

Galatians #8

September 15, 2024

Series: Galatians: Treasuring the Gospel of Grace

Today's Message: The Nature of Justification (It is by faith); Galatians 3:1-14

The sermon today is a shift from Paul's efforts to defend his apostolic authenticity and authority. Chapters 3 and 4 make up the doctrinal section of Galatians. These chapters are Paul's exposition of the doctrine of justification. So, beginning today, and for the next few weeks, we will be taking a deep dive into the theology of the doctrine of justification by faith. Remember, this doctrine is central to the gospel of God worked out on our behalf through the person and work of Christ. If this doctrine falls, or is set aside, all other biblical doctrine falls flat on its face.

Paul was intense! But his intensity was fueled by his spiritual fervor and zeal for the glory of God in Christ Jesus. I'm certain that Paul was not on the hunt looking for a fault in these Galatian believers or even in Peter. These Galatians had received the gospel. They were born again (or at least Paul indicates several times that they were in the faith.) Because of this we should no more think of those to whom Paul is writing as lost anymore than we might think Peter was. And most of us would probably agree that Peter, even though he had compromised the message of the gospel of justification—that Peter remains in Christ! This is very important as we study Galatians: Paul is writing to believers!

So, what is the big deal about some error creeping into the church? For one, when we think about Peter's inconsistency and compromise (Gal. 2:11-21) it should be so very clear that his compromise did or would send the whole Galatian community of believers into confusion and probably also contention. As the debate would rage: Is justification by faith in Christ alone, or by faith in Christ plus works of law for righteousness?

And beyond being simply a local issue the effect of that compromised gospel message would ripple and reverberate across the globe. For if God's apostles couldn't remain consistent in the message, and the churches couldn't agree on the message, what chance would there be for there to be any long lasting and certain agreement among believers the world over and down through the generations of humanity to come? What would become of the message? As far as Paul was concerned, fidelity to the message of the gospel of God in Jesus Christ was worth risking his life, his reputation and his ministry.

In our text today I think we can see Paul is dumbfounded by the confusion in the churches of Galatia. He is bewildered and beside himself. He can't believe that they would so easily set aside the simplicity of the gospel of grace for a doctrine that undercuts and eviscerates the pure doctrines of grace. Paul is perplexed as to why would they cheapen the glorious saving work of Jesus Christ, His supremacy and all-sufficiency, and exchange it for a cheap and historically proven failing message of works/righteousness? We find him unapologetic in his exasperation, and rightly so.

Can you imagine bestowing a gift upon someone just because you wanted to give them something as a gift, let's say that the gift was the most valuable piece of art on earth. Yet, when you give it to them, they immediately take out their paint set and begin adding "improvements" to the painting. Not only would you be insulted, but you would be left scratching your head. You would be dumbfounded. I think that's why Paul is so surprised at their insistence on adding to the gospel of grace. That's why his reaction is what it is. Yet he doesn't fold the tent. He doesn't pack it in and turn against them. Instead, **he extends grace upon grace** in an effort to firmly but lovingly win their hearts back to full dependence upon the gospel of grace.

We will look at three things today in Galatians 3:1-14. 1) How Paul confronts the foolishness and unreasonableness of their inconsistency with reasonable questions. 2) How Paul proves the biblical foundation of the doctrine of justification by faith. And 3) How Paul proves the exceeding superiority of the redeeming work of Christ for our justification.

- I) **(3:1-5) Paul confronts the foolishness and unreasonableness of the Galatian's inconsistency.**
- A) Paul asks questions instead of entering into a direct full force confrontation.
- 1) It is a confrontation, but it is done using a very wise method.
 - (a) He asks them questions that cause them to think and compare.
 - (i) To consider if there are, indeed, inconsistencies.
 - (b) And remember Paul's gentleness in an effort to extend grace to them.
 - (i) Grace leads to repentance.
 - (a) It is a gift from God: **2 Timothy 2:25: "Those who oppose him he must gently instruct, in the hope that God will grant them repentance leading them to a knowledge of the Truth."**
 - (c) **PRN> A Gentle question pricks the conscience; An accusation hardens the heart.**
- B) (3:1-5) Paul confronts their inconsistencies with questions.
- 1) (3:1) Question #1: Who has bewitched you?
 - (a) Foolish: They are not stupid, but they are careless and lazy when it comes to the truth.
 - (b) Bewitched: The Judaizers were so convincing that it was as if a spell had been cast.
 - (c) Christ was portrayed...: They clearly "saw" the Truth of the Gospel, they believed it, and gave evidence to having been born again. But now it is as if they were blinded to the truth.
 - 2) (3:2) Question #2: Did you receive the Spirit by observing the law, or by believing what you heard?
 - (a) He wants to know, "How did you receive the Holy Spirit?"
 - (i) In case you don't know: **Ephesians 1:13-14 gives the answer.**
 - 3) (3:3) Question #3: Are you so foolish? After beginning with the Spirit, are you now trying to attain your goal by human effort?
 - (a) The goal is "righteousness". This righteousness is a gift, received by faith, not works of law.
 - (i) You and I cannot be brought to spiritual maturity by through works of the law anymore than we could have justified ourselves through works of the law.
 - (a) Our maturity also comes from faith as we deepen our dependence on Him!
 1. **1 Pet. 5:7: But the God of all grace...He, Himself, shall establish you and make you strong. (see also Phil. 1:6)**
 - a. **"God expects nothing from the flesh."**
 - 4) (3:4) Question #4: Have you suffered so much for nothing-- if it really was for nothing?
 - (a) Paul says essentially: You've actually suffered for Christ! Are you throwing that away? Is it worthless to you and of no value? **(see Rom. 8:17-27—groaning; waiting; hoping)**
 - 5) (3:5) Question #5: Does God give you His Spirit and work miracles among you because you observe the law, or because you believe what you heard?
 - (a) In other words, is the Spirit beholden to our good works in order to do His work? Or,
 - (b) Are we beholden to the Spirit and His power at work in us for us to do His good works?
 - (c) Our God and Savior is NOT going to let His glory rest on our ingenuity and strength.
- II) **(3:6-9) Paul proves the biblical foundation of the doctrine of justification by faith.**
- A) (3:6) Abraham: The biblical foundation for the argument for the doctrine of justification by faith.
- 1) "Consider Abraham": Paul simply quotes Scripture from Genesis 15:6
 - (a) Statement of fact: "Abraham believed God and it was credited to Him as righteousness."
 - (i) Not credited because of any works of obedience, **but by faith!**
 - (a) Did you know that Abraham preceded the Law by a little over 400 years!
 1. That's a long time. So, well before the Law, God credited Abraham by faith.
 - (b) **Romans 4:7-12** perfectly illustrates this principle of faith over works of law.
- B) (3:7) Fact: everyone (Jew or Gentile) who believe by faith, like Abraham, are his children.
- 1) Did not Jesus say the same thing in John 8?
 - (a) **Look up John 8:39-40**
 - (b) Only genuine believers are, that is, those who are of faith, have relationship to Abraham!

