Theology starts!

Galatians

Wednesday 7 October 2009
We ourselves are Jews by birth and not Gentile sinners; yet we know that a person is justified not by the works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ. And we have come to believe in Christ Jesus, so that we might be justified by faith in Christ, and not by doing the works of the law, because no one will be justified by the works of the law. But if, in our effort to be justified in Christ, we ourselves have been found to be sinners, is Christ then a servant of sin? Certainly not! But if I build up again the very things that I once tore down, then I demonstrate that I am a transgressor. For through the law I died to the law, so that I might live to God. I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but it is 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. I do not nullify the grace of God; for if justification comes through the law, then Christ died for nothing.
We ourselves are Jews by birth and not Gentile sinners.

1Mac. 2:48

They rescued the law out of the hands of the Gentiles and kings, and they never let the sinner gain the upper hand.

- “Sinner” not much used in Paul
- Risks losing the (Gentile) Galatians at this point
- Captatio benevolentiae “we jews”
yet we know that a person is justified not by the works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ. And we have come to believe in Christ Jesus, so that we might be justified by faith in Christ, and not by doing the works of the law, because no one will be justified by the works of the law.

Very important expressions here:

Justification + Works of the Law + Faith
Knowing that a person is not justified by works of the Law but through (the) faith of Jesus Christ even we have believed in Jesus Christ in order that we might be justified by (the) faith of Christ and not by works of the Law because no one will be justified
What Paul is *not* doing

(a) arguing against legalism (church issue)
(b) contrasting works which accumulate credit with faith which is pure trust (Reformation issue)
(c) contrasting Christianity and Judaism

but rather contrasting two forms of Jewish Christianity.

This is rather an *intra-Christian dialogue*, among those who already accept Jesus.
1. Justification

The verb has two fundamental meanings:

(a) to show justice or do justice to someone;

(b) to justify, vindicate or treat someone as just.

In this context of salvation, it means “God’s making right what has gone wrong.”

It has a long and interesting history, which we will see. For the moment, we recall that the term in the LXX is primarily forensic, and that Paul takes up this legal and forensic sense: God acquits the sinner, God declares a person to be just. The Protestant / Catholic division on justification used to turn on imputation / sanctification (really a theological question of grace) which is now definitely passé.
Pre-Pauline Tradition

1. It is an act of God
2. It is an act by which God sets right things which have gone wrong
3. What has made things wrong is transgressions against God’s covenant committed among God’s people
4. What makes transgressing members of God’s people right is God’s forgiveness
5. Justification is therefore God’s mercy
6. No need to mention the Law because it is obviously involved
7. God has brought about this forgiveness through the death and resurrection of his Messiah.
Paul notices that God’s grace is active independently of the Law.

The Law (1) has power to curse; (2) pronounced a curse on Jesus; (3) Sin is still active over all creation; (4) both Jew and Gentiles are slaves to the elements of the cosmos.

Justification means liberation from all this.
2. Works of the Law

Greek Texts *before* Paul

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hebrew Bible (MT)</th>
<th>Greek OT (LXX)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ex. 18:20 teach them the statutes and instructions and make known to them the way they are to go and the things they are to do.</td>
<td>teaches them God’s commandments and his Law, and makes them know the way in which they must walk and the works they must do.</td>
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Qumran?

- 1QS 5:21 shall investigate his spiritual qualities as a community, each member taking part. They shall investigate his understanding and works vis à vis the Law, guided both by the Sons of Aaron, who have jointly volunteered to uphold
3. Pistis Christou

- *Dia pistis Christou* can be rendered either as an **objective genitive** (“though faith *in* Jesus Christ”) or as a **subjective genitive** (“through the faith *of* Jesus Christ”).

- Literally the Greek translates “the faith *of* Jesus Christ”. Look back at your translations and see how they render it. In Greek “pistis Christou” occurs 7 times in the undisputed letters [Rom 3:22; Gal 2:16 (x2); 2:20; 3:22; Phil 3:9]. In Philippians and Romans the sense seems certainly to be the faith that Christ had, the faith which he exhibited. This is likely to be the meaning here too.
Arguments in favour

- (1) Being justified “in Christ” and Christ “in me” suggests a transfer to the sphere of Jesus, and hence into the faith *which Jesus had*.

