

Destroying the Gender War in Your Church

(A Must Have Sermon for All Pastors)

Galatians 3: 28- 29 for all of you were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's descendants, heirs according to promise.

Galatians 1: Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised Him from the dead), 2 and all the brethren who are with me, To the churches of Galatia: 3 Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, 4 who gave Himself for our sins so that He might rescue us from this present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father, 5 to whom be the glory forevermore. Amen. 6 I am amazed that you are so quickly deserting Him **who called you by the grace of Christ**, for a different gospel; 7 which is really not another; only there are some who are disturbing you and want to distort the gospel of Christ. 8 But even if we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to what we have preached to you, he is to be accursed! 9 As we have said before, so I say again now, **if any man is preaching to you a gospel contrary to what you received, he is to be accursed!**

The other gospel to which the Galatians were turning was a "Judauizing" Gospel; it was a Gospel which said that in order to be in Christ, one had to first be a Jew, which meant keeping the law. This has profound consequences for the gender issue as well. Paul goes to great pains to demonstrate that salvation is by Grace through faith and that it is an act of the heart which turns to God, not the keeping of the law, or of any rules or regulations which saves. Yet today a whole branch of the church are laden under the false gospel of gender hierarchy, teaching that women must keep to a subordinate position in order to be right with God. The consequences are much more profound than just missing one verse in Galatians. The whole book of Galatians is a manifesto of gender liberation and social action, in a very real way. This is so because the consequences of missing the point have social implications. It is also because the Gospel itself has social implication. These are real and practice and deal with how we treat people. Paul makes it quite clear that the Gospel has social repercussions.

The context of the letter deals with a conflict that arose between Peter and Paul. We see in chapters 1 and 2 that certain representatives of the Church in Jerusalem came to visit the Galatians while Peter was there; these elements of that church were very suspicious of Paul and who were not on board with the Jerusalem council's decision to accept Paul as the representative to the gentiles. Peter had been eating with the Gentiles and had accepted their fellowship, but when the representatives from Jerusalem came, he withdrew and would not eat with the gentile believers. Paul saw this as hypocrisy.

11 But when Ciphers came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he stood condemned.
12 For prior to the coming of certain men from James, he used to eat with the Gentiles; but when they came, he began to withdraw and hold himself aloof, fearing the party of the circumcision.

He points out that this is a violation of the Gospel, because not only is the Gospel about grace, but it is also about inclusivity. All who give their lives to Jesus are equally followers of Jesus and all deserve to be treated the same. We would apply the social implications to race; in the early 1960s Christians used this passage to justify support for the civil rights movement. There is no reason why it does not also apply to women in the church and in the home, in all positions where women feel that God has called them to service.

This is especially so since Paul states: ***there is neither Jew nor Greek, Slave nor free, male nor female in Christ Jesus.***

Let's look at the full context: I said to Cephas in the presence of all, "If you, being a Jew, live like the Gentiles and not like the Jews, how is it that you compel the Gentiles to live like Jews? 15 "We are Jews by nature and not sinners from among the Gentiles; 16 nevertheless knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the Law but through faith in Christ Jesus, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, so that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the Law; since by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified. 17 "But if, while seeking to be justified in Christ, we ourselves have also been found sinners, is Christ then a minister of sin? May it never be! 18 "For if I rebuild what I have once destroyed, I prove myself to be a transgressor. 19 For through the Law I died to the Law, so that I might live to God. 20 "I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me. 21 "I do not nullify the grace of God, for if righteousness comes through the Law, then Christ died needlessly."

How seldom we consider what these words really mean! They mean that being right with God is not a matter of fitting into some kind of hierarchy, obeying rules, or even being good, but it is a matter of trusting Jesus' saving agency and God's Grace, and knowing God in the heart!

It is through this trust and this Grace that we become heirs to the promise of Abraham. It does not matter what gender, race, color, social position. To place such false barriers in the way of a person's relationship with God is to teach another Gospel. To refuse to see the social consequences of the Gospel, to back away from eating with the gentiles, whether that refusing to notice the black man who is banned from eating with whites, or refusing to allow a woman to speak in the church, is the same kind of social hypocrisy and sin!

The consequences of this doctrine were racial in Paul's day, they were ethnic and they were gender oriented, for he includes both race and gender:

Galatians 3:14 in order that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we would receive the promise of the Spirit through faith. 23 But before faith came, we were kept in custody under the law, being shut up to the faith which was later to be revealed. 24 Therefore the Law has become our tutor to lead us to Christ, so that we may be justified by faith. 25 But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor. 26 For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. 27 For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. 28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. 29 And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's descendants, heirs according to promise.

Heirs according to the promise! What this tells us is that anyone who has been baptized into Christ is an equal heir and deserves all the benefits of the promise; some of those benefits must include the right to serve God, to use one's gifts for God as one feels called. To place barriers to exclude people on the basis of gender, race, and social status is a violation of the Gospel. There are those who argue that this is just "before God" and not for society. Paul felt otherwise, since he did not tell Peter it was fine to withdraw from the gentiles, but rather said that he was not being true to the Gospel! We are not being true to the Gospel when we exclude women from the exercise of their God-given talents and their callings. We are not being true to the Gospel when we decide that women can't have certain callings.