

Galatians is a pastoral letter of practical theological advice to the churches of the Roman Province of Galatia, what we now call Turkey. There a debate and division had occurred among the Jesus followers over identity: did one have to first identify as a Jew by adopting Jewish rituals (such as circumcision and law obedience) before identifying as a Christian? ; or could a Gentile-born Jesus follower simply become Christian? The underlying issue is of freedom, identity, unity and how the Church would live out the teachings of Jesus in a pluralistic world. The letter has served as the genesis of many revolutions of thought and continues to speak to us today. Our selection this day addresses the role of the Spirit of God in the continuing life of faith, as a guarantor and the means by which we are matured in faith, sanctified (or made holy) recreated (or is it discovering our original intended state?) as heirs with Christ – in his image – of God’s kingdom. Faith isn’t a possession or doctrine as much as belonging to a larger family.

the day of Pentecost :: The Christian holiday of Pentecost (Ancient Greek: Πεντηκοστή [ἡμέρα], Pentēkostē [hēmera], "[the] fiftieth [day]") is celebrated 50 days from Easter Sunday, counting inclusive of Easter Sunday itself, i. e. 49 days or 7 weeks after Easter Sunday. Therefore, it always occurs on a Sunday. It is also the tenth day after Ascension Thursday, which itself is 40 days from Easter, counting inclusive of Easter Sunday itself. The Christian Pentecost is based on the New Testament, where it refers to the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the Apostles and other followers of Jesus Christ, as described in the Acts of the Apostles 2:1–31.

Pentecost is the old Greek and Latin name for the Jewish Festival of Weeks (Hebrew שבועות חג Chag ha-Shavuot) which can be found in the Hebrew Bible. It is called by that name in Exodus 34:22 and Deuteronomy 16:10. It is also called the Festival of Reaping in Exodus 23:16, and Day of the First Fruits in Numbers 28:26. Jews traditionally read the Book of Ruth at Pentecost, as the story links with the grain harvest theme of the festival.

The Talmud refers to Shavuot as Atzeret (Hebrew: עצרת, literally, "refraining" or "holding back"), referring to the prohibition against work on this holiday and to the conclusion of the holiday and season of Passover. Since Shavuot occurs 49 days after the first day of Passover (i.e. the 50th day, including Passover itself), Hellenistic Jews gave it the name Pentecost (πεντηκοστή, "fiftieth day"). According to Jewish tradition, Pentecost commemorates God's giving of the Ten Commandments at Mount Sinai, 49 days after the Exodus. The Talmud derives this from a calculation based on Biblical texts.

to speak in other languages :: it’s unclear if this is referring to the capacity to suddenly speak unknown foreign languages, or to speak “in tongues” as in 1 Corinthians 14:2. Whatever the meaning the text insists upon the power of the Spirit to open new doors and horizons, suddenly giving the possibility of a new source of communication hereto foreign and unknown.

[Holy] Spirit :: πνεῦμα [pneúma]:, spirit (Spirit), wind, or breath. The most frequent meaning (translation) of (pneúma) in the NT is "spirit" ("Spirit"). Only the context however determines which sense(s) is meant. The Hebrew counterpart (rûach) has the same range of meaning as (pneúma), i.e. it likewise can refer to spirit/Spirit, wind, or breath.]

Heir – Child – adoption - inherit :: this language of family is used repeatedly by Paul to talk about our new identity in Christ as part of his family, even as his co-equal.....we the same relationship as Jesus does with God. See Romans 8:14-17.

SCRIPTURES FOR PENTECOST SUNDAY

6.4.2017

Acts 2:1-4; Galatians 4:1-7 & Galatians 5:16-26

New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)

Acts 2:1-4

¹When **the day of Pentecost** had come, they were all together in one place. ² And suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. ³ Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them. ⁴ All of them were filled with the **Holy Spirit** and began to **speak in other languages**, as the **Spirit** gave them ability.

Galatians 4:1-7

⁴ My point is this: **heirs**, as long as they are minors, are no better than slaves, though they are the owners of all the property; ² but they remain under guardians and trustees until the date set by the father. ³ So with us; *while we were minors*, we were enslaved to the elemental **spirits** of the world. ⁴ But when the fullness of time had come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, ⁵ in order to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as children. ⁶ And because you are children, God has sent **the Spirit of his Son** into our hearts, crying, “Abba! Father!” ⁷ So you are no longer a slave but a child, and if a child then also an **heir**, through God.

