

Pauline Pneumatology in the Book of Galatians and its Relevance for the Contemporary Society

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Abstract: Pneumatology is a branch of Systematic Theology that deals with the study of the Holy Spirit. New Testament studies cannot be complete without prominence being given to the Holy Spirit, the third person in the Trinity. The Holy Spirit features prominently from the birth and ministry of John the Baptist to that of Jesus and the disciples who later became known as Apostles and whose activities through the Holy Spirit in the Book of Acts have made Bible scholars to refer to the Book as the Acts of the Holy Spirit through the Apostles. This paper will look at his (Paul's) Theology of the Holy Spirit in the Book of Galatians and its relevance for the contemporary society especially in terms of character and moral values of people. Pentecostalism became an interesting area of study to both Biblical Scholars and Church Historians since the beginning of the Pentecostal movement of the early 20th Century AD. Pentecostalism is synonymous with the Holy Spirit, *pneuma hagion*, whose first outpouring on the Disciples of Christ took place on the Day of Pentecost, *pentekostos* (Greek, meaning "Fiftieth" i.e. the fiftieth day after the Feast of Passover Acts 2). The research has given birth to types of Pentecostalism to make the paper very interesting.

1. INTRODUCTION

In almost all his Epistles, St. Paul has made references to the Holy Spirit, beginning from the Book of Romans, particularly chapter 8: 9 where He shows the importance and the role of the Holy Spirit in cementing the relationship between Christ and His followers, to being continuously filled with the Holy Spirit in Eph. 5: 18, manifesting the gifts of the Holy Spirit and how to manage them in I Cor. 12 – 14, etc. In the Book of Galatians, he talks about the nine fruits of the Holy Spirit as against the works of the flesh.

1.1. Statement of Problems

The Book of Galatians is very much related to the Book of Romans in that both of them deal remarkably with the core doctrine of the Church, i.e. Salvation and is justification by grace through faith in Christ as opposed to justification by obedience to the Law of Moses. Justification means being declared righteous by God (Amaowoh 2001:14). Paul wrote the Book of Galatians to draw the attention of his converts in that region back to the original Gospel which he preached to them and through which they were saved and given the Holy Spirit by simply believing in Christ before the Judaizers came and "bewitched" them through another gospel because of their fickle nature. This other gospel was the gospel of circumcision which they got from the Law of Moses. In order to win them back, Paul reasserted the divine credentials of his apostleship, recognition by the leading apostles, his commission by Jesus and that being justified by grace through faith is not a licence to libertine lifestyle but rather the liberty that produces godly character.

1.2. The Destination and Date of the Book of Galatians

While scholars have never doubted the authorship of the Book of Galatians, there have been heated debates in terms of the destination and date of the Epistle. The argument is whether the Epistle was written to Churches in Northern Galatia or Southern Galatia.

If the Northern Galatian view is accepted the Epistle could not have been written before AD 49/50 when Paul's Second Missionary journey began (Acts 16:6) and was probably written after AD 52 when the third journey began and Paul visited "Galatia" a second time (Acts 18:23). This is apparently supported by Gal. 4: 13, a reference to having preached to them "at first." This implies two visits to them.

If the Southern Galatian view is considered, the Epistle could have been written earlier, a time not long after first Missionary journey (AD 47 – 48). The inference is based on the relationship between Gal. 1: 6 and 4: 13, probably when Paul and Barnabas visited the Southern Galatian cities of Pesidian Antioch and Derbe twice during their first journey (Acts 14: 21). The New International Bible commentary is in support of the Southern Galatian churches that the Epistle was sent to the churches founded by Paul on his first missionary journey (Acts 13 and 14).

In fixing the accurate date, scholars have had to consider Paul's Jerusalem visit in the Book of Galatians. Two Jerusalem visits are mentioned, firstly, three years after his conversion (Gal. 1: 18), another fourteen years after (Gal. 2:1). The first related to Acts 9:26ff while the second is generally linked with Acts 15: 2ff, which is associated with the Jerusalem council. In an attempt to resolve this problem, (The) New Bible Dictionary says, "there are weighty reasons for identifying the visit of Gal. 2: 1 with that of Acts 11:30 and for dating the Epistle before the council of Jerusalem, AD 48/49. The incident of Gal 2: 12 is probably to be correlated with Acts 15: 1. This view is supported by many scholars.

1.3. The Theology of the Holy Spirit (Pneumatology) in the Book of Galatians

As stated earlier, Pauline Epistles deal with several themes including the activities of the Holy Spirit in the consummation of the Christian experience. This is also visible in the Book of Galatians where he adumbrated the place of faith and grace in salvation and justification.

