

Galatians

Lesson 5

Chapter 3:1-14

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Lesson 5
Galatians 3:1-14
Living by Faith, Examples from Abraham and Covenants

Are you so foolish? After beginning with the Spirit, are you now trying to attain your goal by human effort? (*Galatians 3:3*)

Prayers

Introduction

After addressing his calling and authority as Christ's apostle, Paul begins teaching about justification by faith with Abraham as an example, a wise approach. His critics knew Abraham was the father of Judaism, the faith the Galatians were aspiring to.

The words of Galatians 3:3, "After beginning with the Spirit, are you now trying to attain your goal by human effort," must have exploded in Martin Luther's consciousness. For 18 years as an Augustinian monk, Luther tried with his full strength and intellect to please God through strict legalism, but it made him miserable. The harder he tried, the more distant from God he felt. Life as a monk was harsh. Monks averaged approximately five hours of sleep between evening prayers and the 2 AM church service. The 2 AM service was followed by a half an hour nap before being up at 4 AM for more prayer. This was followed by six more prayer services, penance, work in the monastery gardens or community school, and one or two meals during the day. Luther wrote, "I was a good monk, and I kept the rule of my order so strictly that I may say that if ever a monk got to heaven by his monkery it was I. All my brothers in the monastery who knew me will bear me out. If I had kept on any longer, I should have killed myself with vigils, prayers, reading, and other work."

Paul writes the alternative to a life guided by strict legalism is a life guided by the Holy Spirit, faith, and love.

Read Galatians 3:1-14, Faith or Law

Gal 3:1 You foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you? Before your very eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed as crucified.

Gal 3:2 I would like to learn just one thing from you: Did you receive the Spirit by observing the law, or by believing what you heard?

Gal 3:3 Are you so foolish? After beginning with the Spirit, are you now trying to attain your goal by human effort?

Gal 3:4 Have you suffered so much for nothing—if it really was for nothing?

Gal 3:5 Does God give you his Spirit and work miracles among you because you observe the law, or because you believe what you heard?

Gal 3:6 Consider Abraham: “He believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness.”

Gal 3:7 Understand, then, that those who believe are children of Abraham.

Gal 3:8 The Scripture foresaw that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, and announced the gospel in advance to Abraham: “All nations will be blessed through you.”

Gal 3:9 So those who have faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith.

Gal 3:10 All who rely on observing the law are under a curse, for it is written: “Cursed is everyone who does not continue to do everything written in the Book of the Law.”

Gal 3:11 Clearly no one is justified before God by the law, because, “The righteous will live by faith.”

Gal 3:12 The law is not based on faith; on the contrary, “The man who does these things will live by them.”

Gal 3:13 Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: “Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree.”

Gal 3:14 He redeemed us in order that the blessing given to Abraham might come to the Gentiles through Christ Jesus, so that by faith we might receive the promise of the Spirit.

Discuss

1. “Foolish Galatians!”, strong language from Paul. Why were the Galatians foolish?

The Galatians were foolish because they were trusting in their own actions to be righteous to God and not trusting in God's grace and his gift of faith to be righteous through Christ.

2. Paul begins his teaching in chapter three by contrasting life led by the Spirit versus the law. The guiding presence of God's Spirit in the lives of believers meant they no longer needed the law to guide their actions. We have a perfect guide who directs, comforts, and transforms our thinking. So, in verses 2, 3, and 5, Paul asks the Galatians how they received the Holy Spirit; through human effort, by obeying the law, or by faith? What should have been apparent to the Galatians?

Gal 3:2 Did you receive the Spirit by observing the law or by believing what you heard?

Gal 3:3 Are you so foolish? After beginning with the Spirit, are you now trying to attain your goal through human effort?

Gal 3:5 Does God give you his Spirit and work miracles among you because you observe the law or because you believe what you heard?

They received God's Spirit through faith and baptism; God's Spirit is superior to the law.

3. According to verse 3:5, how did God respond to the foolish thinking of the Galatians of trying to justify themselves through their actions rather than by faith in Christ?

God was gracious to the Galatians; He worked miracles among them to bolster their faith!

4. What does living life led by the Spirit rather than the law mean?

Paul's short answer of a life led by the spirit is 'faith and love' (Galatians 5:6). If all our thoughts and actions flowed from faith and love, the Spirit would be leading us indeed. The work of the Holy Spirit in our lives is multifaceted. The Spirit calls us to Christ to give us a new life in faith and abides in us to unite us with Christ and other believers. The Spirit sanctifies us and transforms our minds so that we become more Christ-like. The Holy Spirit gives us rich gifts of love, joy, peace, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (Galatians 5:22-23) so that our relationships with others can be joyful and enriching.

The Holy Spirit reminds us of the gifts we received from God the Father and Christ the Son. God showed his unconditional love from before creation by making good and wonderful plans for us to be his children and gives us faith so that we are united in him through Christ and His Spirit. He called his Son to atone for us and redeem us from sin so that we might enter his holiness and have eternal life with him.

These are just a few of the many benefits we have in a life led by the Spirit.

