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Galatians

What is the Kingdom Perspective on Christian Formation?

Part 4: Chapter 3 Derrick Wilson

(slide#1)

RussellAnn Wilson scripture reading:

RussellAnn Wilson (slide with her name on it)

(slide#2 - while RussellAnn is speaking. Break into two slides if needed)

Galatians 3 (NIV)

3 You foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you? Before your very eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed as crucified. **2** I would like to learn just one thing from you: Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law, or by believing what you heard? **3** Are you so foolish? After beginning by means of the Spirit, are you now trying to finish by means of the flesh? **4** Have you experienced so much in vain—if it really was in vain? **5** So again I ask, does God give you his Spirit and work miracles among you by the works of the law, or by your believing what you heard? **6** So also Abraham “believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness.”

7 Understand, then, that those who have faith are children of Abraham. **8** Scripture foresaw that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, and announced the gospel in advance to Abraham: “All nations will be blessed through you.” **9** So those who rely on faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith.

10 For all who rely on the works of the law are under a curse, as it is written: “Cursed is everyone who does not continue to do everything written in the Book of the Law.” **11** Clearly no one who relies on the law is justified before God, because “the righteous will live by faith.” **12** The law is not based on faith; on the contrary, it says, “The person who does these things will live by them.” **13** Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: “Cursed is everyone who is hung on a pole.” **14** He redeemed us in order

that the blessing given to Abraham might come to the Gentiles through Christ Jesus, so that by faith we might receive the promise of the Spirit.

15 Brothers and sisters, let me take an example from everyday life. Just as no one can set aside or add to a human covenant that has been duly established, so it is in this case. **16** The promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. Scripture does not say “and to seeds,” meaning many people, but “and to your seed,” meaning one person, who is Christ. **17** What I mean is this: The law, introduced 430 years later, does not set aside the covenant previously established by God and thus do away with the promise. **18** For if the inheritance depends on the law, then it no longer depends on the promise; but God in his grace gave it to Abraham through a promise.

19 Why, then, was the law given at all? It was added because of transgressions until the Seed to whom the promise referred had come. The law was given through angels and entrusted to a mediator. **20** A mediator, however, implies more than one party; but God is one.

21 Is the law, therefore, opposed to the promises of God? Absolutely not! For if a law had been given that could impart life, then righteousness would certainly have come by the law. **22** But Scripture has locked up everything under the control of sin, so that what was promised, being given through faith in Jesus Christ, might be given to those who believe.

23 Before the coming of this faith,^[a] we were held in custody under the law, locked up until the faith that was to come would be revealed. **24** So the law was our guardian until Christ came that we might be justified by faith. **25** Now that this faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian.

26 So in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith, **27** for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. **28** There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. **29** If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

Review from Galatians 1 & 2

(slide #3, come up one at a time)

Theme — Freedom

Chapters 1&2 - Paul **Defends** the Gospel of Grace

Chapters 3&4 - Paul **Explains** the Gospel of Grace

Chapters 5&6 - Paul **Applies** the Gospel of Grace

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Conclusions from the Jerusalem Council (Acts 15) that define our world:

1. Justification by Faith alone - Galatians 2: 16
2. Salvation by Grace (not sloppy) - Galatians 2: 17-21
3. If Christ plus the Law then Jesus died for nothing - Galatians 2: 15-16

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The Jerusalem Council releases the Gospel from ethnic identity

Galatians 3

Who?

The Galatians. This is the only letter of Paul specifically addressed to a group of churches in a region. Gentiles make up the majority of the population.

Gentiles - A person who is not Jewish. Anyone who is not ethnically or religiously a Jew. Therefore, most of the people living in Galatia were Gentiles. Almost all Gentiles were polytheistic (many god's) either by choice or social conformity. The fastest growing religion of the day was the worship of Cesar as the highest God, many other gods were worshiped as long as they were subject to Cesar. Just as Peter was appointed to preach the gospel to the Jews, Paul was entrusted with the task of preaching to the Gentiles. Galatians 2:7-8

Where?

Galatia - A Region in Asia Minor (Modern Day Turkey) which was a province of Rome.

What?

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What is the Kingdom Perspective on Christian Formation?

Galatians 3 outlines the 2 competing answers to the question of formation:

- I. **The Judaizers** - Jews who insisted that Christian justification and sanctification depends upon a person's efforts. In other words they wanted to add to the Gospel the keeping of OT Law. In receiving Christ plus keeping the Law Christian Formation happens. They had a human perspective on the Divin outworking of the Messiah's message.
 - They still believed the Message would empower them to overthrow Roman tyranny through human effort.
 - They reasoned that God's promises extended only to Jews, so Gentiles must be circumcised inorder to experience real salvation and any hope of Formation.
 - They did not deny that faith in Jesus was necessary, but insisted that it was inadequate for both salvation and formation.

- II. **Paul** - Formation happens by Jesus Christ living through you (forgiving, saving, justifying) and by the Holy Spirit empowering you (gifting, equipping, sanctifying).

