

Richard W. Hove. *Equality in Christ? Galatians 3:28 and Gender Dispute*. Wheaton: Crossway Books, 1999.

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The debate over the roles of men and women is raging, not only within society but also within the church. Some believe the Scriptures teach that men and women have unique roles in the home and church. Others hold that gender is irrelevant to these roles.

In the midst of this heated debate stands Galatians 3:28 frequently cited as one of the critical texts in determining the biblical teaching on gender roles. Richard Hove who received his Master of Divinity at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School and who presently directs the ministry at Duke University sheds clarifying light on this subject by giving great care to exegete the details of the passage in Galatians 3:28. He thoroughly examines the passage to discover what it says and means so that we can accurately understand its significance in this dispute (back cover).

Summary

Richard Hove's primary purpose is to demonstrate that Galatians 3:28 is based on salvation in Christ and not gender roles. He develops his thoughts by proposing what he believes was the Galatians problem. He states, "That the Jewish 'Christians' were corrupting the true gospel by teaching that Gentiles must submit to the Old Testament law" (33). Richard Hove addresses the Galatians 3:28 debate by unveiling the context of Galatians chapters 3-4. He addresses Paul's arguments to the Galatians in chapters 1 and 2 of his book, the meaning and significance of Galatians in chapter 3 and the response to the Egalitarians in his last chapter. Richard Hove goes on to say, "That Paul's argument in Galatians 3-4 is founded on the progression of salvation-history" (35); and "Galatians

3:28, if removed from its context in Galatians 3-4, contains no specific indicators of its salvation-historical importance” (46).

Critical Evaluation

Richard Hove clearly states the purpose of this book. His charitable contribution of this study “is to examine the lexical, syntactical, and contextual issues that are important for an accurate interpretation of Galatians 3:28” (18).

He does a prodigious job of educating his readers on the purpose of Paul’s letter to the Galatians. Richard Hove states, “Galatians itself provides many clues as to the specific situation. Many of the Galatians were deserting Christ and turning to a “different gospel” in confusion (1:6-7). They had received the Spirit by “believing what [they] heard” (3:2), and had run “a good race” up to that point (5:7), but now they were “trying to attain [their] goal by human effort” (3:3). Although they knew God (4:8), many were turning back “to those weak and miserable principles” that previously enslaved them (4:9), and had begun to observe special days, months, seasons, and years. They were being pressured to be circumcised (5:3; 6:12-13, 15), causing Paul to warn them against any attempt to be justified by the law (5:4)” (26-27).

He carefully explains Galatians 3:28 by referring to the context of Scripture. Again, advising us that 3:28, if removed from its context in Galatians, contains no specific indicators of its salvation-historical importance. He points out that in Galatians 2 Paul is addressing the works of the law as it is in contrast with being justified by faith in Jesus Christ. Richard Hove attests to Paul’s giving attention to the Gentiles in chapter 3 now being able to receive the promised inheritance due to the redemption of Christ and informing them that the works of the law is insufficient because of the curse. Because

of his careful explanation of these passages it is understood where Galatians 3:28 fits into all of this. “Paul has discussed the theological basis for issues such as the purpose of the law, the relationship of Christ and His death to the law, the relationship of the Gentiles to the promise, and the relationship of Abraham to Christ” (45-46). One now understands that Galatians 3:28 has nothing to do with gender roles but with oneness in Christ as it relates to salvation.

Richard Hove noted the interpretations of other egalitarians in chapter 3, entitled “The Meaning and Significance of Galatians 3:28.” However, while acknowledging the interpretations of other egalitarians in chapter 3 of his book he devoted an entire chapter to the response of one egalitarian. Richard Hove in part should have given to the readers the interpretation of this passage by more than one egalitarian in the chapter entitled “A Response to A Recent Egalitarian Interpretation of Galatians 3:28.” In order to avoid the assumption that his response is a fight with Rebecca Groothuis and her interpretation of this passage, to give the viewpoint of others in this chapter would lead the reader to believe that his book is based solely on his belief about what Paul is saying to the Galatians in this passage and its proper interpretation of Scripture.

Conclusion

Equality in Christ? *Galatians 3:28 The Gender Dispute*, was overall a book that provided clarity and meaning to Galatians 3:28. The reader clearly understands that Galatians 3:28 cannot be taken out of context and when in context of chapters 3-4 clearly explains that Paul is not stating role differences but equality in Christ as it relates to salvation. The author’s exegetical interpretation of this Scripture was well done as it

relates to the Gentiles receiving the promised inheritance of Abraham due to Christ's coming. The reader clearly understands the letter written to the Galatians by Paul. She understands that Galatians 3:28 quoted to the Gentiles was to help them understand their oneness in Christ as it relates to Jewish Christians and that "works of the law" were no longer needed. The author's purpose of the book was to examine Galatians 3:28 clearly and its contextual issues in order to give proper interpretation of the passage, and this was well achieved.