- (2) If it means by “faith in Christ” then his writing is very verbose and some expressions are not necessary. It would have been clearer to have written simply: “knowing that a person is not justified by legal works but through faith, even we have believed in Christ Jesus in order that we might be justified *by faith*”, leaving out the addition “of Christ”.

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Arguments in favour

(4) V.20 means either by faith in the Son of God or by faith of the Son of God. The former reduces the descriptions to an appendage; the latter unfolds the inner meaning of that faith of the Son of God.

(5) This reading helps us to read two verses in chapter 3:

Gal. 3:23 Now before faith came, we were imprisoned and guarded under the law until faith would be revealed.

Gal. 3:25 But now that faith has come, we are no longer subject to a disciplinarian,
(6) A subjective genitive makes sense of Rom 3:22, 26

Rom. 3:22 the righteousness of God through faith of Jesus Christ (ex pisteos iesou christou) for all who believe. For there is no distinction,

Rom. 3:26 it was to prove at the present time that he himself is righteous and that he justifies the one ("who is/lives") out of the faith of Jesus (ex pisteos iesou christou)
We believed...

(4) We Believed

“Even we have believed in Christ” – this is the common faith of Paul, Galatians, the Jerusalem Christians and even the Teachers. The verb “to believe” occurs 4 times in Galatians [2:7, 16; 3:6, 22]. Its meaning ranges across believe, trust, have faith in.

(5) In order to be justified

“In order that we might be justified by the faith of Christ and not by legal works.” Paul and the other ethnic Jews believed in Jesus’ own faith in order to be justified by God. The two expressions “by the faith of Christ” and “by works of the Law” are mutually exclusive. Because of the faith of Jesus, the boundary marks have been torn down.
17 But if, in our effort to be justified in Christ we ourselves have been found to be sinners is Christ then a servant of sin? Certainly not!

It may be that the Teachers referred to themselves as the “servants of righteousness” and pilloried Paul’s position as making Christ a “servant of sin”.

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But if I build up again the very things that I once tore down, then I demonstrate that I am a *transgressor*.

This is a subtle and tightly packed point. Becoming a Christian does not make you a sinner. On the contrary, if Paul were to re-instate the Law then he would be shown to have acted sinfully by not following the requirements of the Law. Certainly at Antioch he did not follow the Law’s requirements. He implies that Peter and co. by going back into the Law (re-)made themselves into sinners. NB the use of *transgressor* rather than *sinner* in the context.
19 For through the law I died to the law, so that I might live to God. I have been crucified with Christ; 
20 and it is no longer I who live, but it is 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.

Rom. 7:4 In the same way, my friends, you have died to the law through the body of Christ, so that you may belong to another, to him who has been raised from the dead in order that we may bear fruit for God.
“Living to God” is an eschatological expression: cf. the following texts:

4Mac. 7:19 since they believe that they, like our patriarchs Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, do not die to God, but live to God.

Rom. 6:10 The death he died, he died to sin, once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God. 11 So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.

Luke 20:37 And the fact that the dead are raised Moses himself showed, in the story about the bush, where he speaks of the Lord as the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. 38 Now he is God not of the dead, but of the living; for to him all of them are alive.”
“Co-crucified”

Rom. 6:6 We know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be destroyed, and we might no longer be enslaved to sin.

Gal. 5:24 And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

Gal. 6:14 May I never boast of anything except the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.
“Loved me”

but it is 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.

(a) it is the only place where Paul speaks of Christ loving him,

(b) Whereas Rom 4:25 and 8:32 speak of God handing over Christ, here it is Christ who hands himself over to death.

(3) the entire passage is highly personal.

(d) the passage provides a vivid example of Christ’s own faith: he
I do not nullify the grace of God; for if justification comes through the law, then Christ died for nothing.
Gal 2:15-21

Gal. 2:15 We ourselves are Jews by birth and not Gentile sinners; 16 yet we know that a person is justified not by the works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ. And we have come to believe in Christ Jesus, so that we might be justified by faith in Christ, and not by doing the works of the law, because no one will be justified by the works of the law. 17 But if, in our effort to be justified in Christ, we ourselves have been found to be sinners, is Christ then a servant of sin? Certainly not! 18 But if I build up again the very things that I once tore down, then I demonstrate that I am a transgressor. 19 For through the law I died to the law, so that I might live to God. I have been crucified with Christ; 20 and it is no longer I who live, but it is 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. 21 I do not nullify the grace of God; for if justification comes through the law, then Christ died for nothing.