Paul's frustration:

I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you..., Gal. 1:6.

You foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you? Ch. 3:1.

I fear for you, that somehow I have wasted my efforts on you. I plead with you... Ch. 4:11-12.

My dear children, for whom I am **again** in the pains of childbirth until Christ is **formed** in you,... Ch.4:19

This is the goal of Paul's ministry:

For those God foreknew he also predestined to be **conformed** to the likeness of his Son,... Rom. 8:29

(slide#7, come up one at a time)

Three Formation passages from Galatians 3

1. ...does God give you his Spirit and work miracles among you by the works of the law, or by your believing what you heard? **6** So also Abraham “believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness. **9** So those who have faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith. Galatians 3:5-6,9

Paul explicitly links the Abraham story with the gift of the Holy Spirit. This means that in receiving Christ all are in the Holy Spirit, therefore all are in the family of Abraham. In other words just as a Jew is born into his or her ethnicity we can all be “born again” through Jesus and into the Holy Spirit. Because both Jew and Gentiles receive the same Holy Spirit, it is this deposit of heaven into us that forms Jews and Gentiles into one family.

2. In order that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might also come to the Gentiles, so that we would all receive [the realization of] **the promise** of the **[Holy] Spirit** through faith. Galatians 3:14 (AMP)

What is this promise?

I will give you a new heart and put a **new spirit in you**; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a **heart of flesh**. Ezekiel 36:26

- Heart of stone is the Law written on stone tables that I must try to be formed by.
- Heart of flesh is the Holy Spirit writing the Law on my heart and empowering me to be formed by it.

The outworking of Holy Spirit formation looks like this:

3. There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise. Galatians 3:28-29

- The formational work of the Holy Spirit in our lives means that our hearts are becoming one with Christ's heart — **we see people the way He sees them**. Therefore:
- **We don't create ethnic hierarchies**
- **We don't create gender hierarchies**
- **We don't take authority over other people groups** - Gen. 1:26-30, This world God created is His, but He put it in our hands and said, "Let them rule." Note that while humans are given authority to rule over creation, that didn't include ruling over other people.

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What is the Kingdom Perspective on Christian Formation?

Illustration:

Robert Cumming's story:

In his book, *The Vision and The Vow*, Pete Greig tells of how a distinguished art critic was studying an exquisite painting by the Italian Renaissance master, Filippino Lippi. He stood in London's National Gallery gazing at the fifteenth-century depiction of Mary holding the infant Jesus on her lap, with saints Dominic and Jerome kneeling nearby. But the painting troubled him. There could be no doubting Lippi's skill, his use of color, and composition. Lippi completed a large body of work, still with us today, that is sheer genius. But the proportions of this picture seemed slightly wrong. The hills in the background seemed exaggerated, as if they might topple out of the frame at any minute onto the gallery's polished floor. The two kneeling saints looked awkward and uncomfortable.

Renowned British Art critic, and professor of Art History at Boston University, Robert Cumming, was not the first to criticize Lippi's work on this painting for its poor perspective. For over 500 years, Robert and his art world predecessors had looked down on this painting by Lippi. But, Robert may well be the last to have done so, because at that moment he had a revelation. It suddenly occurred to him that the problem might be his. The painting had never been intended to come anywhere near a gallery. Lippi's painting had been commissioned to hang in a place of prayer.

The dignified critic dropped to his knees in the public gallery before the painting. He suddenly saw what generations of art critics had missed. From his new vantage point, Robert Cumming found himself gazing up at a perfectly proportioned piece. The foreground had moved naturally to the background, while the saints seemed settled – their awkwardness, like the painting itself, having turned to grace. Mary now looked intently and directly at him as he knelt at her feet between Saints Dominic and Jerome.

It was not the perspective of the painting that had been all wrong for centuries; it was the perspective of the people looking at it. Robert Cumming, on bended knee, found a beauty that Robert Cumming the proud art critic could not. The painting only came alive to those on their knees in prayer. The right perspective is the only way to see the painting correctly and enjoy its beauty as a masterpiece.

(The Vision and the Vow, Pete Greig)

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Conclusion:

The Kingdom Perspective on Christian Formation is on our knees in prayer, humbly looking up to God.

- When we as modern people try to stand and go eye to eye with God or even look down upon this outdated Patriarchal Father. We have a distorted perspective upon God, ourselves, and others.
- Because of our distorted perspective we draw distorted conclusions:
 1. **We can determine our own Identity** - sexuality, gender, creation
 2. **We can determine who is more important** - 1st world & 3rd world, Enlightened & primitive, Influencer & irrelevant
 3. **We can determine who has authority** - slavery, injustice, totalitarianism...

Christian Formation starts with Salvation and Justification then moves into the process of sanctification. **Formation is the process of growth which enables you and me to reflect more and more the image of Christ.**

(slide#10, come up one at a time)

Ministry Questions:

1. Is your Christian formation stunted?
2. Do cultural ideas influence you more than the Kingdom?
3. Do you find your Identity in anything outside of Christ?