

Lessons from Galatians

Righteousness by Faith Series



Lesson 3—Saved by faith or saved by the Law? Galatians 3:1-29

- I. **Introduction:** *The words of Paul left off in chapter 2 emphasizing that righteousness before God does not come to us through the law, but through faith (2:21). It is not something that we earn before God by works, but something that we receive from God. Then by faith, we choose to live a righteous life in Christ, because we love Him, and we are saved by His grace (ref. John 14:15, 21; Titus 2:11-14; Romans 3:31). Now we come to chapter 3! This is the heart of Galatians. Here Paul deals the most heavily with (1) the Law, (2) righteousness by faith, and (3) the Covenants. (we'll be hitting these issues head-on)*
- II. **Does the Spirit come by works of the Law or by Faith? (v.1-5)**
 - a. *(v.1) What is this TRUTH they are not obeying? "I am the way, the truth, and..." (John 14:6). We must look to Jesus and be saved (like the serpent on the pole, ref. Numbers 21:8,9). "And I, if I be lifted up...will draw all men...", Jesus (John 12:32). "And this is life eternal, that they might KNOW you..." (John 17:3). We are not to look to men (or the works that men can do) for our salvation!*
 - b. *(v.2-4) "by the works of the Law or by the hearing of faith"? For example, take the Gentiles in Acts 10:44-48; also 11:3. In this particular case, were these ones baptized first with water, or did they receive the Holy Spirit first? Were they circumcised before receiving such Divine approval from God? No. And they didn't need to be circumcised either. Christ only insisted on a need for baptism. "...so foolish" (v.3)—God has already given them fellowship of the Holy Spirit by faith (why do they think they should need to do something else to put themselves into saving favor with God?). This is a worthy saying, "If the job is already done—don't do it again." "...things in vain" (v.4)—you've already gone through a lot of persecution for your faith—why would you cave in now on this issue?*
 - c. *(v.5) The works of the spirit are done BY FAITH!! (For example: It was by FAITH the WALLS OF JERICO came down. BY FAITH the RED SEA opened up. By FAITH Israel ENTERED the PROMISED LAND)*
- III. **How was Abraham righteous before God? (v.6-9)**
 - a. *See Genesis 15:3-7. Abraham was justified before God by FAITH (made righteous JUST-as-if—he'd never sinned=justified). And Abraham was a Chaldean, from the land of Babylon, a Gentile. Actually, his father was even an idol worshiper, though it was a mixed religion; something of Jehovah, but something of idolatry as well (ref. Joshua 24:2,3).*
 - b. *Notice how the Covenant with Abraham was made: Genesis 15:8-14, 17, 18. (God's PROMISE and a SACRIFICE). In Gen. 17 God made a second covenant with Abraham which involved circumcision (This was about 15 years later; After he and Sarai performed a faithless act in getting a child—Ishmael—from their bondwoman).*
 - c. *Abraham was saved by FAITH, but I notice something else about him: Genesis 26:4, 5. (Here Isaac, Abraham's son, is given the same promise, "because...")—Abraham was saved by faith and due to this he faithfully chose to OBEY God's laws and live w/the blessings that come from them).*
- IV. **Could Christians possibly put themselves under the "curse of the Law"? (v.10-14)**
 - a. *(v.10-13) Which Law do you think this is talking about here? Yes, Paul has been talking about the works of circumcision, but he's taking it a step further.—This is a reference to the Moral Law as well. But in what sense? Let's see. The verse says, "as many as are of [depending on] the works of the Law [i.e. like for salvation], are under the curse of the law..." (v.10). What is the "curse of the law"? Well, Romans 3:23 tells us that we "all have sinned" and fallen short of God's glory. Romans 6:23 tells us that "the wages of sin is death." Therefore, if you are depending upon the "works of the law" to save you, then you are "cursed" or lost! Why? Because you have not perfectly kept the law's demands. You have failed and broken them like every other one of us. If you say, "I have not sinned," you're lying, and that's sin (1 John 1:8, 10). The man who "does" all the law "shall live" by it (v.12). Christ is the only one who's done that flawlessly!! Therefore, we are to be justified, not by the law, but by faith (v.11), "the just shall live by faith." Christ redeemed us "from the curse of the law" because Jesus died on the cross, thus paying our penalty (Romans 6:23; 2 Corinthians 5:21). The Law's only Purpose is to identify sin (1 John 3:4). (it cannot help or save us)*
 - b. *(v.14) Christ opened the way, that all may have life through faith in Him! (John 14:6; 6:37; Psalm 35:3; Ephesians 2:8,9; Isaiah 53:4,5).*

V. It has always been about God's promise accepted by faith! (v.15-18) Once the COVENANT is made it stays that way (v.15). This promise made even to Christ (v.16). What happened at Sinai did not disannul the covenant of Promise (salvation by faith) (v.17). No one ever was saved "by the law." That's an impossibility. It was always by promise (v.18).

