

# **Galatians**

Lesson #4

**Return Church**

Wednesday

August 27, 2025

# Galatians

- Galatians was the first Epistle the Apostle Paul wrote.
- He wrote it as soon as he and Barnabas returned from their first missionary journey. Probably written in AD 49.
- Some false teachers had entered the region of Galatia and were teaching people that in order to be saved that you had to believe in Jesus Christ + keep the Jewish ceremonial law.
- Paul was furious and the letter was his response to them.
- Paul taught that faith in Jesus Christ plus nothing brings salvation. Or that justification is by faith alone, apart from the works of the Law.



# Galatians 3:1-5 NLT

Oh, foolish Galatians! Who has cast an evil spell on you? For the meaning of Jesus Christ's death was made as clear to you as if you had seen a picture of his death on the cross. Let me ask you this one question: Did you receive the Holy Spirit by obeying the law of Moses? Of course not! You received the Spirit because you believed the message you heard about Christ. How foolish can you be? After starting your new lives in the Spirit, why are you now trying to become perfect by your own human effort? Have you experienced so much for nothing? Surely it was not in vain, was it? I ask you again, does God give you the Holy Spirit and work miracles among you because you obey the law? Of course not! It is because you believe the message you heard about Christ. ***Galatians 3:1-5 NLT***

# Receive the Holy Spirit

*Did you receive the Holy Spirit by obeying the law of Moses? Of course not! You received the Spirit because you believed the message you heard about Christ. **Galatians 3:2 NLT***

- The Galatians Christians had received the Holy Spirit.
- When you are saved or born-again, you receive the Holy Spirit.
- Unless you receive the Spirit, you are not a Christian.
- We need to come to grip with the knowledge of what we have within us.
- If you are a Christian, you are walking around with something of greater value than all of the gold, silver and precious stones in the world.

# The Holy Spirit

But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His. ***Romans 8:9 NKJV***

Jesus answered and said to him, Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. ***John 3:3 NKJV***

# **Have you received the Spirit?**

**Have you been born again?**

In the 1600's, The Massachusetts Bay Colony was founded by the Puritans who sought to build a Godly society. It was not enough to say I believe, you also had to have a testimony of a born-again experience, or you couldn't become a member of the church. And you had to belong to a church before you could vote. So, by 1660 half the people in New England were not allowed to vote.

# The Gospel

- We were all born sinners. We were born with a sinful nature. This caused us to be separated from God. We were all born in sin, separated from God, lost, condemned to die, on our way to hell.
- But there is good news (the gospel). Jesus came to this earth to rescue us, to save us from our sins, to deliver us. Jesus is the Messiah, our savior, and 2,000 years ago, He came to the earth and lived an absolutely perfect, sinless life.
- Then He went to the cross to pay the price for our sins. He died as our substitute, He became our sins, He bore the judgement of our sins, He died on the cross so we wouldn't have to.
- If you put your trust and faith in Him, He will forgive you of your sins and He will make you righteous. Or God will see you as if you haven't sinned, or He will now see you as righteous. That's good news.
- And not only that, He will come to live inside your body, in your spirit.
- What do you have to do? Only believe! Call upon the name of Jesus to save you.



# Have you been changed?

- When Paul preach the gospel to the Galatians, they responded by believing, they were saved, born again, and the Holy Spirit came into their hearts.
- This is extremely important, has this happened to you?
- The gospel is not about what you have to do, but rather about what God has done for you.
- The Spirit of God cannot come into someone's life without producing a change.
- I believe there are millions of people around the world that go to church, and they believe with their heads but have never received the Holy Spirit, never been saved, never been born-again.
- Paul is saying unless the Holy Spirit comes into your life, you are not a Christian.

# Trying to become perfect by your own human effort

How foolish can you be? After starting your new lives in the Spirit, why are you now trying to become perfect by your own human effort? ***Galatians 3:3 NLT***

Surely you can't be so idiotic as to think that a man begins his spiritual life in the Spirit and then completes it by reverting to outward observances?