5. In verse 4, Paul refers to the Galatians suffering [for their faith]. In verse 6:12, Paul tells the Galatians the false teachers were trying to lead them away from the gospel to escape persecution. Recall from the first lesson how Paul was persecuted in Galatia (see verses below). What suffering and persecution might the Galatian believers have been facing?
 - a. Psidian Antioch: ^{Ac 13:50} But the Jews incited the God-fearing women of high standing and the leading men of the city. They stirred up persecution against Paul and Barnabas and expelled them from their region.
 - b. Iconium: ^{Ac 14:4} The people of the city were divided; some sided with the Jews, others with the apostles.
^{Ac 14:5} There was a plot afoot among the Gentiles and Jews, together with their leaders, to mistreat them and stone them.
^{Ac 14:6} But they found out about it and fled to the Lycaonian cities of Lystra and Derbe and to the surrounding country, ⁷ where they continued to preach the good news.
 - c. Lystra: ^{Ac 14:19} Then some Jews came from Antioch and Iconium and won the crowd over. They stoned Paul and dragged him outside the city, thinking he was dead.

New believers faced persecution by both Jewish and Gentile leaders. Their persecutors were powerful leaders of the city and could have made any aspect of their lives difficult – securing work, homes, meeting together for worship, or even threatening their lives.

6. In verses 3:6-19, Paul points to Abraham as an example of being justified apart from the Law of Moses because Abraham lived 430 years before Moses.
 - a. How was Abraham declared righteous without the Law (verse 6)?

He believed in God's promises.

b. What were some of God's promises Abraham accepted by faith?

- Ge 12:1 The LORD had said to Abram [when he was seventy-five years old], "Leave your country, your people and your father's household and go to the land I will show you.
Ge 12:2 "I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing.
Ge 12:3 I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you."

Genesis 12:2 **Promise to bless and make him into a great nation**

Genesis 12:3 **Promise to bless those who bless him and bless all peoples on earth through him**

- Ge 17:1 When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the LORD appeared to him and said, "I am God Almighty; walk before me and be blameless.
Ge 17:2 I will confirm my covenant between me and you and will greatly increase your numbers."
Ge 17:3 Abram fell facedown, and God said to him,
Ge 17:4 "As for me, this is my covenant with you: You will be the father of many nations.
Ge 17:5 No longer will you be called Abram; your name will be Abraham, for I have made you a father of many nations.
Ge 17:6 I will make you very fruitful; I will make nations of you, and kings will come from you.

Genesis 17:2 Promise to _____

Genesis 17:6 Promise to _____

- Heb 11:17 By faith Abraham, when God tested him, offered Isaac as a sacrifice. He who had received the promises was about to sacrifice his one and only son, ¹⁸ even though God had said to him, "It is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned."
Heb 11:19 Abraham reasoned that God could raise the dead, and figuratively speaking, he did receive Isaac back from death.

What did Abraham believe God would do, Hebrews 11:19? **Abraham believed God would raise Isaac from the dead if he did as God asked, and offer Isaac as a sacrifice.**

c. How are we made righteous like Abraham, verses 7?

We have faith in God's promises.

d. What promises does God ask us to believe?

There are many inspirational books about the promises of God. David Wilkerson wrote a small pocket book with 800 promises in just 83 pages!

The greatest promise we believe as Christians is to have faith in Christ as the Son of God who is one with God, who died for our sins, and was raised from the grave to ascend into heaven to be our mediator, intercessor, and savior. We receive a new life, spiritual life, forgiveness of sins, and eternal life through faith in Christ. God does not leave our faith to chance; he draws us to himself and gives us faith so we can be assured that we will never be separated from him.

Jn 6:37 All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never drive away.

e. How did God fulfill his promise to bless all nations through Abraham?

Jesus Christ was born through Abraham's lineage and was God's blessing to all nations.

7. Like all the patriarchs, Abraham's life was characterized by faith, obedience, and some colossal sins. Abraham gave his wife to kings twice to escape possible harm and gain favor. Isaac committed the same sin as his father and gave his wife to the king of the Philistines. Jacob failed to discipline his sons, who grew to be murderously jealous and committed all manner of sins. David was an adulterer and murderer. What do the failures of Abraham and the patriarchs tell you about God's love, faithfulness, and capacity for forgiveness?

God called and loved the patriarchs because they responded with faith, even though they continued to commit colossal sins. God's choosing was never about what Israel did to deserve his favor but how God would bless all mankind through Israel and Christ. God chose us not because of what we had done but because of his love for us as his children. Just as he made plans to bless mankind through Israel, he has made wonderful plans for us to be a blessing to others as Christ's disciples.

8. Psalmists praise the Law 84 times, yet Paul refers to it as a curse. What was Paul's meaning by calling it a curse in verse 10?

The law is a curse because it must be obeyed entirely and still does not lead to salvation or change the heart without faith. In Abraham's case, he was saved without the law. As Paul writes in verse 11, "The righteous will live by faith."

9. In verses 3:13-14, Paul refers to being redeemed by Christ. In a secular sense, to redeem something means to buy it back, to exchange it, or regain possession. What does it mean to be redeemed by Christ?

The price of Christ's redemption of us was his sacrificial death. His blood bought us from the bondage of sin. He saved us and delivered us from sin and all its consequences.

10. What confidence with God does Christ's redemption give us?

Heb 10:19 Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus,²⁰ by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body,²¹ and since we have a great priest over the house of God,²² let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water.

What confidence we have in Christ! We are assured of our union with God; nothing can separate us from His love. We can bring all our worries and burdens to him as his children, and we will spend eternity with him.

Closing Prayer