

Galatians #9

September 22, 2024

Series: Galatians: Treasuring the Gospel of Grace

Today's Message: The Nature of Justification, pt 2; Galatians 3:1-14

In Galatians 3 Paul begins his doctrinal defense of justification by faith.

In the first five verses Paul asks questions to cause them to think and also to lead into his defense of the doctrine of justification by faith. Paul's questions are precise. They are not simple yes or no questions.

Paul asks as series of questions, "Did you receive the Spirit by observing the law, or by believing what you heard?" How else could they answer except to say, *By believing what we heard; not by observing the law.*

Next, he asks, "Are you really so very foolish/reckless/ careless with the Truth? After beginning with the Spirit [which you received by faith], are you now trying to attain your goal [of righteousness before God] by human effort? They would have to answer, *That is indeed very foolish. That is exactly what we've been doing.*

Paul goes on with two more questions about their personal experiences with the living God through Jesus Christ and the power of the working of the Holy Spirit. They would agree with Paul that knowing and experiencing God through faith in Jesus has not been wasted. The bottom line is this: Paul wants to know if they truly believe they can attain a greater blessing by other ways and means than what God has given them as they simply believed and received the message of the gospel of God in the first place!

The serious message for us is that there is no other additional ways or means for God's people to receive the Holy Spirit, or His spiritual blessings, or His righteousness, or His peace, or His power to work in and through believers—there is no other ways or means to be right with God than through faith in His promises which find their fullness and fulfillment in Jesus Christ!

As we finish out Galatians 3:1-14 today Paul will answer the questions asked in 3:1-5 by 1) proving the biblical foundation of the doctrine of justification by faith, and by 2) proving the exceeding greatness and superiority of Christ's redeeming work for our justification, which is by faith alone in Christ alone, for God's glory alone!

- I) **(3:6-9) Paul proves the biblical foundation of the doctrine of justification by faith.**
 - A) Whereas the Judaizers anchored on Moses and the Law and, subsequently, the law of works (which we call "legalism," Paul goes further back to Abraham.
 - B) (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 personal works of obedience, **but by faith!**
 - (a) Abraham was not required to practice circumcision until 14 years after the promise.
 - (b) Did you also know that Abraham preceded the Law by 400 to 500 years!
 1. That's a long time. So, long before the Law, God credited Abraham by faith.
 - (c) **Romans 4:1-12** perfectly illustrates this principle of faith over legalistic works of law.
 1. Paul connects justification by faith with God's blessing.
 - a. **See Romans 4:6-8:** God blesses faith and trust in Him.
 2. It is a blessedness for both believing Jews and Gentiles—by faith, like Abraham.
 - a. The obedience of faith, whether circumcised or uncircumcised—by faith!
 - C) (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 8:37, 39b:** “I know you are Abraham’s descendants. Yet you are ready to kill Me, because you have no room for my word. ... If you were Abraham’s children, then you would do the things Abraham did [which was to believe by faith].”
- (b) Only genuine believers, having the same faith as Abraham, are the descendants of Abraham!
 - (i) But God has not rejected the Jewish people (**Romans 11:1-2**). There is a future!
- D) (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) The Word of God (Scripture) **preached the gospel** to Abraham concerning the blessing that would come to the nations **through faith** not by works! That’s Paul’s point here!
 - (ii) 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!
 - (a) As we will see in 3:10-14 there is no blessing from God apart from faith!
- E) (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**)!!
- F) 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 would lead to the final **spurious** conclusion “That Christ died for nothing.” (see Galatians 2:21)
 - 2) Paul emphasizes the gift of the Holy Spirit for those who believe with the same faith as Abraham. Galatians 3:2 and 3:14 show us that when we are justified through faith, as Abraham was, the Holy Spirit comes to draw us, strengthen us, move us, and animate us as we depend on Him.
 - (a) In fact, Paul only speaks of the divine blessing of God, which is that both our justification and the gift of the Holy Spirit can be received only as a gift of God through faith!
- G) Next, Paul contrasts the divine blessing upon all who believe with the divine curse upon all who would begin with faith and then try to gain a legalistic righteousness through works of law.
- II) **(3:10-14) Paul proves the exceeding superiority of the redeeming work of Christ for our justification.**
 - A) Was Paul against the Law of Moses or was he against legalism?
 - 1) He wasn’t against the Law of Moses.
 - (a) Romans 6:12, “So then, the law is holy, and the commandment is holy, righteous and good.”
 - (b) 1 Timothy 1:8, “For we know that the Law is good...”
 - 2) The law of God wasn’t given to make us better people if we follow its rules:
 - (a) Romans 6:13: “Did that which is good, then, become death to me? By no means! But in order that sin might be recognized as sin, it produced death in me through what was good, so that through the commandment sin might become utterly sinful.”
 - (i) He goes on in Romans 7 to prove that in our flesh there is no power to fulfill righteousness by observing the law. To the contrary, “no one will be declared righteous by observing the law, but rather through the law we become conscious of sin (Rom.3:20).
 - 3) Paul is not attacking the law of Moses but rather a form of legalism.
 - (a) Legalism is the practice of keeping rules and regulations as a means of earning God’s favor and acceptance. Legalistic practices are always done **in the flesh without faith!**
 - (i) But Ephesians 1:5-7 teaches that through His grace He accepts us in the Beloved [Christ, the beloved Son of God].
 - (a) In Christ, according to Eph. 1:7, “we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God’s grace.”

1. We can never do anything in our flesh to become more accepted than we already are, by faith, in Christ Jesus our Savior.
- B) (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 legalistic works for 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 personal performance-based life!
 - (ii) Why? **Because our righteous standing is dependent on Christ's performance record!**
 - (b) Friends, if you have leaned on your own performance record, I urge you to once again turn to Jesus Christ and what He has done on your behalf on the cross! **By faith! By faith! By faith!**
 - (i) Justifying faith involves reliance on and submission to Christ's performance record!
 - (a) Justifying faith recognizes that as an individual there is no escape from God's righteous judgment. The only recourse is to fall with full weight upon God's provision and power given through faith in Jesus Christ by the power of the indwelling Spirit!
- C) (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 are no Scriptural grounds for confidence in the law to produce righteousness.
 - 2) (3:12) He quotes Leviticus 18:5: "The man who does these things will live by them."
 - (a) Living by the law requires perfect obedience to God, not by living mostly obedient to it.
 - 3) Martin Luther loved this letter to the Galatians because as he meditated on it, he was set free from his continuous, bleeding effort to attain a righteousness that he could not ever gain himself!
 - (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!
- D) (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. 3:13—here is the gospel!
 - (i) Christ Jesus **has redeemed us**! Not will redeem us. Not, hopefully will redeem us. 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) Because man sinned, a man had to die! Truly only the Son of Man could stand in for fallen sinners. Indeed, Christ was the only sinless man who could stand in our place!
 - (ii) But only the Son of God could righteously **withstand** the Holy wrath and Judgment of God. Therefore, it is only through faith in Jesus Christ, the God-man that we are 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 through that same faith we would receive the Holy Spirit, our power to live for Him!
- E) Conclusion:
- 1) Through faith in Jesus Christ believers receive the promised blessing of every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ (Eph. 1:3).
 - (a) This very divine blessing gives a testimony of praise to the glory of His grace (that God saves sinners by grace through faith in the finished/ complete work of Christ)!
 - (b) Through faith alone believers are "raised...up with Him, and seated...with Him in the heavenly places, in Christ Jesus, in order that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing greatness of the riches of His kindness toward [sinners who receive Christ by faith] in Christ Jesus." (Eph. 2:6-7)