

Abstract

Life in the Realm of the Spirit: Galatians 3:1–14 in its Eschatological Framework

Matthew Pfiffner

Paul's letter to the Galatians has long been a source of debate, with perhaps no single passage generating as much discussion as Galatians 3:1–14. A particularly vexing question is how we are to understand Paul's "argument from Scripture" and view of the law in vv. 6–14, with v. 10 often serving as the interpretive crux. This focus on Paul's use of Scripture has yielded numerous approaches to the text, none of which have as yet been able to win a consensus. Some scholars, however, including David J. Lull, John M. G. Barclay, and Gordon D. Fee, have focused instead on the role of the Spirit in Paul's thought. These scholars have highlighted the importance of Paul's "argument from experience" (vv. 1–5) as serving as the basis for his argument from Scripture (vv. 6–14). It will be argued that when these two elements are held together within an eschatological framework, a rich reading of the text is made possible. In particular it is the coming of Christ and the Spirit that witnesses to the dawning of the new age of God's restoration of his people. It is this turning of the ages that serves as the interpretative framework within which Paul reads Scripture (cf. Gal 3:8). Those who choose to live "out of works of the law" are still living under the curse (v.10), while those who live "out of (hearing with) faith" are already a part of the people of God, as witnessed to by their reception of the Spirit (vv. 1–5, 14; cf. Gal 4:6–7). Furthermore, it is the Galatians' reception of the promised Spirit that serves to fulfill the promise made to Abraham (v. 14).