

Text: Gal 5.5-6
St Stephen's

July 14/15, 2007
Sat/Sun

Roots and Fruits of Gospel Living

Illustration: What happened to St Anne's when the water broke through our underground heating ducts... and it was raining in the sanctuary!

If you have **trouble in the basement**, you will have **trouble in the living areas**. If you have trouble with the roots, you will have trouble with the fruits...

The Galatians had trouble in the basement.

The Performance Plan

*If you are counting on circumcision to make you right with God, then Christ will be of no benefit to you. I'll say it again. If you are **trying to find favor with God** by being circumcised... if you are **trying to make yourselves right with God** by keeping the law, you have been cut off from Christ! You have fallen away from God's grace.*

Galatians 5:2-4 (NLT)

Their basement problems were so severe, Paul described them as 'cut off...', fallen away...! What were these problems? Notice the common word between vv 4&5... "Trying"

'Trying' is a problem...? Or is it? Well, not always. Look at what Paul writes in the next chapter...

*Pay careful attention to **your own work**, for then you will get the satisfaction of a job well done, and you won't need to compare yourself to anyone else.*

Galatians 6:4 (NLT)

Can't do that without trying.

*So let's not get tired of **doing what is good**. At just the right time we will reap a harvest of blessing if we **don't give up**.*

Galatians 6:9 (NLT)

Nor that.

*Therefore, whenever we have the opportunity, we should **do good to everyone**—especially to those in the family of faith.*

Galatians 6:10 (NLT)

Nor that!

Let's look at the passage in Galatians again... and look more carefully at Paul's phrasing...

*If you are counting on circumcision to make you right with God, then Christ will be of no benefit to you. I'll say it again. If you are **trying to find favor with God** by being circumcised... if you are **trying to make yourselves right with God** by keeping the law, you have been cut off from Christ! You have fallen away from God's grace.*

Galatians 5:2-4 (NLT)

The problem is not with trying, but with **a particular kind of trying**. "Trying to find favor with.../make yourself right with God" - the **'performance plan'**. That's the problem! The problem is not with **human effort**, but with **human earning**. It is **'earning' that is the poison**. That is what can cut you off from grace, because you depend on yourself instead of depending on Christ.

The Gospel House has a **Substructure and a Superstructure...**

- Basement with its foundations and piping and wiring...
- Living areas with its finished walls and furniture...

The foundation of the house is grace, and the upper floors are our response to grace. If you get the foundation right, the living quarters will be great. (fruit of the Spirit: love joy, peace, patience, self control...)

You can see this floor plan in every epistle Paul wrote. Look at vv 5,6.

*For through the Spirit, by faith, **we wait** for the hope of righteousness. For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision is of any avail, but faith **working** through love.*

Galatians 5:5-6 (RSV)

Waiting and Working...

Waiting is a **grace word**, (a basement word) Paul says, we 'wait for righteousness' – he doesn't say we 'work for it'.

'Waiting' for it implies confidence that it has been promised and will be given, **not based on our performance but on his grace**. It implies that your past has been forgiven and your future is secure.

Illustration: My puppies waiting for a meal. Romeo jumping up to the window... eagerly waiting for what he knows is coming...

When there is waiting/grace in the basement, there is fruit in the living quarters, 'faith working through love'.

Here's **how they go together**...

What Christ has done is the foundation of all I do

So I am at rest (his grace is my foundation) **while** I work

I am seated (secure, embraced, loved, forgiven, assured) **while** I walk

Illustration of sitting in a chair... while walking, working, 'faith working through love'.

Here are **some of the paragraphs** where Paul would develop this theme of the partnership between God's grace and our effort...

*For by grace you have been saved through faith; and this is not your own doing, it is the gift of God—**not because of works**, lest any man should boast. For we are **his workmanship**, created in Christ Jesus **for good works**, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.*

Ephesians 2:8-10 (RSV)

*Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, **work out** your own salvation with fear and trembling; for **God is at work in you, both to will and to work** for his good pleasure.*

Philippians 2:12-13 (RSV)

But **by the grace of God I am what I am**, and his grace toward me was not in vain. On the contrary, **I worked harder** than any of them, though **it was not I**, but the grace of God which is with me.

1 Corinthians 15:10 (RSV)

Get your 'roots' right, and the 'fruits' will follow. Get the foundation right and the living quarters will be great.

How can you tell if you are **slipping back into earning**? Here are some 'Grace Questions...' that have raised flags for me, calling me back to a deeper faith, surrender to Jesus...

A Question of Dependence

Do you like to lean on Jesus? Are you happy to make a 'Declaration of Dependence' upon him? Grace invites, welcomes your full surrender.

Or do you find deep streams of independence still flowing through your heart. Do you want to 'go it alone' all the time?

Jesus was the one who said that you will find your life if you give up your life to him.

A Question of Gratitude

Do you have an overwhelming sense that God has been better to you than you deserve? Grace gives you that.

Or do you struggle with an underlying anger about your life?

Jesus' grace will lift that anger, heal that anger...

A Question of Approval

Do you have a deep confidence that God has accepted you, loves you just as you are, that he is delighted to have you in his family?

Or do you find yourself anxiously trying to earn the approval of people you can never seem to please? Or withholding approval from those who can never please you?

Grace frees us from the cycle of criticism and the fear of disapproval.

A Question of Love

Grace in the basement sets you free to love people in the living quarters of your life. Difficult people. Different people. To forgive people. To carry their burdens. To risk in love and reach in love. How are you doing with love.

How are the living quarters of your life? Maybe you give it some thought and you think `its **raining indoors** in this house... or there is way too much **anger** and not enough **love** in this house... or I'm tired of it always being **all about me** in this house...

Maybe it's the foundation. Maybe it's the roots. Maybe it's the performance plan sneaking back in. Maybe God is calling you back to the first thing, the grace plan, back to what he has done for you in Jesus, back to his love for you.

Come on back. The doors are wide open...

From **grace roots**, flow gospel fruits. On **this foundation** you can build a wonderful space for living. Real living!

Prayer: