

What God Has Done, *Soli Deo Gloria*
Galatians 2:1-10, 11-21; Acts 15:1-33
Part 1

1. Flashbacks

a. Genesis 9:1-7 - Seven Laws of Noah

i. The Noahide Laws

(1) In reading regarding Jewish teachings and the law, specifically the Sabbaths, ceremonial and moral laws for the gentiles, the major schools of Judaism taught the following. This is the teaching regarding the obedience of the laws for the gentiles from the Noahian period until this day. Jewish tradition holds that non-Jews (Gentiles) are bound by seven laws, presumed to date from the time of that most righteous of the Gentiles, NOAH. There are six negative laws and one positive one:

1. Not to deny God (for example, idolatry)
2. Not to blaspheme God
3. Not to murder
4. Not to engage in incestuous, adulterous, bestial, or homosexual relationships
5. Not to steal
6. Not to eat a limb torn from a living animal
7. To set up courts to ensure obedience to the other six laws.

(2) Since each law has extensions and interpretations there are in fact more than seven laws that gentiles are commanded to observe.

(3) The Talmud states that the instruction not to eat "flesh with the life" was given to Noah, and that Adam and Eve had already received six other commandments. Adam and Eve were not enjoined from eating from a living animal; they were forbidden to eat any animal. The remaining six are exegetically derived from the sentence, "And the Lord God commanded the man saying, of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat" in Gen 2:16 [implying theft by eating of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good & Evil] (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Seven_Laws_of_Noah)

(4) "Whereas Congress recognizes the historical tradition of ethical values and principles which are the basis of civilized society and upon which our great Nation was founded; Whereas these ethical values and principles have been the bedrock of society from the dawn of civilization, when they were known as the Seven Noahide Laws." [27] 102nd Congress of the U.S.A., March 5, 1991

(5) Judaism regards any non-Jew (GENTILE) who keeps these laws as a RIGHTEOUS person who is guaranteed a place in the world-to-come." This is taken from the book; "Jewish Literacy, The Most Important Things to Know About the Jewish Religion, Its People, and Its History" Chapter 263, "THE SEVEN NOAHIDE LAWS," page 509. The author is Rabbi Joseph Telushkin and author of two of the most influential Jewish books of the past decade; "The Nine Questions People Ask About Judaism" and "Why the Jews? The Reason for anti-Semitism."

b. Abraham: covenant, circumcision, promise

- i. God's covenant with Abraham, Genesis 17:1-22.
- ii. The son of the promise, Genesis 21:1-14.

c. Blood, Leviticus 17:10-14.

d. David's fallen tabernacle: "In that day I will raise up the tabernacle of David that is fallen, and will rebuild the ruins of it, and will set up the parts thereof that have been broken down, and will build it up as in the ancient days: that the remnant of men, and all the Gentiles upon whom my name is called, may earnestly seek me, saith the Lord who does all these things." (Amos 9:11-12 Brenton's English Septuagint)

e. Cornelius, Acts 10:42-48; 11:1-3: conversion without...

f. Antioch in Pisidia, Acts 13:38-39: justification and the weakness of the law.

