



Paul

On a Mission from God

Week 7

Paul's Big Ideas – Part 3

Michael Gorman's book, *Apostle of the Crucified Lord*, has been very helpful in the development of this class.

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Today's Three Big Ideas

Justification by Grace through Faith

The Trinitarian Experience of God

“Cruciformity” – the Law of Christ

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Justification by Grace through Faith

- ❖ “. . . not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but one that comes through the faith of Christ, the righteousness from God based on faith.” (Philippians 3:9)
- ❖ “We hold that a person is justified [*righteoused*] by faith apart from works prescribed by the law. Or is God the God of the Jews only? Is he not also the God of Gentiles also? Yes, of Gentiles also, since God is one; and he will justify [*righteous*] the circumcised on the ground of faith and the uncircumcised through that same faith.” (Romans 3:28-30)
- ❖ “Therefore, since we are justified [*righteoused*] by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have obtained access to this grace in which we stand.” (Romans 5:1-2a).

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Justification by Grace through Faith (cont.)

- ❖ “For by grace you have been saved through faith and this is not of your own doing: it is the gift of God – not the result of works so that no one can boast.” (Ephesians 2:9)
- ❖ “For there is no distinction, since all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God; they are now justified [*righteoused*] by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is Christ Jesus . . . Then what becomes of boasting? It is excluded. By what law? By that of works? No, by the law of faith. For we hold that a person is justified [*righteoused*] by faith apart from works prescribed by the law.” (Romans 3:23-24, 27-28)

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Justification by Grace through Faith (cont.)

- ❖ Michael Gorman has taken the traditional “justification by faith through grace” and changed it to better reflect Paul’s theology.
- ❖ After the rebellion in the garden, God chose one man, Abraham, through whose family God would rescue humankind and all creation. **After** rescuing the family from slavery in Egypt, God made a covenant with them. In gratitude, the family endeavored to keep the covenant. Too often, the family saw the covenant as a vehicle of privilege rather than responsibility. In the end, God would have to keep the covenant for them . . . and he did, out of love, by setting forth his Son, even to the point of death on a cross. **So that** all the world could be saved.

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Justification by Grace through Faith (cont.)

- ❖ All of creation, all of humanity, needs rescuing. *All* God’s rescuing is a free gift, it is God’s grace at work. God is *not* in anyone’s debt. Faith is the *only* appropriate response to such a gift. This faith, e.g., the faith of Abraham (Romans 4), is the *fulfillment* of Torah. Our faith is the only appropriate response to the faithfulness of the Messiah.
 - Our faith is a response to God’s rescuing of us. It is not what we offer to God so that he will rescue us. Our faith does not put God in our debt.
 - It is like a drowning man who realizes that someone has tossed a life preserver around his neck and he is no longer drowning. His response will be grateful trust. He never shouted out “Save me” – he was simply saved, much to his own surprise.
- ❖ We **do not** cooperate in our rescuing (our salvation). We **do** cooperate in our growth toward Christian maturity (our sanctification).

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The Trinitarian Experience of God

- ❖ “And because you are children, God has sent the Spirit of his son into our hearts, crying, “Abba! Father!”
- ❖ “Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of services, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone.” (1 Corinthians 12:4-6)
- ❖ “The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with all of you.” (2 Cor. 13:13).
- ❖ “But you are not in the flesh; you are in the Spirit, since the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. But if Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness. If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies also through his Spirit that dwells in you.” (Romans 8:9-11)

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Jews – fiercely monotheistic!

- ❖ Creational monotheists
 - There is one God, and one God only, who made all that there is!
 - No other gods at all!
 - God and creation are not the same (they were not pantheists!)
 - God is active, caring, & involved (they were not Deists!)
- ❖ Providential monotheists – God is caring & active
 - God is not an absentee landlord
 - God’s purposes will not be thwarted
- ❖ Covenantal monotheists
 - God is the great covenant-maker and covenant-keeper
- ❖ BUT – none of this had anything to do with their understanding of God’s inner existence!

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The Problem of Jesus

- ❖ Jesus' death on the cross posed no "problem of understanding" for the disciples.
 - Was Jesus of Nazareth just another crucified would-be Messiah?
- ❖ But . . . Jesus' resurrection changed everything! What did it mean?
 - The disciples/apostles began to look back at what Jesus said and did, trying to make some sense of it, in light of the resurrection.
 - Yes . . . Jesus must be the Messiah, but that was not the same thing as claiming Jesus was God!
- ❖ Could Jesus be God? Would that explain these most extraordinary happenings?
 - They came to understand that Jesus said and did what only God could say and do. He embodied God. *Somehow*, Jesus was God without diminishing God's "oneness."

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A New Understanding of God



Paul did not have this all worked out, but he clearly worshiped Jesus as divine and the Spirit as divine.

- One God in three persons
- God has always known himself as the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit
- God is inherently relational!! God is a community of three!!

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Some of the ways to get this wrong

- ❖ Collapse the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit into one
 - modalism is an example -- where God appeared first as the Father, then as the Son, then as the Spirit
- ❖ Jesus only *seemed* to be human
- ❖ God *adopted* Jesus as his son, setting him apart
- ❖ Trying to “rank” the Father, the Son, and the Spirit – particularly, making the Son less than the Father
 - Differing roles – Father sends the Son; but not a ranking
 - Was there a time when the Son was not? Is the Son of the same substance as the Father?
 - Arius and the Council of Nicea

Jesus is fully and completely human AND fully and completely God

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The Law of Christ

- ❖ “For through the Spirit, by faith, we eagerly wait for the hope of righteousness. For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything; the only thing that counts is faith working through love. . . . Bear one another’s burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.” (Galatians 5:5-6; 6:2)
- ❖ If then there is any encouragement in Christ, any consolation from love, any sharing in the Spirit, any compassion and sympathy, make my joy complete: be of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility regard others as better than yourselves. Let each of you look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others. Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus,
 - who, though he was in the form of God,
 - did not regard equality with God
 - as something to be exploited, . . . (Philippians 2:1-6 ff)

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The Law of Christ (cont.)

- ❖ “I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the sharing of his sufferings by becoming like him in his death, if somehow I may attain the resurrection from the dead.”
(Philippians 3:10-11)
- ❖ “We always give thanks to God for all of you and mention you in our prayers, constantly remembering before our God and Father your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ.” (1 Thessalonians 1:2-3)

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The Law of Christ (cont.)

- ❖ Paul tells a story of the life of Christ. It is the master story that is to be our own story. In it, we are to find the shape of our own life. He calls this shape the “law of Christ.”
 - What does love look like? It looks like Jesus on the cross.
- ❖ Like “faith working” in 5:6, the “law of Christ” seems like an oxymoron.
 - Christ has fulfilled the Law, brought it to its true meaning (Gal. 5:14). We are to fulfill the Law of Christ by playing out his sacrificial love over and over again. We are to take responsibility for one another, to bear each other’s burdens.
- ❖ The pattern of Christ’s life is to be the pattern of our lives.
 - A life lived under the law of Christ is a life shaped by faithfulness toward God and love toward others. It may not be characterized by suffering, but it is to be characterized by sacrifice, putting others before ourselves.

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