

## THE EPISTLE TO THE GALATIANS

### Galatians 3:1-5, *AFFIRMATION OF JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH: THE GALATIANS*

- A. Paul accused the Galatians of abandoning grace for works (1), *O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you? It was before your eyes that Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified.*
- B. Paul asked the Galatians four rhetorical questions concerning their salvation (2-5)
1. Introductory notes
    - a. Paul applied the principles of Ephesians 2:15-21 to the Galatians by appealing to their experience.
    - b. He asked them four questions which demonstrate that salvation is by God's grace through faith in Christ alone.
    - c. The questions focus on the reception and work of the Holy Spirit.
    - d. Leon Morris, . . . *those who stressed the law put no emphasis on the Holy Spirit. But from the day of Pentecost on, the Christians emphasized the importance of the Holy Spirit for Christian living.*
    - e. Richard Longenecker, *The Judaizers in Galatia, it seems, claimed not to be opposing Paul but to be supplementing his message...*
  2. The four questions
    - a. Question 1: Did you receive the Holy Spirit by works or by grace? (2), *Let me ask you only this: Did you receive the Spirit by works of the law or by hearing with faith?*
      - 1) Paul asked the Galatian believers to recall how they received their Holy Spirit.
        - a) He was emphatic that they had received the Holy Spirit.
          - 1] He was asking about their justification.
          - 2] It appears there were external acts of miracles which accompanied their reception of the Holy Spirit, note Galatians 3:5.
          - 3] The reception of the Holy Spirit is the evidence of real conversion, Romans 8:9, *You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him.*
        - b) He gave them two choices.
          - 1] *by the works of the law* which was being promoted by the Judaizers.
          - 2] *by hearing with faith*
            - a] Grant Osborne, *Paul means that the Galatians have heard the gospel of Christ and believed, and this (not obeying the works of the law) has enabled them to find salvation and receive the Spirit. It is hearing that leads to faith, and faith alone justifies.*
            - b] Richard Longenecker, *Paul wants to hear it from the Galatians themselves. He is convinced that if they would but recall their own experience of having received God's Spirit at the time when they accepted Paul's proclamation of the gospel, then no further argument from him would be necessary and no enticement from the Judaizers would be possible.*
      - 2) The Holy Spirit in the life of a believer
        - a) Responsibility to the Holy Spirit, 1 Corinthians 6:19-20, *Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.*
        - b) Necessity of Bible study, prayer, and obedience to God's will, Galatians 5:16, *But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh.*
        - c) Danger of grieving the Holy Spirit, Ephesians 4:30, *And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.*
        - d) Continual disobedience will quench the Holy Spirit, 1 Thessalonians 5:19, *Do not quench the Spirit.*
        - e) The Holy Spirit abides forever in a believer, John 14:16, *And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever,*
        - f) Need for the Holy Spirit's control, Ephesians 5:18, *And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit,*
    - b. Question 2: Are you being sanctified by works of the flesh even though it began by the Holy Spirit? (3), *Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh?*
      - 1) Paul now deals with the aspect of sanctification.
        - a) He asked them if they were so foolish to think that the initial work of the Holy Spirit must be replaced by the works of the flesh.
        - b) They were being foolish to think that becoming a Christian is by faith but growing in faith comes by works.

- 2) Paul substituted *flesh* for *works* in this verse.
  - a) This shows how foolish one is to place value in human ability.
  - b) The flesh refers to one's sinful human nature so how can one look for spiritual maturity from that which was killed at the cross?
  - c) Galatian Christians were being told by Judaizers that keeping the law would bring spiritual maturity but it does not.
  