The first mention of the Holy Spirit is in Galatians 3: 2 – 5 where the following facts about Him are stated. First, the Galatians are reminded that they received the Holy Spirit by faith in Christ and not by observing the Law of Moses. Baptism in the Holy Spirit, like other aspects of the Christian life, is by faith, according to the scripture "the just (righteous) shall live by faith" which is stated in four places of the Bible, including Gal. 3: 11, cf. Hab. 2: 4; Rom. 1: 17 and Heb. 10: 38. Paul's view of receiving the Holy Spirit by believing in Christ was not originated by him. Jesus Christ taught after His resurrection that those who believe, would among other signs, speak in other tongues as enabled by the Holy Spirit (Mark 16: 15 – 16). On the Day of Pentecost, Peter taught that the Holy Spirit, whom God promised to pour out on His people, was for all those who would believe and receive salvation in Christ (Acts 2: 37 – 39). The implication is that the Holy Spirit is not received through obedience to the Law of Moses which includes circumcision as taught by the Judaizers. In all the instances of this experience in the Book of Acts, including Paul's own (Acts 9) it was all by faith and not by obedience to the law (Acts 2; 8, and 19).

The second reference to the Holy Spirit in verse 3 has to do with the role of the Holy Spirit in the beginning of the Christian life experience. If we admit that conversion or regeneration is the real beginning of the Christian life, whereby the old nature or Adamic nature in man is replaced with life of Christ, through the New Birth or conversion, then the Holy Spirit is the sole agent in this process. This was the message of Jesus Christ to Nicodemus in John 3: 1 – 7. This is the invisible wind that blows but is visible through the new nature of the one who believes. Paul explains it further in the Book of Corinthians: "**Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new**" (2 Cor. 5: 17).

The Holy Spirit does not end His work after conversion. He continues in sanctification, power for victorious living, prayer and witnessing for Christ until resurrection of the dead believers for the *parousia* as He did in the life, ministry and resurrection of Christ (Rom. 8: 9 – 17). Paul was then shocked at the "foolishness" of the Galatians who began in the spirit but were about ending in the flesh. This undesirable experience could only have come through being "bewitched" by no other persons except the Judaizers.

The third reference to the Holy Spirit (verse 5) is His visible manifestation through miracles. The working of miracles, power signs and wonders have always been associated with presence of the Holy Spirit even from the Old Testament times (the Book of Judges chapters 3, 6, 11, 13, 14 and 15; I Sam. 10, etc) up to the ministry of Jesus Christ and the early church as recorded in the Book of Acts. Paul's discourse on the gifts of the Holy Spirit in I Cor. 12 also corroborates that the Holy Spirit should be visible through the charismata. The Galatians had this glorious experience without the doing the work of the law. Those who rely on obedience to the law for salvation would attract a curse upon themselves rather than the blessing of being filled with the Holy Spirit through faith in Christ (Gal. 3: 10 – 14).

Commenting on the aforesaid, The Full life Study Bible says,

Paul's references to the Spirit include both the baptism in the Spirit and the Spirit's subsequent special operations... Conversion and baptism in the Holy Spirit should continuously result in the working of miracles and the other manifestations of the Spirit.

Paul makes mention of the Holy Spirit again in Gal. 4: 6. He says that the Holy Spirit was given to the Galatians because they were sons of God by believing in Christ and not by obedience to the law. The Holy Spirit affirms this filial relationship between God and them by calling out "Abba," Father (Greek – *pater*) showing intimacy that is not found between a slave and his master. This is similar to Rom. 8: 14 – 16 and emphasises the role of the Holy Spirit in the assurance of the believer's salvation by grace through faith in Christ. The Holy Spirit gives the believer a place in God's Household not only as a son but an heir (Gal. 4: 7). In the Paternoster, to buttress the filial bond which should exist between God and the believer through the agency of the Holy Spirit, the Lord Jesus taught the disciples to say, "Our Father, who is in Heaven" (Matt. 6: 9). This is occasioned by the Spirit's work as in Rom. 8: 16. The bond between God and His redeemed children is *ipso facto* sweeter than that between an earthly father and his children.

