

THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

MARCH 9TH–10TH, 2024 // GALATIANS

ABRAHAM'S SONS (GALATIANS 3:1–9) "YOU FOOLISH GALATIANS!" (VS. 1)

Paul suggests that these Christians, who began their walk with Jesus in the truth of the gospel, have been put under a spell so they could no longer think or act according to reason.

- Paul's preaching to them of Christ crucified had been so vivid and full of power, it was as if they had seen Jesus publicly crucified before their very eyes.

Legalism can be quite bewitching and cause us to lose our ability to practice our faith (which is foolish).

- Fear and shame are powerful things! They can "bewitch" us into never considering whether what we're believing lines up with Scripture.
- The desire to be spiritually superior is an intoxicating force that can "bewitch" one into being a part of a tribe or group that is caught up in legalism.

The Galatians started by the Spirit (they had been truly born again by the Spirit, not by law-keeping) but now they were trying to live out their faith by the flesh and by their own effort (vs. 3).

- Paul essentially asks, "Did you receive God's Spirit and see His works of power and miracles in your midst because you followed the law or because you believed in Jesus?" (vs. 2–5)
- Miracles aren't a result of us earning them.

Paul then reasons using the example of Abraham and how he was made right with God (vs. 6).

- Before Abraham was circumcised or given any rules to follow, God counted him as "righteous" (Gen. 15:6).
- Abram ("exalted father") had no children at age 86, but God gave him a promise that He'd make him a mighty nation in Gen. 15.
- God made the promise, and Abram believed ("aman").

Because Abram trusted God, God counted it to him (credited it to his account) as righteousness.

- He didn't do any work to be declared righteous, he simply said "amen" to and trusted God, therefore God took His own righteousness and put it on Abram's account!
- Who are the true sons of Abraham? Those who have faith, just as Abraham did (vs. 7).

This offer to be a part of Abraham's family was extended to "all the nations"—anyone (Jew or Gentile) who places their faith in God and says "amen" to His promise of salvation through Jesus the Messiah can become a son of Abraham (vs. 8).

- The blessing of God belongs to those who have the same faith as Abraham—those who would say "amen" and believe (vs. 9).

THE CURSE OF THE LAW (GALATIANS 3:10–14)

"For all who rely on the works of the law are under a curse, because...Everyone who does not do everything written in the book of the law is cursed."

- Some of us mistakenly see the law and commands of God like bowling pins we knock down one at a time.
- We think our obedience in certain areas makes up for our disobedience in others, and we judge our morality based on comparison.

Religious legalism only works because it teaches us to see our own sins as "baby sins" while we see the sins of others as huge sins.

- "Thou shalt not smoke! The body is a temple!" (nothing about gluttony and overeating).
- If you rely on the "works of the law" to be saved or to gain God's approval, you've got to keep all the works of the law, not just the ones that are easy for you (spoiler alert: YOU CAN'T).

It's glaringly obvious to anyone who has read the Scriptures that no one is justified before God by the law but by faith (vs. 11, Hebrews 11).

- The righteous will live by faith (Hab. 2:4)—the righteousness of God is provided for people who have no righteousness of their own through their faith in Jesus Christ.
- Relying on the law and living by it to earn salvation or God's approval is not faith (vs. 12).

The good news ("gospel") is that Jesus came to rescue us from that curse by becoming a curse for us—He stood in our place and took the curse we deserved because of our lawbreaking and sin (vs. 13).

- The price Jesus paid to "redeem" us (buy us out) from the curse of the law was the price of His life.
- Jesus willingly made Himself the target of every curse our sin rightly deserved.

"CURSED IS EVERYONE WHO IS HUNG ON A TREE..."

In Deut. 21:23, God told Israel that any human body that was publicly desecrated after death by being hung on a tree was a defilement, a shameful thing, and that person was cursed by God.

- Jesus received this curse upon Himself by going to the cross—so the curse of the law has been paid in full by Jesus' sacrificial death.

Jesus got the curse so that through Him we could get the blessing of Abraham—the blessing of being made right with God by faith instead of works (vs. 14).

- With that blessing is the promise of the Holy Spirit, Who is received (not earned) by faith.
- This is a promise to ANYONE (Jew or Gentile) who would place their faith in Jesus Christ.

THE PROMISE OF FAITH (GALATIANS 3:15–22)

When somebody makes a binding agreement (i.e., a "covenant," "validated human will"), they don't change that promise later.

- That covenant is legally binding—it stands, and no one can set it aside or make any additions to it.
- If that's the nature of human covenants, how they're made, and how they operate, how much more certain is a covenant that God makes (vs. 15)?

God made a covenant to Abraham and his Seed (singular, not plural).

- Paul is quoting Genesis 22:18, where God told Abraham that "in your seed [singular, not plural] all the nations of the earth shall be blessed" (NASB).
- The promised "Seed" of Abraham was Jesus, Who came from the lineage of Abraham (Matt. 1:2).
- What's Paul's point? What exactly is he saying?