**Galatians 3:3 Phillips**

- I was guilty of this for years, back when I was so religious.
- Sure, I believed I was saved by grace, but the entire rest of my journey was self-effort. Trying to make the rapture and what we called, make the bride.

# So how do I get better?

- I was trying to be perfect, holy, Godly, righteous, sanctified, by will power, hard work, self-denial and fleshly human effort.
- Human effort simply doesn't work. You must go to Jesus and apply what Jesus has done, and get rid of the self improvement strategy.
- Human effort strives to follow the rules. It says "what can I do", it follows advice, that's religion. Where faith says, "what did Jesus do", and it believes and receives.
- Your theology effects the way you live.
- When you become a Christian, you receive imputed righteousness. The question is, how do you move beyond imputed to imparted righteousness.
- Or better said, when you become a Christian and you realize you are forgiven, pardoned, and God loves you. But you still have problems, you still have sinful flesh, (anger, lust, pride, etc...) The question is, how do I grow in Christ, how do I get better.

# Trying really hard

- The way you enter the Christian faith is the same way you advance in the Christian faith.
- The way you become a Christian is the same way you grow as a Christian.
- You get imputed righteousness, when you believe in Jesus by faith.
- So how do I get imparted righteousness? How do I become Christlike? The same way.
- **Most Christians believe they are justified by faith, but they believe they are sanctified by trying really, really hard.**
- We believe we get imputed righteousness just by believing. Not by doing anything, just believing. That's what brings me into the kingdom of God. But we want to do the rest on our own.
- Paul is saying if you are having trouble with anger, lust or self-control, you can get changed the same way you began your journey, by faith.
- You must continue to believe, in the work of Jesus Christ.
- The rest of the book of Galatians deals with this.

# The Golden Rule

Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect. **Matthew 5:48**

**What does being perfect mean? It could begin by keeping the golden rule.**

*Do to others whatever you would like them to do to you. This is the essence of all that is taught in the law and the prophets. **Matthew 7:12 NKJV***

Have you really ever thought this through? Do you really treat others the way you would like them to treat you? Look at all the time, money and energy we spend upon making sure we are comfortable. Well fed, clothed, good shelter, transportation. Luxuries like Air conditioner, television, computers, smart phones, books. Do we try and make sure all the people we know are taken as good of care of as ourselves?

I don't believe that anyone in the history of the world has ever kept the Golden Rule, except Jesus Christ. My point is this: nobody has ever kept the law, you need to give up on that idea and realize you need a savior and call upon Jesus.

# **You grow by faith**

But when it comes to advancing in the kingdom, or how do I become Christlike? Most say, I am going to try really hard. Paul is saying, No, the way you became a Christian you stopped relying on the law and started trusting in what Jesus has done for you. Are you so foolish that you are now trying to do it by human effort.

Your advancement doesn't come from trying harder, but by believing.

# Abraham believed God

Just as Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness. Therefore know that *only* those who are of faith are sons of Abraham. And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel to Abraham beforehand, *saying*, In you all the nations shall be blessed. ***Galatians 3:6-8 NKJV***

- Consider Abraham, he believed God and it was accredited (accounted) to him as righteousness.
- God was giving the Gospel to Abraham. God was saying, I am going to save the whole world through a decedent of yours. That is the gospel. When Abraham believed this, it was credited to him as righteousness.
- Credited, reckoned, an accounting word, to count as.
- Not that Abraham became righteous, he was counted as righteous. God treats him as if he were righteous.
- You became a Christian when you stopped observing the law and started believing in Jesus as your savior. You are then counted as righteous, accepted by God.

# **This verse is stunning**

And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel to Abraham beforehand, *saying*, “In you all the nations shall be blessed.” ***Galatians 3:8 NKJV***

- One one hand, you only understand the gospel through the scripture, on the other hand, you can only understand the scripture through the gospel.
- Without the scripture no gospel, without the gospel no scripture.
- The only way to understand the gospel is through the scripture.