Paul's final mention of the Holy Spirit is in Gal. 5: 16 – 23 where he gives profound teaching on the fruit of the Spirit as opposed to the works of the flesh. The list of the nine fruit (not plural) of the Holy Spirit has to do with the believer's character and not his charisma which he teaches in I Cor. 12 – 14. The International Bible Commentary puts in succinctly, "It is natural that the essential fruit and signs of the Spirit recorded in verses 22-23 include none of the ecstatic charismata with which they are so often identified... They stand with their peers in Christian ideal cited: Phil. 4: 8; James 3: 17; 2 Peter 1: 5 – 7; Rom. 5: 3 – 5." The Holy Spirit's greatest duty in the believer is to sanctify him, live in him and manifest Himself through him in godly conduct of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control which fit the believer for God's kingdom. On the other hand the flesh produces a list of ungodly attributes which send man away from God's kingdom (19 – 21). Without the fruit of the Holy Spirit, those who display and boast of the charismata are not fit for the kingdom of God because they will be treated as "workers of iniquity" (Matt. 7: 21 – 23). This is why Paul sees the supremacy of fruit over and against the gifts in I Cor. 13. These virtues are similar to the beatitudes taught by the Lord in Matthew 5 - 7.

The Full Life Study Bible defines the nine fruit of the Holy Spirit as follows:

- a. **Love (Gk *agape*)**, i.e. a caring for and seeking the highest good of another person without motive of personal gain (Rom. 5: 5; I Cor. 13; Eph. 5: 2; Col. 3: 14).
- b. **Joy (Gk *chara*)**, i.e. the feeling of gladness based on the love, grace, blessings, promises and nearness of God that belong to those who believe in Christ (Psalm 119: 16; 2 Cor. 6: 10; 12: 9; I Pet. 1: 8).
- c. **Peace (GK *eirene*)** i.e., the quietness of heart and mind based on the knowledge that all is well between the believer and his or her heavenly Father (Rom. 15: 33; Philippians 4: 7; I Tim. 5: 23; Heb. 13: 20).
- d. **Patience (Gk *makrothumia*)** this means endurance, long-suffering; being slow to anger or despair (Eph. 4: 2; 2 Tim. 3: 10; Heb. 12: 1)
- e. **Kindness (Gk *chrestotes*)** not wanting to hurt anyone or cause them pain (Eph. 4: 32; Col. 3:12; I Pet. 2:3).
- f. **Goodness (Gk *agathosune*)** zeal for truth and righteousness and a hatred of evil; it can be expressed in acts of kindness (Luke 7: 37 – 50) or in rebuking and correcting evil (Matt. 21: 12 – 13).
- g. **Faithfulness (Gk *pistis*)** this shows firm and unswerving loyalty to a person to whom one is united by promise, commitment, trustworthiness and honesty (Matt. 23: 23; Rom. 3: 3; I Tim. 6: 12; 2 Tim. 2: 2; 4: 7; Titus 2: 10).
- h. **Gentleness (Gk *prautes*)** this expresses restraint coupled with strength and courage; it describes a person who can be angry when anger is needed and humbly submissive when submission is needed (2 Tim. 2: 25; I Pet. 3: 15; for gentleness in Jesus, compare Matt. 11: 29 with Matt. 23 and Mark 3: 5 in Pau, compare 2 Cor. 10:1 with 10: 4 – 6 and Gal. 1: 9; in Moses, compare Num. 12: 3 with Ex. 32: 19 – 20)

- i. **Self-control (Gk *egkrateia*)** this implies mastering one's own desires and passions, including faithfulness to one's marriage vows; also purity (I Cor. 7: 9; 9: 25; Tit. 1: 8; 2: 5).

Conclusively, Gal. 5: 22 can be regarded as the *locus classicus* of the character of all followers of Christ brought about by the Holy Spirit. This is the hallmark of Pauline Pneumatology in the Book of Galatians.

1.4. Relevance for Contemporary Society

The relevance of Pauline Theology of the Holy Spirit in the Book of Galatians for the contemporary Church and civil society at large can never be overemphasized. Apart from reminding the Church and civil society that the Christian life, beginning from salvation, and justification to forgiveness, adoption, baptism in the Holy Spirit and victorious living till the *Parousia* is by grace through faith in Christ alone, the greatest lesson is that of acquiring and putting on the garment of moral and godly virtues which the church and civil society desperately need. These cannot be attained by self efforts because of human frailties but through the instrumentality of the indwelling Holy Spirit.

Every human being has a natural tendency, desire or propensity both to do good and evil. The latter comes following the fall of the first parents, Adam and Eve into sin (Gen. 3) and all human beings descending from them became depraved (Rom. 3: 23) while the former is intrinsic in man by the nature and image of God in man (Gen. 1: 26). This is the reason for the struggle between the spirit (to do good) and the flesh (to do evil) according to Rom. 7: 7 – 25 and Gal. 5:17.

The war against the preponderance of evil deeds, criminality and corruption in the society today cannot be won as long as human beings continue to walk in the flesh and not in the Spirit of God. The fickleness and inconsistencies of the Galatian Church are the same in contemporary society due to negative and bewitching spiritual, moral and political influences as well lack of maturity, firmness and stability among the citizenry. Contemporary society has witnessed fickleness among politicians who defect from one party to another among and people who defect from one religion or church denomination to another. The cure for this unpalatable trend is the Holy Spirit who will lead them into all truth (John 14: 15 - 25) and all godly attributes. Fickleness is also being seen in marital relationships where a lot of people change their spouses with reckless abandon through divorce.

