

MORE EXCELLENT INSIGHTS FROM DANIEL BUSH AND NOEL DUE. THANKS.

How did we begin?

“To progress is always to begin again,” said Luther. How did we begin? In faith, at the cross. We never get to a place in this life where we can leave the foot of the cross. We never get past grace, never get to the point where we have fully plumbed the depths of the gospel, fully grasped it, or fully delighted in it. It’s God’s gracious mercy that he will not let us live without his crucified Son as our constant dwelling place.

The bewitching spell of legalism ...

Like the Galatians, we often fail to interrogate the legalist within us. To break the bewitching spell of legalism, we have to go back to the gospel again and again and again; to see Jesus crucified for us as a finished work. The way of the Christian life is learning to look away from ourselves and to the Lord Jesus.

When your heart is in a dark place ...

So when your heart is in a dark place, look to Christ. When you feel like a failure, look to Christ. When you feel dirty in your sin, look to Christ. Go again and again to the cross of Christ. The perfectionist within you will tell you that to do so is failure: “Surely I should be beyond this!” But faith speaks otherwise: “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.”

The broad road of destruction ...

The highway we gravitate to when trying to sort out our lives—the one that we think leads to the way to get right with God, or at least

to ease our consciences—is eight lanes wide. It’s straight, it’s paved, it’s easy traveling, no bumps, no risk. But it’s completely blocked. All who hope to get right with God on the basis of what they’ve done, are doing, or will do, are traveling a blocked road and will never reach their destination.

- (Matthew 7:13 NIV) Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it.

But how can we possibly be declared righteous? We’ve sinned and fallen well short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23). We’re not righteous; we’re guilty.

The Judaizers say ...

“God has provided a highway for you to drive on with clear signage. ... Keep your nose in the Scriptures, pray, be charitable. Do all of this—don’t fail—and you’ll make the grade. The law will justify you, and God will accept you.”

Religion crucified God ...

The innate goodness of the human heart and its ability to redeem itself are the world’s grandest delusions, which every moral and religious system falls into. Religion crucified God when he visited us. **His true goodness was so offensive to our tawdry religious endeavors, we drove nails through his flesh. Yet that event remains the very means of our rescue. This is the narrow mountain pass, which natural human reason finds totally unappealing because it requires relinquishing trust in one’s self and placing that trust in the way we would rather not go.**

That Way has a face and a name ...

Jesus said, “I am the way, the truth and the life, no one comes to the Father but through me” (John 14:6). Paul says this man is none other than “the Son of God who loved me and gave himself up for me” (Galatians 2:20). There’s no other way to be justified.

Not a natural human language ...

The gospel speaks a different language—there’s never any justification in the law, never any forgiveness, never release from guilt. The law never says a good thing about you. It’s your worst nightmare, steadfastly pointing out failure, transgression, and sin. The law slays.

Even more deadly ...

But it also does something even more deadly. It establishes in you the foolish and futile pursuit of “righteousness according the law” (Phil 3:6). It sets you up as the self-righteous judge, jury, and executioner of others who have failed even more than you have. It allows you to stand with the Pharisee, thanking God that you’re not like other sinners (Luke 18:11), treating your fellow human beings with contempt. Like a psychiatric patient undergoing an acute psychotic episode, we have no insight into our real situation—except that in our case, our ignorance is willful.

How did you receive the Spirit?

The pundits from Jerusalem might have befuddled the Galatians’ minds with their clever arguments, but they couldn’t do anything to change their experience. Paul has simply to ask them, “Did you receive the Spirit by works of the law or by hearing with faith?” (Galatians 3:2). Works of the law, neither pagan or Jewish, hadn’t flooded their hearts with the Spirit. Indeed, they were under “the elemental principles of the universe” until faith came through Paul’s message (Galatians 4:3, 8–9).

But when they heard the gospel, the gates of heaven were opened. Joy so great it carried them through the sufferings that accompanied their new life replaced their fear; surely, surely says Paul, this hasn’t all been in vain.

The true struggle of the Christian life ...

Certainly there is struggle and effort to the Christian life, but it is not where we think. It is not a struggle to be holy and practice holiness; this is trying to be perfected in the flesh. It is a struggle to continue in the way we began—namely, to believe our justification is true.

The flesh wants to be the star of the show ...

But the flesh loves to hear that it has a role to play. If, for a moment, it gives up believing it can justify itself, it immediately turns to the path of holiness to sanctify itself. Either way, it thinks the law is the answer. It can’t be educated or reasoned with on this point. It’s inimical to the Spirit in every way, believing it can still reform itself.

After all ... we’ve got work to do ...

Often we look to our emotions and feelings of holiness, or lack thereof, and feel pride or sorrow over where these place us with God. So we want to add works to cleanse our souls. After all, we’ve got to work at cleaning the kitchen floor; in the same way, don’t we have to work at cleaning up our lives? God surely can’t continue to love me if I’ve failed for the umpteenth time in the same area. There has to be something he needs from me ...

[Bush, D., & Due, N. (2015). Live in Liberty: The Spiritual Message of Galatians (p. 68). Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.]

[All excerpts from Bush and Due. The following statement is just to clarify, not credit: I (Dave Scott) added the lead lines to help organize.]