

GALATIANS 3

Justification by Faith (cf. Rom 4)

Galatians 3:1-4

You foolish Galatians, who has bewitched you, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified? 2 This is the only thing I want to find out from you: did you receive the Spirit by the works of the Law, or by hearing with faith? 3 Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh? 4 Did you suffer so many things in vain—if indeed it was in vain?

The phrase “O foolish Galatians!” and the rhetorical questions seem to taunt the Galatians who had first viewed a crucified Christ and had obeyed the truth of his portrayal. How could they turn from the truth of this gospel? These questions are followed by more; the first: “Did you receive the Spirit by works of the law or by hearing of faith? The answer is obvious. Hebrews 11:6 instructs us:

6 And without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him.

This absolutely necessary faith comes from hearing, according to Romans 10:11-15:

11 For the Scripture says, "Whoever believes in Him will not be disappointed." 12 For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord is Lord of all, abounding in riches for all who call upon Him; 13 for "Whoever will call upon the name of the Lord will be saved." 14 How then shall they call upon Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher?

Are they willingly trading the Spirit in whom they had begun for some kind of perfection of the flesh—an impossibility to begin with? Was their suffering for Christ and in Christ vain?

Galatians 3:5-9

5 Does He then, who provides you with the Spirit and works miracles among you, do it by the works of the Law, or by hearing with faith? 6 Even so Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness. 7 Therefore, be sure that it is those who are of faith who are sons of Abraham. 8 And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, "All the nations shall be blessed in you." 9 So then those who are of faith are blessed with Abraham, the believer.

Christ supplied the Spirit to them and worked miracles among them. These, of course, came by the hearing of faith and not by works of the law. The true sons of Abraham are those of faith just as the justification of the Gentiles is by faith, allowing the gospel to be preached beforehand to Abraham: “In you shall all the nations of the earth be blessed.” [Footnotes for Galatians 3:8: Genesis 12:3; 18:18; 22:18; 26:4; 28:14].

The Law Brings a Curse

Galatians 3:10-12

Galatians 3:10-14

10 For as many as are of the works of the Law are under a curse; for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who does not abide by all things written in the book of the law, to perform them." 11 Now that

no one is justified by the Law before God is evident; for, "The righteous man shall live by faith." 12 However, the Law is not of faith; on the contrary, "He who practices them shall live by them

Paul cites three passages to prove his point that as many are of the works of the law are under the curse:

Deuteronomy 27:26: 26 "Cursed is he who does not confirm the words of this law by doing them."

Habakkuk 2:4:

4 "Behold, as for the proud one,
His soul is not right within him;
But the righteous will live by his faith.

Leviticus 18:5: 5 "So you shall keep My statutes and My judgments, by which a man may live if he does them; I am the Lord."

Those who are of the works of the law are under a curse, because these do not justify a man, since the just live by faith.

Galatians 3: 13-14

13 Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us — for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree" — 14 in order that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.

Christ himself suffered the curse of law in Deuteronomy 21:22-23 and in doing so redeemed (bought back) us from the curse of the law:

22 "And if a man has committed a sin worthy of death, and he is put to death, and you hang him on a tree, 23 his corpse shall not hang all night on the tree, but you shall surely bury him on the same day (for he who is hanged is accursed of God), so that you do not defile your land which the Lord your God gives you as an inheritance.

Because of this sacrifice, the blessing of Abraham comes upon Gentiles in Christ Jesus. The end of this is that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith. The blessing of Abraham is to all nations—Jew and Gentile alike. Genesis 22:18 reads:

18 And in your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice."

And again it is repeated in Genesis 28:14:

14 Your descendants shall also be like the dust of the earth, and you shall spread out to the west and to the east and to the north and to the south; and in you and in your descendants shall all the families of the earth be blessed.

The Changeless Promise

Galatians 3:15-18

15 Brethren, I speak in terms of human relations: even though it is only a man's covenant, yet when it has been ratified, no one sets it aside or adds conditions to it. 16 Now the promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. He does not say, "And to seeds," as referring to many, but rather to one, "And to your seed," that is, Christ. 17 What I am saying is this: the Law, which came four hundred and thirty years later, does not invalidate a covenant previously ratified by God, so as to nullify the

promise. 18 For if the inheritance is based on law, it is no longer based on a promise; but God has granted it to Abraham by means of a promise.