2. Read FF Bruce's 1. Repercussions in Jerusalem for introduction to this section.

Chapter 17, The Gentile Problem

1. Repercussions in Jerusalem

1. Repercussions in Jerusalem NEWS OF THE EXPANSION OF GENTILE CHRISTIANITY NATURALLY brought pleasure to the church of Antioch, but it was received with mixed feelings in Jerusalem. It was good, certainly, that so many Gentiles had come to acknowledge Jesus as Lord. But when the Jerusalem leaders had shaken hands with Barnabas and Paul, they had scarcely envisaged such a rapid influx of Gentile believers. Hitherto they had tried to maintain some measure of control over the extending Christian mission, but this was henceforth going to prove more and more difficult. It does not appear that they were specifically consulted about Barnabas and Paul's recent mission to Cyprus and South Galatia.⁴³⁷ Any concern which they felt about this should not be put down merely to a desire to keep the reins of power in their own hands. There was an important question of principle at stake, as they saw it: with such an increase in the number of Gentile Christians, to a point where they must soon outnumber Jewish Christians (if they had not done so already), how were the church's ethical standards to be safeguarded? Jews in general had no great opinion of Gentile morality,⁴³⁸ and the church's ethical standards were based on the peculiarly demanding requirements of Jesus. Jesus may have relaxed various non-ethical prescriptions of Jewish tradition, such as those relating to food restrictions and sabbath observance, but he sharpened the ethical prescriptions, carrying them back beyond overt speech and action to the hidden motives and emotions of the heart,⁴³⁹ and insisting on "the weightier matters of the law, justice and mercy and faith" (Matthew 23: 23). His disciples were taught to practise a righteousness exceeding "that of the scribes and Pharisees" (Matthew 5: 20) — no easy matter. But it was evident that Gentiles would have a hard task to bring their practice, especially in relations between the sexes, up to the ordinary Jewish level, let alone that of the scribes and Pharisees. What could be done to protect Christian standards? It was all very well for Barnabas and Paul to forge ahead with Gentile evangelization, but meanwhile the Jerusalem leaders had to discharge their own responsibility to commend the gospel to their fellow-Jews. The discharge of this responsibility would not be rendered any easier by reports that large numbers of Gentiles were entering the new fellowship on what must have seemed to be very easy terms. The whole issue of the approach to Gentiles was a delicate one in the Jerusalem situation. During the brief reign of Herod Agrippa as king of the Jews there had been a short but sharp campaign against at least one section of the Jerusalem church, in which the apostles, far from being unmolested as they had been in the earlier persecution which followed Stephen's death, were now the principal targets of attack. James the son of Zebedee had been executed and

Peter would have shared his fate had he not escaped from prison and gone into hiding.⁴⁴⁰ This attack on the apostles was not unconnected with the recent first steps in Gentile evangelization, such as Peter's visit to Cornelius in Caesarea⁴⁴¹ — first steps which, cautious though they were, apparently lost the apostles much of the public goodwill which they had formerly enjoyed in Jerusalem. Herod Agrippa's attack came to an end with his sudden death in A.D. 44, but fresh trouble for the church sprang up from another quarter. Judaea reverted to the control of Roman procurators, under whom during the next eight years there was a succession of militant actions led by men who might be generally described as Zealots, even if they did not all adopt this designation. Josephus, less politely, calls them brigands or impostors. ⁴⁴² Most important of these insurgent leaders were two sons of Judas the Galilaeen, James and Simon by name, who were caught and crucified by Tiberius Julius Alexander (procurator c. 46 — 48).⁴⁴³ Such insurgents were not only fiercely anti-Roman; they showed hostility also to those Jews whom they suspected of collaborating with the Romans.⁴⁴⁴ Those principally guilty in this last respect were members of the chief priestly establishment, but even a pious body of humble Jews, like the Jerusalem church, would incur their disfavour if they, or their associates elsewhere, were thought to be building bridges to the Gentile world. On religious and political grounds alike, then, the Gentile mission was bound to pose problems for the Jerusalem church and its leaders. Some members of the church suggested a simple solution: Gentile converts to Christianity should comply with the same requirements as Gentile converts to Judaism — they should be circumcised (if they were men) and undertake to keep the law of Moses. This would not only limit the intake of Gentiles into the church; it would ensure that those who did enter it would have to observe an acceptable ethical standard. Even the Zealots could have no valid argument against the admission of Gentiles on these terms. If this suggestion were adopted, however, it would have a disconcerting effect on the large number of Gentiles who had already been admitted to Christian fellowship without any such requirements - in Caesarea, Antioch, and places farther afield. Nevertheless, the suggestion commended itself to many, and some were disposed to insist on it, especially those who had links with the Pharisees. How far they could count on the support of the leadership of the Jerusalem church is uncertain: the apostles had already compromised themselves in the eyes of such rigorists, but they may have hoped for the approval of James the Just, who was respected by all the people for his piety and self-denial.⁴⁴⁵

Bruce, Frederick Fyvie (2000-01-01). Paul Apostle of the Heart Set Free (Kindle Locations 3132-3175). Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing. Kindle Edition.