of God the Father, that Jesus Christ is Lord.” Phil 2:9

“I give no thought to what lies behind but push on to what lies ahead. My entire attention is on the finish line as I run toward the prize to which God calls me – life on high in Christ Jesus.” Phil 3:13

“I can do all things through him who strengthens me.” Phil 4:13

the BIG PICTURE			
→ : LAW, History, Writings, Prophets			
12 Periods ▾	Plot ▾	Other books related to period ▾	→ : key covenants in our Father's plan
BC	🌐 THE BEGINNINGS	GN 1-11	Ps 8, 104
1850	💧 THE PATRIARCHS	GN 12-50	
1250	⚠ EXODUS FROM EGYPT	EX	
1200	♣ JOURNEY TO CANAAN	NM, Jos	LV, DT
1100	💀 THE JUDGE CYCLE	Jg	Ruth
1030	✡ KINGS & PROPHETS	1 & 2 S	1 Ch, Ps, Prov
1000	▣ THE DIVIDED KINGDOM	1 Kg	2 Ch, Prov,
721 587	⌚ BABYLONIAN EXILE	2 Kg	2 Ch, Tob, Hos, Am, Hab, Is, Jer, Lam, Jl, Mic, Zp, Jon, Nah, Ob, Ez, Dan, Bar
538	⚙ THE RESTORATION	Ezr, Neh	Est, Judith, Hag, Zech, Mal, Job, Ecc, Songs
163 63	🔑 THE REPURIFICATION	1 Mac	Dn, 2Mac, Sirach, Wisdom
AD	✚ JESUS CHRIST	LK	MT, MK, JN
33 70	💡 APOSTOLIC CHURCH	Acts	Rm, 1&2Co, Ga, Ep, Phil, Col, 1&2Th, 1&2 Tm, Ti, Phm, Hb, Ja, 1P, 2P, 1,2&3J, Jd, Rv
			Pentecost, council, journeys, epistles, Body/Bride of Christ



The Story of Part 35: Paul Stands Tall



When the Galatians went so far as to deny Paul's authority since he was not one of the original twelve, Paul found it necessary to assert himself to be just as apostolic as Peter. When they considered his gospel as incomplete without the Jewish works of the law (like circumcision), he told them that he even had to reprimand Peter for giving in to such Jewish pressure. (Paul himself would later give in to the same pressure by having his assistant Timothy circumcised for fear of the Jews! But the point was that he was no less apostolic than Peter.)

As for his gospel being "incomplete," Paul took the offensive. After telling them that he was at a complete loss for words, he then found plenty of words for them! They were doing no less than accepting an entirely different gospel than the one he preached. They had accepted a gospel based on works of the law, as opposed to a gospel based on grace. A man does good works not *in order* to be justified, but *because* he is justified. Otherwise, what use is God's grace? What use was Jesus' death? "Any of you who seek justification from the Law have severed yourselves from Christ and fallen from God's favor."

It is no exaggeration to say that this emphasis separates Protestant teaching from what Protestants (and perhaps misinformed Catholics) believe to be Catholic teaching. Protestants rightly believe that justification comes from grace through faith, not grace through works. Of course, grace through works is a calumnious caricature of Catholic teaching. The Church infallibly labelled the idea that man can be justified by his own efforts as heretical (Pelagianism), but does not teach (as most Protestants do) that justification comes by faith *alone*. (More on this when we discuss James' letter). Paul's point is just as valid today as it was then. Faith is always threatened with being perverted into religious self-justification – "If I do such and such, God has to justify me." Nonsense! Justification is not something God owes, but something he freely gives, a gift which when accepted, transforms us into new creatures, enabled to do good works for the sake of *others*, not for the sake of self. This is the gospel message, plain and simple. Paul says "even if we (the apostles) or an angel from heaven told you otherwise, a curse upon him!" Paul's insistence on this point is non-negotiable.

But Paul also has a dark past. He used to persecute the Church. Now he strove for Church unity. "I went up to Jerusalem to know Cephas, with whom I stayed fifteen days." He knew that as unique as his apostolic calling was (remember, Jesus himself called him on the road to Damascus), there was only one Church, and it was to Peter that he went. The only other apostle he mentions by name is James, who tradition tells us remained in Jerusalem as the bishop there, while Peter (and Paul) wound up in Rome (both martyred).

The freedom of salvation, Paul exhorted, is a freedom from slavery, slavery to sin. Being freed from a bunch of precepts does not equate, however, to giving in to the flesh! If you are truly under the Spirit, the Spirit which makes us call God "Father" ("Abba"), then you do not serve the flesh. If you willingly give yourself to the flesh, then you are still under the law and its curse. Freedom from the curse of the law did not imply moral disobedience!

Paul ends his passionate letter: "Don't bother me anymore. I bear the brand marks of Jesus in my body."

His letter to the Philippians was much more serene. There is complete confidence between them, as he asks them for generous donations for the Church without fear of being accused of milking them! Unlike the "unbelieving dogs" (probably in reference to some of the Galatians and Romans), the Philippians have stuck to the gospel.

