

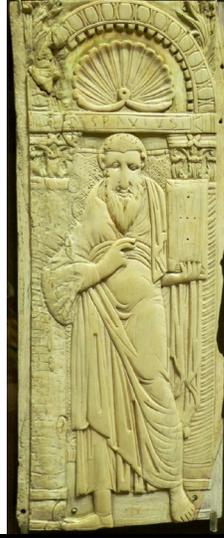
Slide 1



Overcoming a Problem of Division

1. A Traditional Barrier
2. An Eternal Barrier Crossed
3. A Shared Failure
4. A Shared Victory
5. A Shared Vision

Saint Paul, 7th Century, Author Unknown,
Musée National du Moyen-Âge, Cluny



1. A Traditional Barrier

“We ourselves are Jews by birth and not Gentile sinners;...”

Galatians 2:15

In grace, we learn to view both ourselves and others differently

Notes:

- Paul probably begins a new thought here, inspired by his description of his argument with Peter. (2:11-14)
- He restates an unflattering stereotype, and then proceeds to break it down.
- This stereotype labels and divides people based on their cultural heritage and religious practice – Jewish vs. Gentile people.
- Two factors identify a Jewish person, birth and Torah. Various traditions within historical Judaism have not always agreed on the relative significance of each of these factors.
- Paul will point to a new identity for both Jew and Gentile that pre-dates and overcomes these divisive factors.

2. An Eternal Barrier Crossed

“...yet we know that a person is not justified by works of the **law** but through faith in Jesus Christ, so we also have believed in Christ Jesus, in order to be **justified** by **faith** in Christ and not by works of the law, because by works of the law no one will be justified.”

Galatians 2:16

2. An Eternal Barrier Crossed

What does “justified” mean?

“Rightness” before God

- δικαιοῦν – “declare righteous”
- Δίκη – “punishment, penalty, justice”
- Δικαιοσύνη – “righteousness”

2. An Eternal Barrier Crossed

What does makes us “right” before God?

- Is it a birth “right”?
- Is it the “Law”

Paul says it is neither!

2. An Eternal Barrier Crossed

Three aspects of Law (Νόμος):

- A written law, see Romans 7:6
- An expression of God's holiness, see Romans 7:12; compare the Hebrew term, תּוֹרָה, "Torah", moral, civil and ceremonial, Exodus 12:49, etc.
- A spiritual force, like a law of nature (gravity, for example). See Romans 7:21-24

2. An Eternal Barrier Crossed

- Defined in this robust way, Law cannot lead to rightness before God, even for the people who receive the perfect expression of God's will in the Torah.
- This perfection only makes our imperfection more obvious.
- A good mirror will not lie!

2. An Eternal Barrier Crossed

Faith in Jesus Christ delivers what Law cannot!

Two aspects of faith (πίστις):

- Spiritual knowledge, knowing what we cannot see. See Hebrews 11:1-3
- Trust and reliance upon God and His promises. See Hebrews 11:4-28

2. An Eternal Barrier Crossed

- In other words, we are confident about our 'rightness' before God entirely because of this 'knowledge' that comes to us in Jesus.
- Apart from this knowledge, such trust/confidence is not at all possible.

3. A Shared Failure

“But if, in our endeavor to be justified in Christ, we too were found to be sinners, is Christ then a servant of sin? Certainly not!”

Galatians 2:17

Notes:

- To be declared right before God, we must first be declared wrong and guilty in ourselves.
- This applies to all of us, regardless of our birth or the particular religious road that we travel, even if we have the perfect Torah before us.
- Can we blame this newly discovered and admitted failure to be blamed on Jesus, who makes this failure perfectly clear? Paul emphatically says, “No!”; lit. μή γένοιτο; “may it never be”

3. A Shared Failure

“For if I rebuild what I tore down, I prove myself to be a transgressor.”

