

From Nazareth to Nicaea (1)

The Nicene Creed (325)

We believe in one God, the Father almighty,
 maker of all things visible and invisible;
 And in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the Son of God,
 begotten from the Father, only-begotten,
 that is, from the substance of the Father,
 God from God, light from light,
 true God from true God,
 begotten not made,
 of one substance with the Father,
 through Whom all things came into being,
 things in heaven and things on earth,
 Who because of us men
 and because of our salvation came down,
 and became incarnate and became man, and suffered,
 and rose again on the third day,
 and ascended to the heavens,
 and will come to judge the living and dead,
 And in the Holy Spirit.

But as for those who say, "There was when He was not", and, "Before being born He was not, and that He came into existence out of nothing", or who assert that the Son of God is of a different hypostasis or substance, or created, or is subject to alteration or change - these the Catholic and apostolic Church anathematizes.

Jesus in Paul

1. The "conversion" story
2. Resurrection
3. Cross
4. The Jesus story
5. The teaching of Jesus
6. The teaching about Jesus
7. The Son of God
8. The love of God in Jesus
9. Finally, a close reading of Galatians 2:15-21
10. And so...

1. The conversion story

- Paul works backwards from the resurrection to the crucifixion
- Galatians 1:1-5

- This patterns reflects his own experience
- Galatians 1:13-17

- Great objection to the Christian teaching:
- Deuteronomy 21:22-23 (cf. Gal 3:10-14)

2. Resurrection

- Israelites seem not to have believed in life after death until quite late

- Dan 12:1-3 is the first clear affirmation in the Hebrew Bible
- Also: 2 Maccabees 6:18-21; 7:1-42; 12:43-45 and the Wisdom of Solomon 3:1; 8:19 etc.
- Earlier hints: Ezekiel 37 (a metaphor) and Isaiah 25:7-8; ascension of Elijah in 2 Kings 2:11.

Daniel 12:1 “At that time Michael, the great prince, the protector of your people, shall arise. There shall be a time of anguish such as has never occurred since nations first came into existence. But at that time your people shall be delivered, everyone who is found written in the book. **2** Many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life and some to shame and everlasting contempt. **3** Those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the sky, and those who lead the many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever.

- Context: martyrdom
- Question: God’s justice and faithfulness
- Spread: Pharisees and Dead Sea Scrolls
- Paul: as a Pharisee, he already believed in the resurrection at the end of time

3. Cross

- **Question:** what was God’s Son doing in a place of curse?
- **Step 1:** the Son of God was where God wanted him to be
- **Step 2:** place of curse – i.e. all those excluded from the covenant grace
- **Step 3:** in Jesus, God was extended the Covenant to all humanity without distinction
- **Conclusion:** Paul’s conversion insight led directly to a new understanding of God’s project in Jesus and that, in turn, led to Paul’s apostolic mission to the Gentiles
- So: impossible to separate the conversion, the resurrection and the cross and Paul’s own vocation

4. The Jesus story

If we had only Paul...!

- Birth (Gal 4:4)
- A descendant of David (Rom 1:1-7)
- Lord’s Supper (1 Cor 11:23-28)
- Abba, Father (Romans 8:15; Gal 4:6)
- Crucifixion and death (Phil 2:18 and many places)
- Resurrection (Rom 6:9 and many places)

5. The teaching of Jesus

Paul echoes the teaching of Jesus in a few texts:

- Mark 12:28-34:
- Romans 13:8-10
- Galatians 5:14

6. The Gospel about Jesus

- Gospel = Good news, from the old English gōd = “good” + spel = “news”
- Jesus proclaimed the Good News, the Gospel from God
- Paul proclaimed the Good News, the Gospel about Jesus
- The evangelists wrote “Gospels”, that is, lives of Jesus

Romans 1:1-7; 1 Corinthians 15:1-5; Romans 10:5-13; 1 Corinthians 1:18-25; 1 Corinthians 4:1-6

Romans 1:1 From Paul, a slave of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God. **2** This gospel he promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy scriptures, **3** concerning his Son who was a descendant of David with reference to the flesh, **4** who was appointed the Son-of-God-in-power according to the Holy Spirit by the resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord. **5** Through him we have received grace and our apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith among all the Gentiles on behalf of his name. **6** You also are among them, called to belong to Jesus Christ. **7** To all those loved by God in Rome, called to be saints: Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ!