¹⁴ For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God. ¹⁵ For you did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received a spirit of adoption. When we cry, "Abba! Father!" ¹⁶ it is that very Spirit bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God, ¹⁷ and if children, then **heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ**—if, in fact, we suffer with him so that we may also be glorified with him." Romans 8:14-17

THEME OF MATURATION : minors : fruits of the Spirit :: Paul seems to portray faith as a process, a journey of maturation; what we today might call a life(style). It's a dynamic growth not merely a static adherence or dogmatic stance.

FLESH vs spirit :: **sarx**: flesh σάρξ, : **FLESH**:: ("carnal"), body, human nature, materiality; kindred; referring to that which is of human origin or empowerment. The word is mostly likely derived from [suro] (the Greek verb meaning 'to draw,' 'to draw off'), coming to signify what can be stripped off from the bones and hence flesh (the soft substance of the living body, which covers the bones and is permeated with blood) of both men and beasts: It is equivalent to the word "body" signifying the material or substance of the living body, but doesn't have the designation of a skillful combination of related parts (of organism) which is denoted by the word "body" [σῶμα]. The word is generally negative, referring to an ethical sense and denotes "mere human nature, the earthly nature of man apart from divine influence, and therefore prone to sin and opposed to God"; accordingly it includes whatever in the soul is weak, low, debased, tending to ungodliness and vice ("Thou must not understand 'flesh', therefore, as though that only were 'flesh' which is connected with unchastity, but St. Paul uses 'flesh' of the whole man, body and soul, reason and all his faculties included, because all that is in him longs and strives after the flesh (Luther, Preface to the Epistle to the Romans); note that 'flesh' signifies the entire nature of man, sense and reason, without the Holy Spirit" Check out Romans 8:1-8

Slave :: δοῦλος [doulos]: a slave or servant. Literally, it means someone who belongs to another; a bond-slave, servant, without any ownership rights of their own. Metaphorically, it refers to one who gives himself up wholly to another's will. Ironically, the word is used with the highest dignity in the NT – namely, of believers who willingly live under Christ's authority as His devoted followers. This paradox is pointed to be Jesus in John 15:12-17 (see below). Paul seems to be using the breadth of the word's meanings here in Galatians 4:7.

¹² "This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. ¹³ No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends. ¹⁴ You are my friends if you do what I command you. ¹⁵ I do not call you *servants* any longer, because the *servant* does not know what the master is doing; but I have called you friends, because I have made known to you everything that I have heard from my Father. ¹⁶ You did not choose me but I chose you. And I appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last, so that the Father will give you whatever you ask him in my name. ¹⁷ I am giving you these commands so that you may love one another." John 15:12-17

¹⁶ Live by the **Spirit**, I say, and do not gratify the desires of the **FLESH**. ¹⁷ For what the **FLESH** desires is opposed to the **Spirit**, and what the **Spirit** desires is opposed to the flesh; for these are opposed to each other, to prevent you from doing what you want. ¹⁸

But if you are led by the **Spirit**, you are not subject to the law. ¹⁹ Now the works of the **FLESH** are obvious: fornication, impurity, licentiousness, ²⁰ idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, anger, quarrels, dissensions, factions, ²¹ envy, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these. I am warning you, as I warned you before: those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

²² By contrast, the *fruit* of the **Spirit** is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against such things. ²⁴ And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the **FLESH** with its passions and desires. ²⁵ If we live by the **Spirit**, let us also be guided by the **Spirit**. ²⁶ Let us not become conceited, competing against one another, envying one another.

Questions for the practice of Examen & Contemplation

***What strikes or shimmers for you in this passage?**

***In our reading of Galatians, we've heard Paul articulate his perspective on Christian identity and integration of all peoples in the Church for Jesus on equal footing in love and freedom. Here he talks about that unity using the language of family and maturation. The flesh leads ultimately towards death, whereas the Spirit invites and guides us to a contagious life that begets more life in relationship. How do you need to grow or mature in your faith, so that the fruits of the Spirit might take deeper root in your work, relationships, view of yourself and actions?**

***The story of Pentecost is that of the birthday of the Church. There is no cake but there are plenty of gifts that orient followers of**

Jesus to new life, new horizons and universes not yet expected. These gifts lead to communication, generosity, solidarity – to living the gospel. To what new "orientation" or "universe" might the Spirit of God be calling you today at Pentecost?