Galatians 2:18

Notes:

- The very attempt to re-establish law as a means of rightness before God proves our failure before God.
- If we try to justify ourselves based on our own good behavior, then we show how entirely self-deluded we are. We do not have the faith/knowledge that alone can render us right.
- Paul is clearly implying that there are those at work in the church to spread this delusion, by seeking to re-introduce Jewish “Torah,” as a means to achieve rightness before God.

4. A Shared Victory

“For through the law I died to the law, so that I might live to God.”

Galatians 2:19

- The law, rightly understood, serves only to show us how far short we have fallen.
- Before we can begin again, we must first admit our failure. We must abandon our attempt to self-justify.
- We must “die to the law;” no longer believe that we can justify ourselves through it.
- This death to the law allows us to “live for God,” which Paul will now explain.

4. A Shared Victory

“I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.”

Galatians 2:20

Notes:

- “crucified with Christ” - we must be willing to let go of our old identity, in order to receive a new identity.
- “Christ who lives in me” – Christ’s presence is a spiritual presence
- “live by faith in the Son of God” – my new identity is now based upon my new faith – my knowledge and trust – in the true identity of Jesus
- “who loved me and gave Himself for me” – this new identity is possible only because of Jesus’ loving, self-sacrifice

4. A Shared Victory

“I do not nullify (ἀθετῶ) the grace of God, for if righteousness (δικαιοσύνη) were through the law (νόμου), then Christ died for no purpose.”

Galatians 2:21

Notes:

- To “nullify” God’s grace would be to deny its effect on me; i.e., it produces no change in me.
- Paul says this must not be the case for him.
- To deny the power of grace is to rely on our own ability to be right before God.
- In which case Christ’s death would be unnecessary; a nice message of sacrifice without any further power.

5. A Shared Vision

“O foolish (literally, “mindless”) Galatians! Who has bewitched you? It was before your eyes that Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified.”

Galatians 3:1

Notes:

- There is a play on words here. Literally, “bewitched” could be translated “given the evil eye”, in contrast to their eyes being filled with vision of a crucified Jesus. Which vision will inform their understanding?
- This portrayal was “public,” not a secret reserved for the initiated few.
- Paul is astounded at how quickly they are lead astray by this deception.

5. A Shared Vision

“Let me ask you only this: Did you receive the Spirit by works of the law or by hearing with faith?”

Galatians 3:2

Notes:

- The Spirit of God begins His transforming work in us when we give up our attempt to justify ourselves.
- The working of the Spirit is a divine gift of grace; it is not worked for or earned. It is simply received, when we believe and trust (*faith*) in the One who gives it.
- Not just hearing, but responding in faith.

5. A Shared Vision

“Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh?”

Galatians 3:3

Notes:

- Paul once again pokes at the “foolishness” (“*mindlessness*”) of the church goers.
- The process of becoming “right” is a spiritual process, driven by the Holy Spirit Himself, when we accept the truth of the Good News concerning Jesus.
- Being “perfected” (ἐπιτελεῖσθε), carries the notion of completion. The journey from beginning to end is entirely a spiritual one.
- The Spirit and not our own efforts ensure the success of this journey.

5. A Shared Vision

“Did you suffer so many things in vain—if indeed it was in vain?”

Galatians 3:4

Notes:

- No explicit accounts of their suffering; however, they may have shared at some level the well-documented, hostile treatment that Paul received from both religious and secular authorities.
- Paul is concerned that the hostility they endure may have been in vain; i.e., they lost the prize for which they had suffered.
- This prize is our freedom from judgement, which the Galatians are too easily relinquishing.

5. A Shared Vision

“Does he who supplies the Spirit to you and works miracles among you do so by works of the law, or by hearing with faith...”

Galatians 3:5

Notes:

- God is the one who is doing the “work” through His Spirit.
- The question is, “What moves God to do this work?”
- Not our performance, but our faith.
- The law, then, is not essential for God decision to move among us. This means that both Jewish and Gentile people have the same access to God, since faith can happen without it.
- Our shared vision of Jesus can unite us, therefore, regardless of the type of law that we are seeking to obey.
- Illustrated in the person of Abraham (next week...)