

Lecture 22: The Circumcision Controversy

March 16, 2020

The Circumcision Controversy

Acts 15 – Must Gentile Christians receive circumcision to be saved?

Judaizers – Yes!

Paul – No!

Three times Paul says that neither circumcision nor uncircumcision is anything.

Yet in Galatians 5:1-4, Paul asserts that if Gentile Christians received circumcision:

“Christ will be of no advantage to you.”

“He is obligated to keep the whole law.”

“You are severed from Christ.”

“You have fallen away from grace.”

And Paul makes these claims right before asserting circumcision itself is nothing (5:6)!

What is the solution to this paradox?

Illus. Is raising your arm straight in the air in itself significant?

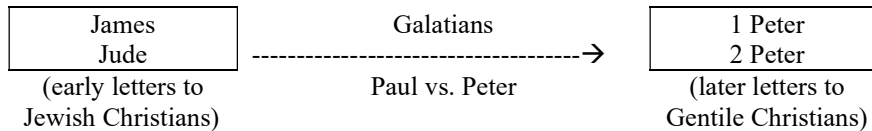
In Nazi Germany, this action meant a lot and severed you from the resistance movement.

Context determines the meaning of a symbol.

Illus. Are good college grades and a diploma really required to be an engineer?

Doctrinal Development within the New Testament

This chart of biblical books should help to explain the meaning of Paul’s emphasis on “justification.”



The Logical Gospel of Paul

Galatians

Authority (chs. 1-2)

Justification (chs. 3-4)

Liberty (chs. 5-6)

Illus. The mixed congregation in Fremont, California.

Romans

The Wrath of God (1:18-3:20)

The Righteousness of God (3:21-ch. 4)

The Glory of God (chs. 5-8)

The People of God (chs. 9-11)

The Church of God (ch. 12-15:13)

The goal is unity in faith and love, not uniformity in practice.

Christianity is...

A universal religion – exclusive (only through Christ), but inclusive (open to any Jew and to any Gentile)

A resurrection religion – both spiritually (against sinful addictions) and physically (bodily raised from the dead)

A grace religion – salvation is a gift

The Law says, “Do and you shall live” (Leviticus 18:5).

The Gospel says, “Believe and you shall live” (Habakkuk 2:4).

Why? Jesus did what is needed *for you* on the cross.

Jesus does what is needed *in you* by the Spirit.