- c. Question 3: Have your Christian experiences been of no value? (4), *Did you suffer so many things in vain—if indeed it was in vain?*
  - 1) Paul asked them if their faith experiences were of no value.
    - a) There had been persecution of Christians in the region of Galatia.
      - 1] Acts 14:21-22, *When they had preached the gospel to that city and had made many disciples, they returned to Lystra and to Iconium and to Antioch, strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith, and saying that through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God.*
      - 2] Donald Campbell, . . . *Paul reminded them that if they turned from grace to Law they would brand their former position in error and would then have suffered so much for nothing.*
    - b) He was probably including life experiences, as well, as noted by Max Anders, *By turning to a works message, they were discounting the saving and sanctifying work that the Holy Spirit had exemplified in their lives.*
  - 2) It appears that Paul did not consider the Galatians a lost cause, yet.
    - a) *if indeed it was in vain*, appears to state that they had not fully gone over to the Judaizers' side.
    - b) Grant Osborne, *Paul prays that this letter will convince his readers of the danger of the Judaizers' error and bring about revival in their midst, enabling them to return to their earlier experience of the Spirit and once again enjoy the fullness of Christ in their churches.*
  
- d. Question 4: Has God performed works of miracles in you because of your works or the work of the Holy Spirit? (5), *Does he who supplies the Spirit to you and works miracles among you do so by works of the law, or by hearing with faith -*
  - 1) Paul already addressed the fact that they received the Holy Spirit by hearing with faith, note verse 2.
  - 2) Now, he asked if the miracles they performed were on the basis of their obedience to the law or their faith in Christ evidenced by the indwelling Holy Spirit.
    - a) Acts 14:3, *So they remained for a long time, speaking boldly for the Lord, who bore witness to the word of his grace, granting signs and wonders to be done by their hands.*
    - b) Donald Campbell, *It was clear, furthermore, that these supernatural works were not the result of the works of the Law but from the hearing that leads to faith. The Galatians did not know the Law, and Paul's message was that of justification by faith.*
    - c) Thomas Constable, *Here he appealed to the fact that miracles accompanied his preaching to the Galatians whereas presumably they did not accompany the preaching of the Judaizers. He did this to remind them of the Holy Spirit's miraculous confirmation of his gospel.*
  - 3) Note the tie between Paul's question in verses 2 and 5.
    - a) In verse 2, they received the Holy Spirit by faith in Christ alone.
    - b) In verse 5, God gave them the Holy Spirit based on faith in Christ alone.
    - c) There is no room for the Law where grace is all sufficient.

<b>Galatians 3:6-9, AFFIRMATION OF JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH: ABRAHAM</b>
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- A. Paul declared that Abraham was justified by faith (6), *just as Abraham "believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness"?*
  1. *Just as*
    - a. This looks back to the previous 4 questions Paul asked the Galatians.
    - b. The Galatians' justification was on the same basis as Abraham's, through faith in Christ alone. Note Ronald Fung, . . . *Paul's intention is to show that "what the Galatians might have known on the basis of their experience (verses 1-5) is in accord with what the Scriptures have to say about Abraham.*