# **The scripture preached to Abraham**

- Paul is quoting Genesis 12:3
- There was no book of Genesis when Abraham was on the earth, there was no scripture, there was only a voice from heaven.
- How did Paul say the scripture preached the gospel to Abraham.
- What is Paul teaching us about scripture?
- Every part of scripture, every verse is inspired by God. If scripture says it, then God said it.
- Paul is talking about the scriptures as if they are alive. You don't make it alive, it is already alive.
- Paul is saying the scripture is so divine that it had a being before it was written down. When you sit down and open the Bible and read it you can be sure it is God's truth, as Abraham had when God spoke to him out of heaven.

# All scripture is inspired by God

All Scripture *is* given by inspiration of God, and *is* profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work. ***II Timothy 3:16-17 NKJV***

- Every single piece of it is inspired. Every book, chapter, verse and word came directly from God.
- There are a lot of people in America that say they believe in Jesus, but they simply will not believe everything in the Bible. They want the parts about love and forgiveness. They love the verse that says judge not, but they hate the parts that tell them how to live their lives when it comes to sex and money.
- When you say I want Jesus, but I don't believe everything the Bible says, you are saying I don't want the Jesus of the Bible, I want to make up my own Jesus. I will create my own god.
- The scriptures are infallible or inerrant. This means you can trust them. You can trust every part of your life to every part of scripture.

# The Bible

The Bible contains the mind of God, the state of man, the way of salvation, the doom of sinners, and the happiness of believers. Its doctrines are holy, its precepts are binding, its histories are true, and its decisions are immutable. Read it to be wise, believe it to be safe, and practice it to be holy. It contains light to direct you, food to support you, and comfort to cheer you. It is the traveler's map, the pilgrim's staff, the pilot's compass, the soldier's sword and the Christian's charter. Here too, Heaven is opened and the gates of Hell disclosed. Christ is its grand subject, our good its design, and the glory of God its end. It should fill the memory, rule the heart, and guide the feet. Read it slowly, frequently, and prayerfully. It is a mine of wealth, a paradise of glory, and a river of pleasure. It is given you in life, will be opened at the judgment, and be remembered forever. It involves the highest responsibility, rewards the greatest labor, and will condemn all who trifle with its sacred contents.

# **The scripture preached the gospel to Abraham**

- There are over 200 verses in the New Testament where Jesus is quoting scripture either directly or indirectly.
- There is no gospel without the scripture. There is no scripture without the gospel.
- The scripture preached the gospel to Abraham. The Old Testament was about the gospel.
- The entire Old Testament is about the gospel. The entire ceremonial law is pointing us to the coming Messiah.
- You can't keep the law. Look at the golden rule, if you think you can obey it, you are not listening to it. You can never keep it. You need Jesus.
- Without the scripture you will never understand the gospel, without the gospel you will never understand the scripture.

# Cursed

For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse; for it is written, Cursed *is* everyone who does not continue in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them. But that no one is justified by the law in the sight of God *is* evident, for the just shall live by faith. Yet the law is not of faith, but the man who does them shall live by them. Christ has 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.) that the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles in Christ Jesus, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith. ***Galatians 3:10-14 NKJV***

I preached an entire sermon on this a few weeks ago. We all deserve the curses, not the blessings, because none of us have kept the law perfectly. But the good news of the gospel is that Jesus came and took our curses upon Himself, as our substitute. He not only became our sins, but He became our curses.

# Substitute

- Jesus was punished, for us, in our place. He was our substitute.
- When you believe in Him you get forgiveness, and righteousness.
- If He became a curse and became sin so we could become the righteousness of God. It means that God treated Him as if he was an evil person. The moment you get saved, you are treated as if you are a good and righteous person.
- He was treated legally as a sinner. When you get saved, you are treated legally as a righteous person, holy, with no condemnation.