- (i) But God has not rejected the Jewish people (**Romans 11:1-2**). There is a future!
 - C) (3:8) Paul appeals to OT Scripture as the proof of his argument that Gentiles are justified by faith.
 - 1) Let Scripture interpret Scripture: Here, Paul gives an expositional teaching on **Genesis 12:3**.
 - (a) Genesis 12:3 to Abraham: "...and all the peoples on earth will be blessed through you."
 - (i) By the same faith as Abraham! Gentiles are **justified and blessed** for the same reason as Abraham was justified and blessed: through their faith in God's promise!
 - D) (3:9) Fact: everyone who has the faith of Abraham shares in his gospel blessing.
 - 1) All who believe by faith are blessed along with Abraham, **the believer!**
 - (a) The blessing: ALL the love, grace, mercy, which God pours out on all who are in Christ!
 - (i) "Every Spiritual blessing in the heavenly realms!" (**See Eph. 1:3; 2:6-7**)!!
 - E) Summary: Paul is dumbfounded, filled with perplexity wondering why they would exchange the gospel of grace for works that neither save, nor sanctify anyone!
 - 1) There is absolutely NO advantage for a Gentile to become a Jew either before or after becoming a Christian! In fact, as Paul has been arguing, adding anything, such a circumcision to justification by faith, whether Jew or Gentile "nullifies the grace of God," which determines the conclusion "That Christ died for nothing." (see Galatians 2:21)
- III) (**3:10-14**) Paul proves the exceeding superiority of the redeeming work of Christ for our justification.
 - A) (3:10) To the contrary, everyone who trusts in the law of works is under a perpetual curse.
 - 1) Paul tells them plainly, in essence, trusting in works righteousness removes **the blessing**. Therefore, the curse is the absence of **the blessing!**
 - (a) Think of all **the blessings** we miss every day because we try to work for God's grace?
 - (i) PRN> The Christian life is a faith based life, not a performance based life!
 - (ii) Why? **James 2:10**: If you offend even one point of the law, you're guilty of breaking all!
 - (b) Friends, if you know you've broken even one law, your only recourse is to once again turn to Jesus Christ and what He has done on your behalf on the cross! By faith! By faith! By faith!
 - B) (3:11-12) Paul appeals to Scripture once again to establish the foundation of justification by faith.
 - 1) (3:11) He quotes Habakkuk 2:4: "The righteous shall live by faith."
 - (a) There is no confidence in the law to produce righteousness. Scripture clearly teaches this.
 - 2) (3:12) He quotes Leviticus 18:5: "The man who does these things will live by them."
 - 3) Martin Luther loved this letter to the Galatians because he was set free from his continuous, bleeding effort to attain a righteous for himself that he could not ever gain!
 - (a) As he climbed the sacred stairs on bloody knees Galatians 3:11 kept resounding in his mind screaming, "The righteous shall live by faith!" And he was set free by the gospel of grace!
 - (b) Warning: If you neglect faith in Jesus Christ, you are exchanging the grace of God for the heavy weight of the law, which falls without mercy upon all who trust in it instead of Christ!
 - C) (3:13-14) Paul anchors the doctrine of justification by faith on the redemptive work of Christ Jesus.
 - 1) (3:13a) Paul gives his statement of fact of our deliverance from the curse through Christ.
 - (a) Right here, Gal. 3:12—here is the gospel!
 - (i) Christ Jesus **has redeemed us!** Not will. Not hopefully but **has redeemed us** from the law curse!
 - 2) (3:13b) Paul establishes the means of our deliverance from the curse.
 - (a) God sent His Son from heaven to perfectly do **for us** what we could never do!
 - (i) Only the Son of Man could stand in for fallen sinners: a man had to die.
 - (ii) But only the Son of God could righteously stand in His righteousness before the Holy Judgment of God. Through faith in Jesus Christ, the God-man, are we saved!
 - 3) (3:14) Paul underscores the far-reaching purpose of Christ's redeeming work on the cross.
 - (a) God sent His Son for two most blessed reasons:
 - (i) That the blessing of the faith of Abraham would come to the Gentiles through faith;
 - (ii) And, that through that same faith we would receive the Holy Spirit—power to live!