God gave his promise to Abraham in Genesis 12:1-3:

12 Now the Lord said to Abram,
"Go forth from your country,
And from your relatives
And from your father's house,
To the land which I will show you;
2 And I will make you a great nation,
And I will bless you,
And make your name great;
And so you shall be a blessing;
3 And I will bless those who bless you,
And the one who curses you I will curse.
And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."

Paul explains why the promise cannot be changed:

1. Even a man's covenant once entered into cannot be annulled or added to.
2. The seed is clearly Christ ("and your seed" "who is Christ."").
3. The covenant was confirmed before by God in Christ and cannot be annulled by the law.
4. An inheritance of the law is no longer of promise.

Purpose of the Law

Galatians 3:19-20

19 Why the Law then? It was added because of transgressions, having been ordained through angels by the agency of a mediator, until the seed should come to whom the promise had been made. 20 Now a mediator is not for one party only; whereas God is only one.

If the blessing in Christ is not under the law, then what purpose does the law serve? It was added because of the transgressions and sins of the Jewish people until Christ should come. Paul teaches this same principle of the law related to sin and transgressions in Romans 3:20:

20 because by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight; for through the Law comes the knowledge of sin.

In short, sin and transgression required a sustaining law until the blessing of Abraham was fulfilled in Christ. So that Christ himself would teach in Matthew 5:17-18:

17 "Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish, but to fulfill. 18 "For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass away from the Law, until all is accomplished.

Thus the law and the promised work perfectly together with each fulfilling its purpose in Christ.

Galatians 3:21-25

21 Is the Law then contrary to the promises of God? May it never be! For if a law had been given which was able to impart life, then righteousness would indeed have been based on law. 22 But the Scripture has shut up all men under sin that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe. 23 But before faith came, we were kept in custody under the law, being shut up to the faith which was later to be revealed. 24 Therefore the Law has become our tutor to lead us to Christ, that we may be justified by faith. 25 But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor.

Therefore, the law is not against the promises of God because the law could not give life; if it could have given life, righteousness would have been by the law. The law established sin for all, and the promise establish salvation to all who believe in Jesus Christ. The law kept mankind under guard for the faith in Christ which was afterward to be revealed. Therefore, the law came:

As a tutor to bring us to Christ.

That we might be justified by faith.

But after faith came, we are no longer under the law.

In this way, Christ was the fulfillment of the law as taught also in Romans 10:4: “4 For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.”

Sons and Heirs

Galatians 3:26-29

26 For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. 27 For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. 28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. 29 And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise.

We who receive Abraham’s blessing through belief in Christ are all sons God through this faith in Christ. However, it is not by faith alone as James also records in James 2:19:

19 You believe that God is one. You do well; the demons also believe, and shudder. 20 But are you willing to recognize, you foolish fellow, that faith without works is useless?

To become a son of God, one must obey by being baptized into Christ to put on Christ—a consistent principle taught by Christ and his apostles. In Mark 16:16, Jesus taught:

16 "He who has believed and has been baptized shall be saved; but he who has disbelieved shall be condemned.

In Acts 22:16, Saul (later, called Paul) at the point of his conversion was told:

6 “And now why do you delay? Arise, and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on His name.”

Finally Peter wrote in 1 Peter 3:21:

21 And corresponding to that, baptism now saves you — not the removal of dirt from the flesh, but an appeal to God for a good conscience — through the resurrection of Jesus Christ,

This promise of salvation is open to all men of every nation, slave or free, male or female. **We are one in Christ Jesus; we all are Abraham’s offspring; and we are heirs according to the promise!**

This testimony is certain; Romans 8:12-17 agrees:

12 So then, brethren, we are under obligation, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh — 13 for if you are living according to the flesh, you must die; but if by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live. 14 For all who are **being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.** 15 For you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, **but you have received a spirit of adoption as sons** by which we cry out, "Abba! Father!" 16 The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are **children of God**, 17 and if children, heirs also, **heirs of God** and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him in order that we may also be glorified with Him.