# Substitute

- Why was Jesus living a normal human life. He did not come to be an example but to be a substitute. He came to live the life you couldn't live and then die the death you deserved to die.
- He lives the perfect life, the only man to ever live a perfect life. He was baptized. Satan tried to get him to turn the stones into bread.
- Satan is trying to get him to not live as a human being. Don't be a substitute. Why, because Satan knows if Jesus is a substitute we can be righteous.
- Rejoice in who you are in Christ. See Jesus as a substitute, recognize what he has done for you.
- You are righteous in Christ Jesus.

# Galatians 3:14-20 NLT

Through Christ Jesus, God has blessed the Gentiles with the same blessing he promised to Abraham, so that we who are believers might receive the promised Holy Spirit through faith. Dear brothers and sisters, here's an example from everyday life. Just as no one can set aside or amend an irrevocable agreement, so it is in this case. God gave the promises to Abraham and his child. And notice that the Scripture doesn't say to his children, as if it meant many descendants. Rather, it says to his child—and that, of course, means Christ. This is what I am trying to say: The agreement God made with Abraham could not be canceled 430 years later when God gave the law to Moses. God would be breaking his promise. For if the inheritance could be received by keeping the law, then it would not be the result of accepting God's promise. But God graciously gave it to Abraham as a promise. Why, then, was the law given? It was given alongside the promise to show people their sins. But the law was designed to last only until the coming of the child who was promised. God gave his law through angels to Moses, who was the mediator between God and the people. Now a mediator is helpful if more than one party must reach an agreement. But God, who is one, did not use a mediator when he gave his promise to Abraham. ***Galatians 3:14-20 NLT***



# This is a difficult passage

- There are a lot of gems here we can discover, if we work hard and do some mining.
- Here Paul gives us a tremendous key to understanding the Bible.
- He divides the Bible into 2 eras. (The promise and the law.) And 2 figures to represent the eras. Abraham and Moses.

## God made promises to Abraham.

*I will make you a great nation; I will bless you and make your name great; And you shall be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse him who curses you; And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed. **Genesis 12:2-3 NKJV***

## More promises to Abraham in these verses:

- *Genesis 12:7, Genesis 13:15-16, Genesis 17:8, Genesis 24:7*

# His seed – Christ

Now to Abraham and his Seed were the promises made. He does not say, “And to seeds,” as of many, but as of one, “And to your Seed,” who is Christ. ***Galatians 3:16 NKJV***

- What is promised to Abraham is not just an earthly inheritance.
- Not just farmland. How could his descendants bless the entire world.
- Paul is saying, all the nations blessed through your seed, a singular word, one seed, one descendant. Jesus Christ. It says seed.
- God was preaching the gospel to Abraham.

# **Difference in promise and law**

- How does it come to Abraham? It came by promise.
- Think about the difference between a promise agreement and a law (legal) agreement.

## **A promise agreement.**

- You must believe a promise agreement. It all depends upon the promiser. You have one person making a promise and the other person believing them. If I promise to give you \$1,000 after church, all you have to do is to believe me and come and get your money. It's a promise. Do you believe me or not? Do you trust me?

## **A legal agreement.**

- In a law (legal) agreement it all has to do with both parties. There is no belief or trust, so you sign a contract saying I will do this, and you must do this. You can have \$1,000 if you landscape all of my flower beds. I tell you what you can have, if you do what I am requesting that you do. We enter into a legal agreement because of no trust.

# Salvation is not a cooperative agreement between 2 people.

- Why is Paul pointing us to Abraham?
- Paul is referring to Genesis the 15<sup>th</sup> chapter. Without understanding Genesis 15, you cannot possibly understand the book of Galatians.
- I'm not sure I really understood the gospel, until God opened my eyes to this truth in Genesis the 15<sup>th</sup> chapter.
- Salvation is not a cooperative agreement between 2 people. There is not stronger place in the Bible that teaches this than Genesis the 15<sup>th</sup> chapter.
- God gives him the promise and Abraham responds by believing.
- I know I have taught this before, but it is so important, I feel that we should go over it once again.