7. Jesus, the Son of God

The Lord Jesus

- Rom 1:4, 7; 4:24; 5:1, 11, 21; 6:23; 7:25; 8:39; 10:9; 13:14; 14:14; 15:6, 30; 16:20;
- 1 Cor 1:2-3, 7-10; 4:17; 5:4; 6:11; 8:6; 9:1; 11:23; 12:3; 15:31, 57; 16:23;
- 2 Cor 1:2-3, 14; 4:5, 14; 8:9; 11:31; 13:13;
- Gal 1:3; 6:14, 18;
- Phil 1:2; 2:11, 19; 3:8, 20; 4:23;
- 1 Thess 1:1, 3; 2:15, 19; 3:11, 13-4:2; 5:9, 23, 28;
- Phlm 1:3, 5, 25

“Jesus is Lord”

1Corinthians 12:3 Therefore I want you to understand that no one speaking by the Spirit of God ever says “Let Jesus be cursed!” and no one can say “Jesus is Lord” except by the Holy Spirit.

Romans 10:9 ...because if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.

Jesus, Son of God

- Romans 1:4
- 2Corinthians 1:19
- Galatians 2:20
- Romans 9:1-5
- Phil 2:6-7

Romans 1:4 who was appointed the *Son-of-God-in-power* according to the Holy Spirit by the resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord.

2Corinthians 1:19 For the *Son of God*, Jesus Christ, the one who was proclaimed among you by us—by me and Silvanus and Timothy—was not “Yes” and “No,” but it has always been “Yes” in him.

Galatians 2:20 I have been crucified with Christ, and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me. So the life I now live in the body, I live because of the faithfulness of the *Son of God*, who loved me and gave himself for me

Romans 9:1 I am telling the truth in Christ (I am not lying!), for my conscience assures me in the Holy Spirit— **2** I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart. **3** For I

could wish that I myself were accursed—cut off from Christ—for the sake of my people, my fellow countrymen, **4** who are Israelites. To them belong the adoption as sons, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the temple worship, and the promises. **5** To them belong the patriarchs, and from them, by human descent, came the Christ, *who is God over all, blessed forever! Amen.*

Phil 2:6 ...who though he existed in the form of God did not regard equality with God as something to be grasped,
7 but emptied himself by taking on the form of a slave, by looking like other men, and by sharing in human nature.

8. The love of God in Jesus

Romans 5:1-5; 8:31-39; Gal 1:15-21

Romans 5:1 Therefore, since we have been declared righteous by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, **2** through whom we have also obtained access into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in the hope of God's glory. **3** Not only this, but we also rejoice in sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, **4** and endurance, character, and character, hope. **5** And hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us.

- Being “in Christ” is a key expression of Pauline spirituality

Rom 3:24; 6:11, 23; 8:1-2, 39-9:1; 12:5; 15:17; 16:3, 7, 9-10;
 1 Cor 1:2, 4, 30; 3:1; 4:10, 15, 17; 15:18-19, 31; 16:24;
 2 Cor 2:17; 3:14; 5:17, 19; 12:2, 19;
 Gal 1:22; 2:4, 17; 3:14, 26, 28;
 Phil 1:1, 13, 26; 2:1, 5; 3:3, 14; 4:7, 19, 21;
 1 Thess 2:14; 4:16; 5:18;
 Phlm 1:8, 20, 23

9. Finally: A close reading of Galatians 2:15-21

Galatians (NET) 2:15 We are Jews by birth and not Gentile sinners, **16** yet we know that no one is justified by the works of the law but by the faithfulness of Jesus Christ.

And we have come to believe in Christ Jesus, so that we may be justified by the faithfulness of Christ and not by the works of the law, because by the works of the law no one will be justified.

17 But if while seeking to be justified in Christ we ourselves have also been found to be sinners, is Christ then one who encourages sin? Absolutely not! **18**

Galatians 2:15 (ESV) We ourselves are Jews by birth and not Gentile sinners; **16** 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.