- c. In verse 5, Paul identified the Galatians' receiving the Holy Spirit with their justification. It is interesting that some believe that receiving the Holy Spirit is conditioned on works but Paul affirms that the Holy Spirit is received at justification by faith in Christ alone.
2. The father of the Jewish people was justified by faith.
    - a. The Judaizers used Moses to claim that their position was right but Paul moved the discussion back 430 years to the father of the Jewish race, Abraham.
    - b. God made Abraham a promise; Abraham believed God; Abraham's faith was counted as righteousness.
      - 1) Paul noted Genesis 15:6, *And he believed the LORD, and he counted it to him as righteousness.*
      - 2) Donald Campbell, *Abraham's faith in God's ability to perform what He promised was accepted by God as righteousness and so the patriarch was justified—before he was circumcised. How then could the Judaizers insist that circumcision was essential to being accepted by God?*
      - 3) Abraham was circumcised after he had already been justified by faith, note Genesis 17:24, *Abraham was ninety-nine years old when he was circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin.*
      - 4) Richard Longenecker, *Abraham's faith was not specifically faith in Jesus Christ, but faith in God and his promise. Some have distinguished between Abraham's faith as "faith in the promise" and Christian faith as "faith in fulfillment of that promise."*
      - 5) Grant Osborne, . . . *righteousness in the Genesis passage is right standing before God rather than righteous conduct. . . None of us can ever be made right with God through works. For Abraham, as well as for us in the new covenant era, justification was and is always and exclusively a matter of faith.*
- B. True sons of Abraham are those who have been justified by faith (7-9)
    1. Faith not works relates a person to Abraham (7), ***Know then that it is those of faith who are the sons of Abraham.***
      - a. *then*
        - 1) Some English translations have *therefore* instead of *then*.
        - 2) Both are markers of result tied to a former thought.
        - 3) It is looking back to verse 6 and the marker is faith which extends to Abraham's posterity.
      - b. True *sons of Abraham* are those related to him by faith in a trustworthy God.
        - 1) This argument of who are the true children of Abraham will dominate Galatians 3 and 4. The conclusion will be in Galatians 4:21-31, where faith is contrasted to works, in two mothers, Sarah and Hagar, and their two sons, Isaac and Ishmael.
        - 2) Jews believed that they were *sons of Abraham* based on nationality.
          - a) Justin Martyr (2<sup>nd</sup> C. theologian), *Your rabbis delude themselves and us in supposing that the kingdom of heaven is prepared for the natural seed of Abraham, even though they be sinners and unbelievers.*
          - b) Unknown source, *Great is the virtue of circumcision—no circumcised person enters hell.*
        - 3) Paul proclaims that spiritual sons of Abraham are not physical descendants but those who place their trust in the promises of God.
          - a) This is seen in God's promise that in Abraham all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, Genesis 12:3 and 22:18.
          - b) Paul did not believe that *all the nations* means universal salvation but that there will be people from *all the nations* who will place their trust in God who provides salvation through His Son.
  2. The blessing of salvation is available to all peoples based on faith (8), ***And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, "In you shall all the nations be blessed."***
    - a. Paul declares that Scripture foresaw God justifying Gentiles by faith.
      - 1) The Gospel was preached to Abraham through God's covenant blessing, Genesis 12:3, *I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.*
      - 2) Abraham is an example of justification by faith because he trusted God's future promise.
      - 3) Judaizers argued that circumcision would make them true sons of Abraham. Paul declared true sonship comes through faith alone.
      - 4) Note that Paul identifies Scripture as God's Word, affirming the inspiration and authority of Scripture, 2 Timothy 3:16, *All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness,*
    - b. Paul states God's covenant with Abraham pictures the Gospel.
      - 1) God's promise to Abraham looked to future fulfillment which we know has come through Jesus Christ.
      - 2) The Gospel declares that fulfillment took place at the cross of Jesus Christ.

- c. Review of Paul's reasoning concerning justification by faith alone.
  - 1) Abraham received righteousness by faith (6).
  - 2) His faith response to God's promise was the occasion of the establishment of justification by faith (8).
  - 3) God's declaration of worldwide blessing was an announcement of the Gospel (8).
  - 4) The Gospel is the blessing of justification by faith in Christ alone.
- 3. The blessing of justification is only for those who come by faith not by works (9), *So then, those who are of faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith.*
  - a. *So then*
    - 1) This is a marker of result with Paul emphasizing what connects a person to Abraham.
    - 2) As in verse 7, Paul takes us back to his previous thought.
  - b. Faith connects those blessed by God to Abraham, not circumcision.
    - 1) God's blessing is based on a spiritual not a physical connection.
    - 2) Judaizers were emphasizing circumcision but God looks on the heart.
    - 3) Paul repeats his declaration of verse 7 that the *sons of Abraham* are men of faith.
  - c. Abraham was *the man of faith*.
    - 1) He demonstrated that spiritual relationship to God is based on trust, not works.
    - 2) Grant Osborne, *It was not the faithfulness of Abraham in obeying God but his faith in God's promises that was credited to him by God as righteousness. . . We join Abraham only when we come to Christ in faith.*

<b>CONCLUSION</b>
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- A. Faith in Jesus Christ alone is sufficient for justification and sanctification.
- B. Abraham demonstrated justification by faith alone through his trust in God's promise.