# **Abraham wanted to know**

And he said, Lord God, how shall I know that I will inherit it?

***Genesis 15:8 NKJV***

**I'm sure Abraham thought God was going to ask him to walk between the pieces.**

So He said to him, bring Me a three-year-old heifer, a three-year-old female goat, a three-year-old ram, a turtledove, and a young pigeon. Then he brought all these to Him and cut them in two, down the middle, and placed each piece opposite the other; ***Genesis 15:9-10 NKJV***

# Covenant

In ancient times this is how people made agreements, contracts or covenants with each other.

Because you have broken the terms of our covenant, I will cut you apart just as you cut apart the calf when you walked between its halves to solemnize your vows. Yes, I will cut you apart, whether you are officials of Judah or Jerusalem, court officials, priests, or common people—for you have broken your oath. I will give you to your enemies, and they will kill you. Your bodies will be food for the vultures and wild animals. ***Jeremiah 34:18-20 NLT***

The routine way people made contracts or covenants was to cut an animal up into pieces and then walk down an aisle between the pieces. Saying, if I do not keep the contract, may I be killed and cut up into pieces.

# Smoking oven & burning torch

*Now when the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell upon Abram; and behold, horror and great darkness fell upon him. **Genesis 15:12 NKJV***

Abraham must have thought, God must want me to make a promise, He wants me to walk between the pieces, to show Him that I will keep my end of the agreement.

*And it came to pass, when the sun went down and it was dark, that behold, there appeared a smoking oven and a burning torch that passed between those pieces. On the same day the Lord made a covenant with Abram, **Genesis 15:17-18. NKJV***

This is astonishing! God passed through the pieces for Abraham, on his behalf. What God was saying, may I die, or may I be cut off if I don't keep my end of the deal, or if you don't keep your end of the deal. God never asked Abraham to pass through the pieces.

# **This is why Paul says look at Abraham**

- God was saying, if you don't keep your end of the agreement, even if I have to be killed and cut to pieces, I will.
- And He was at Calvary's cross, a great darkness came upon the land, as Jesus hung upon a cross. God passed between the pieces.
- Salvation is not a cooperative agreement between 2 people. God makes the promise, you simply must believe.
- People are always saying what do I need to do? How much faith do I need to have? All you need is Jesus plus nothing.
- Salvation is by promise and not by law. You can trust God.
- This is why Paul points us to Abraham. God made an agreement with Abraham. A promise agreement, and he simply had to believe it.



# Galatians 3:17-19

The agreement God made with Abraham could not be canceled 430 years later when God gave the law to Moses. God would be breaking his promise. For if the inheritance could be received by keeping the law, then it would not be the result of accepting God's promise. But God graciously gave it to Abraham as a promise. Why, then, was the law given? It was given alongside the promise to show people their sins. But the law was designed to last only until the coming of the child who was promised.

***Galatians 3:17-19 NLT***

Then 430 years later, alone comes Moses and God gives him the law. What was the purpose of the law? In the Bible law and promise are in agreement.

# Promise and law

- The law shows us the need for the promise and the promise shows us the scope of the law.
- If you really listen to the law, it doesn't just say obey the golden rule, don't murder, don't lie, but if you listen deeply, the law says, you will never really be able to obey me.
- The 10 commandments were given to Moses, but God also gave Moses the tabernacle, with the blood sacrifices. Because God knew that they could not possibly keep the law.
- Yes, you should try your best to obey the law, but you will never be able to keep it perfectly.
- The law couldn't be kept. The law shows us we need salvation by promise. The law points us to the promise. It shows us our transgressions.
- The old testament will not make sense unless you unless you believe in salvation by grace and promise.