VI. So what was the PURPOSE of the Law? (v.19-22)

- a. (v.19)—"added because of transgressions" **"...till the Seed should come"**—coming out of Egypt, God's people were in GREAT DARKNESS as to the LAWS that even Abraham was aware of (practices of Sacrifice—ceremonial—and even, and especially the Moral Laws (the people were VERY DARK on this)). The "law" was now added to spell it out for them, because they had been living in transgression of it. The Laws of Sacrifice (ceremonial) were no longer to be needed after the **Seed [Christ] had come.**
- b. The Ten Commandments (Moral law), were given on plates to preserve God's Moral standard in this dark earth. **The Seed—CHRIST was an even greater revelation of God's moral law than were the stone tablets.** (Christ actually lived all these commandments.—He had perfect righteousness—the law embodied in Human Flesh.)—**the seed has come and revealed perfect righteousness—That is God's standard for us!!** Christ has set the bar at its highest! Does that mean we don't need to obey the Ten Commandments?! (No, it means you and me should be like Jesus who kept them flawlessly—something we must have Christ to do—John 15:4,5).
- c. (v.19-22) "...hand of a mediator."—Moses (ref. Exodus 20:19). "...does not mediate for only one" (v.20). The covenant was to be TWO SIDED (between God and us). The Law of God is "not against" God's promises. The law just simply cannot give life. It only concludes "all" to be "under sin." (We've all sinned). So, the promise of Christ must save us.
- d. Being that God demands perfect righteousness from every one of us, perhaps you may feel burdened that you've fallen so short. But, the Lord be glorified, we don't have to give up! The good news is that righteousness "does not come from the law!" (v.21). It comes from Jesus' perfect obedience—by HIS obedience we are accepted before God—and Justified—counted "just-as-if-I'd-never sinned.

VII. What does Paul mean for us to understand about the Law? (v.23-29)

- a. (v.23-25) The law will help to keep us in check if we merely follow it. But there is far more that God desires to accomplish in us. He desires that we shall see our utter weakness and wretchedness of our own selves. He desires that we shall turn away from sin and self-attempted righteousness, and behold our need for Christ and His righteousness. Therefore, the law is our tutor, to lead us unto Christ. Just "being good" and doing a thing or two that we know we ought to will never save us! We must have that faith that is firmly placed upon and revealed through Christ! (v.24)—Both Laws were a school master or "tutor" for us. The ceremonial which is useless since the cross, and the Ten Commandments which have shown us our need for Jesus Christ. The writings of SDA church founder, Ellen G. White, even comment that "...especially the moral law" is mentioned here as being our school master (1 Selected Messages, p.235, paragraph 5). This is because the Law reveals sin to us, causing us to see our need, and then flee to Christ for pardon and peace. Faith having come, we are "not under a tutor" (v.25). This is exactly the same truth that Paul taught in Romans 6:14,15. We are "not under the law," but rather, we're "under grace." This means two things. (1) We're not under the law as means of salvation, which never could be so, and (2) We're no longer condemned to die by the law because Christ has died for us (Romans 8:1; 6:23). It would be terribly sad if you said, "I'm not under a tutor anymore, so now I'll go out and forget everything I was ever taught, and do any evil I like." Imagine if a Doctor or an Airline Pilot had an attitude like that! Would you trust them to care for you? No way! Faith "upholds the law" of God! (Romans 3:31).
- b. (v.26-29) We may all belong to Christ and His promise, that was made to Abraham, by faith! By faith, and the action of faith—baptism and obedience to the voice of God—we are to "put on" Christ, and have the gift of eternal life! There is no possible social status to keep you from receiving Jesus Christ—all is leveled at the cross! (v.28,29).

Taking it Home: Are you willing to give your life to Jesus Christ in faith? _____ How many of you will give your life to Christ today? (If you know you don't already have the faith and peace of Jesus Christ then you had better ask Jesus into your life just now, this very moment! Don't ever put Christ on hold! Perhaps you may have been fighting or struggling against Christ. You know you've lacked to follow His will. Just surrender to Him!)