Heinous crimes and all forms of unpatriotic activities being experienced particularly in Nigeria today is the display of the works of the flesh in all ramifications (Gal. 5: 19 – 21). These may not stop except and until "Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires (Gal. 5:23). This crucifixion is entirely the work of the Holy Spirit. Sadly, according to Amaowoh (2018: 167 – 168) those who claim to be fighting corruption, are the people who are also perpetuating it.

Virtue is superior to charisma. People will miss the *Parousia*/Rapture not because of lack of the gifts of the Spirit but because of lack of the fruit of the Spirit. Nevertheless, the contemporary church should continue to seek both for effective and balanced Christian life and service/ministry.

Types of Pentecostalism

This paper has given birth to six types of Pentecostalism, namely:

1.5. a. Dormant Pentecostalism

These are the Churches that claim to be Pentecostal but there is nothing, either the gifts or fruit of the Holy Spirit to show for it. They are Pentecostal in nature but the Holy Spirit has been caged, relegated and resisted. They are not active for now but are able to become active through Revival or Spiritual Renaissance.

b. Nominal Pentecostalism

These are the Churches that claim to be Pentecostal in name but without experiencing at any time the move and operations of the Holy Spirit.

c. Selective Pentecostalism

These are Pentecostal Churches that are selective in their belief in and operations of the Holy Spirit. They may emphasize certain gifts and fruit of the Holy Spirit over and against others.

d. Extinct Pentecostalism

These Churches were once Pentecostal in every sense but have ceased to have the experience due to lack of continuity, having begun in the spirit but are ending in the flesh.

e. Active Pentecostalism

These are Churches that are still experiencing the presence and manifestations of the Holy Spirit in all ramifications of gifts and fruit. They are Pentecostal and charismatic with all the gifts of the Holy Spirit in operation.

f. Pseuo-Pentecostalism

These are Churches who claim to be Pentecostals but their foundations are not of God and their operations seem to agree with 2 Cor. 11: 13 – 15.

For such men are false apostles, deceitful workmen, masquerading as apostles of Christ. 14 And no wonder, for Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light. 15 It is not surprising, then, if his servants masquerade as servants of righteousness. Their end will be what their actions deserve (2 Corinthians 11:13-15).

They are not genuine and bare no fruit of righteousness.

Then comes the issue of constantly stirring up or fanning to flame the gifts and operations of the Holy Spirit as Paul instructed Timothy:

For this reason I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands. For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline. (2 Tim. 1: 6 – 7).

If this is not done, the flame of Pentecost will disappear from the Church through heresies or non teaching of Pentecostal truths. St. Paul warns against quenching the Spirit (I Thess. 5: 19); grieving the Spirit (Eph. 4: 30); blaspheming and abusing the gifts of the Holy Spirit (I Cor. 12 – 14). The Church should not blaspheme the Holy Spirit (Matt. 12) or resist Him as the Jewish people did (Acts 7: 51).

The Church requires genuine revival to stay in touch with the Holy Spirit. This should be done through constant teaching, singing songs about Him and helping believers to be filled regularly. God-ordained Revivalists and Evangelists have critical roles to play in this regard. Prophets, Pastors, Teachers and Deacons are all stakeholders in perpetuating the moves of the Holy Spirit in the Church, in terms of both gifts and fruits so that the Galatian experience will be avoided.

2. CONCLUSION

It is interesting to discover St. Paul's teaching on the Holy Spirit (Pauline Pneumatology) in the Book of Galatians. The Holy Spirit, like other graces, is received by faith in Jesus Christ, to give the assurance of sonship, working of miracles and to produce godly virtues known as fruit of the Spirit by helping to crucify the flesh and its evil works. This teaching is timelessly relevant for the contemporary Church and civil society where such experiences and godly virtues are in short supply but are needed desperately in Church growth, the *parousia* and national development. Interestingly, Paul was not only *tupocratic* (from *tupocracy*, leading by example) in character (I Cor. 11:1). He was also *tupocratic* in operations of the Holy Spirit when he said, "***I thank God that I speak in tongues more than all of you***" (1 Corinthians 14:18). Church leaders should emulate Paul's example. It was the desire of Paul that the Galatian Christians should be Active Pentecostalism, walking constantly by the Spirit of God, producing godly virtues through the enablement of the Holy Spirit and this is also relevant for the contemporary society.

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