Galatians 5:13-25 Doxology
June 29, 2025

It is summer. What a glorious time of the year! I enjoy being able to walk late in the evening, with enough daylight to see by, even after sunset, until almost 10pm. There is beauty in nature all the year round, but there is something about summer in its fulness. Everything is green. Nature's display inspires *praise.* People have always noticed it.

It has occurred to me that it is appropriate to simply devote a Sunday message to praise, sometimes called, "doxology." The epistle reading is from Galatians. It is not really a doxology, but Paul writes about the, "fruit of the Spirit," and somehow I was led to a train of thought that involved Paul's declarations of praise. There are several scattered about his letters. Some of them make good invocations. For example:

Romans 11:33-36 - "Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God!
Who has known the mind of the Lord?
Or who has been his counselor?"
Who has ever given to God,
that God should repay them?
How unsearchable are his judgments
and how inscrutable his ways!
For from him and through him and to him
are all things. To God be the glory forever. Amen."

1 Timothy 1:17 - To the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.

1 Timothy 6:15-16 - He who is the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords, who alone has immortality, who dwells in unapproachable light, whom no one has ever seen or can see. To him be honor and eternal dominion. Amen.

There are times when Paul wrote beautifully arranged benedictions and doxologies. Paul's letters are also filled with exhortations and encouragements, and instructions such as the one that has been read for us this morning from Galatians, that leave us inspired, especially when they are the focus of the day, or the last words we hear in worship. Some might have practical application:

2 Corinthians 13:11 - Finally, brothers (and sisters), rejoice. Aim for restoration, comfort one another, agree with one another, live in peace; and the God of love and peace will be with you.

Colossians 3:16-17 - Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God. And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father.

1 Corinthians 15:58 - Therefore, my beloved brothers (and sisters), be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain.

Ephesians 3:17-19 - (May) Christ dwell in your hearts through faith—that being rooted and grounded in love, you may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth of the love of Christ, and to know the love that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

The reading from Galatians fits in this category, maybe it is not a doxology or a benediction, but it does have instruction in which Paul teaches about the spiritual life, and raises the thoughts of the readers high. He compares the spirit and the flesh, and compares the results of a life devoted.

Paul lists the kinds of things that grow from a life devoted to this world and its values, we see such a list here; “sexual immorality, impurity, and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like.”

Some of them are not a part of our regular habits, but we should pay attention nonetheless for the sake of the ones that may strike a little closer to home.

Thankfully, he does not end with such a list. He also speaks of the result of the life devoted to God and to the Spirit, which is altogether different, and in a world that is increasingly restless and divided, and angry, it shines a light into the darkness;

“love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.”

He says, “against such things there is no law.”

He says, “if we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.” It is, after all, the Time After Pentecost, sometimes called, “Life in the Spirit.” Life in the Spirit is a life of praise.

The history of Israel is part of the human spiritual journey that has led to the Christian faith as we experience it; in its fellowship, its service and witness, and in its worship. Historians and archeologists have a hard time representing what daily life was like in that part of the past, presenting the people in ways that seem a little exotic, like Elisha and Elijah and the Chariot of Fire.

It becomes clear upon reading the stories and listening to the message, that whatever else, they *were* real human beings, and struggled with all the questions associated with being human. Why is life so short? What are the implications of right and wrong, good and evil? Why are people corrupted by wealth and power? How does a faithful person live in an imperfect world? How is God’s will discerned? What is salvation, and how is it attained?

Think of what we learn just from reading and hearing the doxologies and benedictions from Paul's letters whenever he got the literary juices flowing. We live in the aftermath of the resurrection of Jesus, which has changed the way the faithful understand themselves in the world, and answer these questions.

We believe in the Forgiveness of Sin and the Resurrection of the Dead, and the Rule of Love as the highest rule. We understand salvation as a merciful gift apprehended by faith, leading to eternal life. I can't help but think of one more set of instructions that I must include from Philippians 4;

"Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things."

I have spoken of benedictions; they often come with blessings:

1 Thessalonians 3:12-13 - May the Lord make you increase and abound in love for one another and for all, as we do for you, so that he may establish your hearts blameless in holiness before our God and Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all his saints.

Romans 15:5-6 - May the God of endurance and encouragement grant you to live in such harmony with one another, in accord with Christ Jesus, that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Romans 15:13 - May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope.

Love, endurance, and hope; these are the thoughts of our parting, and along with the blessed spiritual fruit, let them be in our hearts throughout this day and coming week.

Perhaps this brief sermon featuring some of the doxologies and benedictions and instructions found in Paul's epistles may seem like it is too much to remember. Bare with me as I leave you with one more, just a simple statement of blessing as we depart:

2 Corinthians 13:14 - The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit *be with you all.* Amen.

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