In light of this, Paul seeks to deepen their faith, to take it to the next level. "He who has begun the good work in you will carry it through to completion, right up to the day of Christ Jesus." Relaxed with them, Paul then opens up his heart to them and reveals his inner thoughts, admitting that sometimes he longs to be with Jesus so much that he can't wait to be freed from this life! But then he acknowledges that he has a lot of work to do for the sake of the gospel.

If there was one problem he found necessary to address, it was the tendency (again) for dissension. He told them to always strive for unity. The way to do this? "Let all parties think humbly of others as superior to themselves." Imagine Christians doing this today! This sounds as impossible as a reunified Christendom, yet it may be our only hope to fulfilling Jesus' desire "that they may be one" as he and the Father are one. Just as Jesus himself, even though he was God, did not deem equality with God as something to be grasped at, so we must serve others with whom we wish to be one with.

Paul then leaves the Philippians a critical point on the Christian vocation: breaking with the past. He himself had been an ardent Pharisee, zealous for the Law. But now with Jesus' grace, the past is history. Now that he felt the redeeming power of justice that comes from faith in Christ, he turned his back on the useless pursuit of self-justice. As in the message to the Galatians, Paul would join himself to Christ's sufferings in the hope of sharing in the Resurrection. Not looking back, he runs to the finish line, focusing entirely on the prize that awaits the soul who perseveres in faith – life on high in Christ Jesus.

Paul leaves the Philippians (and us) with the confident plea to imitate him, not those whose god is their belly, fat with the things of this world. We have our citizenship in heaven. Stand firm in the Lord!



Defending the Faith: Something More About Mary

"The Immaculate Conception and the Assumption are unscriptural. Mary needed a savior like everyone else. As for her 'sinlessness', the Bible says that all have sinned, and that none are righteous."

When Paul says "all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God," and that "none are righteous, no not one," he is quoting Psalm 14. In this Psalm, the unrighteous are the fools who do not believe in God, as opposed to a "company of righteous" in the same Psalm. In other words, "no not one" does not equate to every single human being, but to every type of people. Paul uses it to teach that Jews and Greeks alike were under the dominion of sin, since Jews equated Jewishness with righteousness.

The Immaculate Conception (that Mary was born without original sin) and the Assumption (that she was taken body and soul into heaven) are not events recorded in Scripture. We know these truths from the same sacred tradition that gives us Scripture in the first place. To say they are "unscriptural" is incorrect, for nowhere do they *contradict* Scripture. But knowing them to be true, they shed light on what Scripture does say about Mary, revealing some interesting parallels.

In Genesis, we read that Eve believed the word of a serpent (the devil, a fallen angel). She and her husband eat the forbidden fruit. God pronounces that the woman and her "seed" (*not* the man's) would forever be enemies of the serpent, and then blocks the way to the Tree of Life. In the Gospels we read how another virgin believed the word of another angel and gave birth (without a man's intervention) to a son who would be the "rise and fall of many in Israel," and who eventually defeated the forces of death. In the twelfth chapter of Revelation, we read of a "great and wondrous sign," a

woman giving birth to a child who is later called the Lamb of God. A dragon tries to eat the child, but the child is snatched up first. The dragon then turns to the woman, but she is taken up on eagle's wings. The dragon then declares war on the woman's children on earth. A great eschatological war ensues, until the Lamb returns victorious in the end.

Mary can be seen as the new Eve, whose "seed" (not man's seed, but God's Holy Spirit) would bring salvation from the death that was introduced by the serpent. Mary also represents Israel. She is the mother of the Lamb of God in Revelation, a woman wearing a crown of twelve stars, which represent both the twelve tribes of Israel, and the twelve apostles. She is clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet. For this reason she is truly queen of all the prophets, of the apostles, and of heaven, where she reigns by virtue of her Son, the King of Kings.

But doesn't being preserved from original sin and being taken into heaven imply that she didn't need a savior? Not at all. She herself said, "My spirit rejoices in God, my Savior." Even the figures of righteousness in the Old Testament (like Enoch and Elijah, both who are taken up into heaven without ever tasting death) were righteous by virtue of the same Holy Spirit which proceeds from the Father and the Son. For this reason the Church teaches that they were made righteous by virtue of, and *in anticipation of*, Christ's merits, for no one goes to the Father except through Jesus (Jn 14:6).



Expressing the Faith: In the Light

DC Talk echoes Paul to the Romans (7:14ff). We are all in need of a savior.

*I keep trying to find a life
on my own apart from you.
I am the king of excuses.
I've got one for every selfish thing I do.*

*What's going on inside of me?
I despise my own behavior.
This only serves to confirm my suspicions
That I'm still a man in need of a Savior.
I wanna be in the light as you are in the light
I wanna shine like the stars in the heavens
Oh, Lord, be my light, and be my salvation
'cause all I want is to be in the light.
All I want is to be in the light.*

*The disease of self runs through my blood
It's a cancer fatal to my soul
Every attempt on my behalf has failed
To bring this sickness under control
(chorus)*

*Honesty becomes me,
there's nothing left to lose.
The secrets that did run me,
in your presence are defused.
Pride has no position and riches have no worth
The fame that once did cover me
Has been sentenced to this earth
(chorus)*

↗ **Next time: "Prisoner of Love"** ↗