But if I build up again those things I once destroyed, I demonstrate that I am one who breaks God's law.

17 But if, in our endeavour to be justified in Christ, we too were found to be sinners, is Christ then a servant of sin? Certainly not! 18 For if I rebuild 19 For through the law I died to the law so that I may live to God. 20 I have been crucified with Christ, and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me. So the life I now live in the body, I live because of the faithfulness of the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

21 I do not set aside God's grace, because if righteousness could come through the law, then Christ died for nothing!

what I tore down, I prove myself to be a transgressor.

9 For through the law I died to the law, so that I might live to God. 20 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.

21 I do not nullify the grace of God, for if righteousness were through the law, then Christ died for no purpose.

Activity: spot the differences and ask questions.

Steps

- (a) Key terms
- (b) What happened?
- (c) Audience?
- (d) Overlapping stories
- (e) The New Perspective on Paul
- (f) *Pistis Christou* (faith/faithfulness of Christ)

(a) Key terms

- justified; works of the law; faithfulness; believe; grace.
- Galatians 2:15-21 is one of Paul's more intricate passage (comparable to Romans 3:21-26). A few approaches may help.

(b) What happened?

Paul was en route to Asia Minor or Greece. While in Galatia, he fell ill but nevertheless preached the Gospel successfully to some Gentiles. The Gentile Christ-believers did not practice the dietary laws, circumcision and Sabbath observance. Paul, as usual, moved on. Travelling evangelists arrived from Jerusalem and they "completed" Paul's work by insisting on the full practice of the ritual Law as in Jerusalem. Disconcerted, the community evidently sent to Paul to inform him and ask his opinion.

(c) Audience?

So far in the letter, Paul has been speaking to the whole community directly. In these verses, he seems to talk over the heads of the Gentile believers to address his fellow Christ-believing Jews. Our verses, very compressed, give us the core of the Pauline teaching.

(d) Overlapping stories

- The story of ancient Israel and its relationship with God
- The story of Jesus' death and resurrection
- The story of Paul's "conversion" experience
- The story of the mission to the Galatians and their coming to faith
- The story of the "intruders" from Jerusalem

(e) The New Perspective on Paul

- Key 1** It was not part of Jewish teaching at the time that keeping the law was a way of earning God's grace. Even the ritual Law (as here) was a response of grace to grace, not a way of putting oneself in credit with God.
- Key 2** The 16th century Reformers assumed a match between the practices of late medieval Catholicism and those of first century Judaism. Jews have never recognised themselves in this projection.
- Key 3** The real issue is not good works to earn grace but ritual practices to distinguish the Jewish people from the rest of humanity.
- Key 4** Paul's objection that the putting back such practices is a failure to realise God's project in Jesus: the extension of election grace to all humanity without distinction. The imposition of the ritual Law threatens the entire Pauline proclamation and mission.

(f) *Pistis Christou* (faith/faithfulness of Christ)

- *Dia pistis Christou* can be rendered either as an objective genitive ("though faith in Jesus Christ") or as a subjective genitive ("through the faith[fulness] of Jesus Christ").
- Literally the Greek translates "the faith of Jesus Christ."
- 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 most likely to be the faith that Christ had, the faith which he exhibited.
- Being justified "in Christ" and Christ "in me" suggests a transfer to the sphere of Jesus, and hence into the faith which Jesus himself had.
- Notice: What then? If some were unfaithful, their unfaithfulness will not nullify God's faithfulness, will it? (Romans 3:3). See Romans 3:3 What if some were unfaithful? Will their faithlessness nullify the faithfulness of God (*tēn pistin tou theou*)?

10. And so...

- Paul comes to faith through an encounter with the risen Jesus.
- Early Christian acclamation: "Jesus is Lord"
- Jesus is the expression of God's faithful love and loving faithfulness.
- Cross: God's compassionate solidarity (= faithfulness)
- Resurrection: God's justice (= faithfulness)
- Paul does not "work out" a trinitarian doctrine...
- ...but still, his teaching is a foundation for Nicaea