Faith in God's covenant that He first gave to Abraham takes priority over the law.

- The promise that God gave to Abraham that all the nations of the world will be blessed through his seed happened some 430 years BEFORE the law was given to Israel.
- So, if Abraham was justified in the sight of God simply because He believed God's promise, how can you say it's the law that justifies?

The law doesn't change the covenant or cancel the promise (vs. 17).

- The promise God gave to Abraham wasn't based on Abe's keeping of the law but simply on God's promise of what He would do (vs. 18).
- So then...what's the point of the law? Why was it even given to Israel?
- "It was added for the sake of transgressions;" it was to demonstrate our total sinfulness (vs. 19).

To "transgress" is to step out of bounds: the law laid down a perfect boundary of God's righteous requirements for living.

- The law shows that no one can stay within that perfect boundary—we're all sinners in need of a savior!
- The law was meant to reveal our transgressions and show our need for salvation until the Seed (the Messiah, Jesus) came to save us.

Jewish tradition stated that when the Law was given to Moses at Mt. Sinai, it was given by the hand of angels (vs. 19).

- But when God made a promise to Abraham and his descendants, He did it directly, without needing anyone else as a middleman.
- Moses needed a mediator between himself and God, but we don't need a mediator between us and Jesus—He is our mediator (vs. 20)!

So, is there a conflict between the law and the promises of God? Absolutely not (vs. 21)!

- The law wasn't given to give life and a right standing with God—its purpose was to reveal that everything has been imprisoned by sin, under God's judgment, and is therefore in need of forgiveness, redemption, and release from the law's penalty (vs. 22).
- The law points us to the promise of Christ!

CHILDREN OF FAITH (GALATIANS 3:23–29)

Before Christ came to offer salvation through faith in His completed work, humanity was in a kind of spiritual protective custody (vs. 23).

- Humanity was like a child being watched over and guided by a "paidagogos;" a tutor or guardian who had charge over the life and morals of the boys in a Roman family (vs. 24).
- Whether it's the written law of Scripture or the inward law of the conscience, the law gives us a basic sense of morality and what is right and wrong.

The "tutor" of the law also reveals to us that we're not capable in our own strength of always perfectly following the rules.

- The whole point of a "tutor" is to help the child grow up in maturity—so the whole point of the law is to grow us in spiritual maturity by revealing God's holiness, exposing our sin, and pointing us to our need for Christ (vs. 25).
- When faith shows up, the relationship changes.

"SONS OF GOD IN CHRIST JESUS..." (VS. 26)

Through faith in Christ, a person can be born again into the very family of God and have the privilege of knowing God as a father.

- Knowing God as Father is revolutionary—our faith becomes less about a set of rules to follow to avoid punishment and seek reward and more about trusting, loving obedience to a father whom we love and know personally.

Water baptism is the outward act of public profession of our faith in Christ, but Paul is speaking here of a different kind of baptism.

- Being "baptized into Christ" quite literally means to be sunk or submerged into the person of Jesus by faith so that we're not seen anymore—all that's seen in us is Jesus (vs. 27).
- If we've put faith in Christ, we've been "sunk into Christ," and we've put on His identity like clothing. If that's true, then all who have put faith in Christ have equal standing with one another (vs. 28).
- There's no "Jew or Greek"—religious pedigrees or ethnic identities don't earn us anything.
- There's no "slave or free"—economic or social classes mean nothing in Christ's body.
- There's no "male or female"—men don't have a spiritual advantage over women, and women don't have one over men.

Regardless of your race, profession, socioeconomic status, or gender, anyone who comes to Christ must come the same way—through repentance and faith.

- The ground is level at the foot of the cross! We are all "one" in Christ Jesus!
- If you belong to Christ, no matter your background, ethnicity, or social standing, then you are part of God's spiritual family (vs. 29).

UNITY IN A DIVIDED WORLD.

- Among those surveyed from 17 countries in Europe, Asia, and North America, Americans were found to be the most divided and split along political, racial, ideological, social, and ethnic lines.
- Amidst the hatred, fear, and division, the gospel is the most unifying, hopeful message there is!
- Are we able to see past cultural labels and recognize others as human beings for whom Jesus died?

IF YOU BELONG TO CHRIST...

- It's not that your biological sex, ethnicity, or profession doesn't matter; it's that those things don't earn you special status in the eyes of God.
- Those things aren't a part of your core identity—Christ is where we find our identity.
- Belonging to Christ implies ownership and intimacy. Are you submitted to Jesus' control, and do you know Him personally?

TRUSTING AND OBEYING THE FATHER.

- "Rules without relationship lead to rebellion" —Josh McDowell
- If your faith is simply about rules to follow instead of a loving, perfect Father to know, love, and trust through obedience, don't be surprised when your heart becomes hardened through rebellion.
- Through faith in Jesus, you're part of God's family! God is your Father and now sees you as a son or daughter. Have you received this love?