

Grace Bible Church
Adult Elective Fall 2016
Topic: Galatians
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Galatians Chapter 3 Cont. and Chapter 4

Chapter 3

- BIG IDEA: Abraham, the father of the faith, was counted righteous by his faith in God (Gal. 3:6). The Law did not (and does not save us), but serves to show both God's standard and our sinfulness.
 - Grace (with faith and repentance) had brought the Galatians into right relationship with God.
 - Returning to the Law was like a slave returning to a master who could never be pleased (chapter 4 of Galatians).
 - Their return was termed "backsliding". Elsewhere in the Bible (Jeremiah, etc.) backsliding refers to apostatizing and turning away from a positive course to a negative one. Worse, they had turned away willingly.

- vv. 1-5
 - This section focused on legalism and how it assaults both justification (the sinner must add to Christ's work so God will accept him/her) and sanctification (even once saved, the redeemed sinner must work to please God). -> The focus of both these assaults is on ourselves ("It's all about me...").
 - God the Father has provided the plan of atonement which was enacted by the life, death, and resurrection of the Son. The Holy Spirit (upon Spirit baptism at salvation) has brought us into right relationship with God and continues to give us the power to live rightly before Him.
 - Key Words:
 - *anoetos* (Gk): "foolish", mindless, thoughtless, ignorant.
 - Galatians are literally "unthinking" regarding their departure from grace back into works
 - "bewitched": spiritual powers were at play in leading the Galatians away from grace back into works
 - The Galatians were reminded that they did not receive the Spirit by the Law, but by simple hearing and response to the Gospel.
 - If the Spirit started the work, only the Spirit can finish the work (not the Law!!!)
 - Both justification and sanctification are through the Spirit. Both.

- The Galatians had been persecuted because they had embraced the Gospel (not the Law!!!). Going back would ease the persecution, but would void the very Gospel itself in their lives. cf. Acts 13:49-14:22
- God was the one Who had testified to the veracity of the Gospel. He had done so with signs and miracles to confirm His message. The Galatians were turning against God's own testimony of the Gospel.
- vv.6-9
 - Paul here fights the Judaizers on their own turf - the Old Testament
 - Paul goes back before Moses to Abraham. In Genesis 15-17 Abraham is seen responding to God's word in faith.
 - Paul then goes on to show that the Gentiles, like the Jews, are the spiritual descendants of Abraham if they respond to God's word similarly (in faith). Their justification (being declared righteous before God while even in a sinful state) is by grace through faith. This was predicted in Genesis 12:3!
- vv.10-14
 - We only relate to God by grace (through faith and repentance). There is nothing else, there is no other option. That's it. No more and no less.
 - Anyone may try to live by the Law, but they will inevitably stumble (cf. James 3:2, Eccl. 7:20, Romans 6:23, Deuteronomy 27:26).
 - the Law:
 - moral, civil, ceremonial (liturgical)
 - all parts of the Law had to be kept!!!
 - Anyone trying to live by the Law (to receive a blessing) actually receives a curse!!! They are cursed because they can in no way attain the perfect standard of God when in sin.
 - v. 13 uses the Gk word *exagorazo* which is related to the Gk word *agora* (marketplace). We were like slaves in the marketplace, and under bondage and slavery to our master (sin as revealed in the Law). Christ's sacrifice has taken that bondage off from us and has ransomed us from sin (the true Ransom Theory of the Atonement) and the Law. We are essentially freed from the penalty of our own actions and consequences given God's perfect standard. We need forgiveness from God, and Christ satisfies the debt that we owe God.
- vv. 15-22
 - Only a person with perfect character and perfect power can successfully fulfill a promise (with no chance of that promise being broken). -> GOD!
 - This kind of promise (in the form of a covenant) is *berith* in the Hebrew.
 - When God makes a promise, that promise is iron-clad.
 - Normally in a covenant promise both parties had obligations. The sacrifice (being split down the middle and both parties walking through) ceremony signified the significance of mutual responsibility.

- God's promise to Abraham was different, however. In Genesis 15:17-18 God solidifies the treaty unilaterally! Only He passes between the sacrifices.
 - Paul argues that if the Jews (mere humans) respect a covenant (*diatheke* in the Gk), how much more will God keep His word? The method of argument is from the lesser to the greater. God's word is fixed and iron-clad. Nothing can change it (nothing can be added and nothing can be taken away!!!).
 - God's promise to Abraham was land (Israel), descendants, and blessings (the Messiah ["the Seed"]) and a spiritual heritage of Jews and Gentiles).
 - The function of the Law: Practical - set Israel apart and keep them from apostasy; Theological - express God's standard and drive them toward mercy and grace (showing sinfulness).
 - The Law is bilateral, whereas God's promise to Abraham is unilateral. The Law is temporary and inferior whereas God's promise is eternal and superior.
 - The Law is not inherently wrong. We are inherently wrong!!! cf. Eph. 2 and Rom. 3
 - **Application Point:** How good are you? Have you kept the 10 Commandments? How well? Read Matthew 5:21-22 and 27-28
- vv. 23-24
 - Gk word is *phroureo* ("guard") and has both a positive and negative meaning. In v. 23 Paul is likely using it both ways: on the positive side it is a guard to protect us while on the negative side it is a guard to hold us prisoner. The Law works both ways. Positively it allows us to relate rightly to God and others. Negatively it imprisons us to sin.
 - The Law prevents us from freedom in Christ (which comes by repentance and salvation [grace through faith]).
 - Gk word is *paidagogos* ("schoolmaster") and refers to a supervisor, controller, or disciplinarian. This is in contradistinction to the Greek word *didaskalos* which refers to the teacher or instructor.
 - KEY: Before Christ, the Law kept us prisoner and disciplined us.
- vv. 25-29
 - We have become members of God's family via the baptism of the Holy Spirit (upon salvation - cf. 1 Cor. 12:13)
 - We have right relationship with God (Father, Son, and Spirit) as well as all others in God's spiritual family.
 - We are heirs in Abraham's promise (we inherit it, too!!!) -> justification by faith and repentance via the Holy Spirit's work in us.

Chapter 4

- vv. 1-3
 - Gk word is *stoicheia* ("elemental things") which refers to the philosophy and deception of man's traditions (cf. the same usage in Col. chapter 2) or of spiritual forces which deceive the world (cf. this usage in Ephesians 2 and John 12, 14).
 - KEY: Before Christ, the Law kept us in bondage to both man's lies and demonic influences. Both result in despair and a loss / lack of truth.
- vv. 4-11
 - Jesus was born under the Law, but only He could perfectly keep the Law (and also fulfill it!!!).
 - Jesus' perfect life and sacrificial death purchased us from the Law (our slave-master).
 - Jesus sacrifice for us put us in right standing before God (justification), but also put us in right relationship with God!!!
 - We can call God the Father "Abba" [Aramaic for "Daddy"].
 - Christ calls the Father Abba, and we can too (because of our adoption as sons and daughters through Christ).
 - Judaizers were calling for an adherence to many points of the Law, including circumcision and keeping festivals (which the Jews kept in order to keep their focus on God - NOT for salvation!!!).
 - **Application Point:** How do we maintain a strong and loving relationship with God?
- v. 12
 - Paul is a defender of truth with righteous anger and zeal. He is also an encouraging pastor. He shows genuine care and love for the Galatians who were probably somewhat hostile toward him (given the passage and the surely smooth tongues of the Judaizers).
 - cf. 1 Peter 3:15
 - Paul wanted the Galatians to emulate his freedom in Christ.
 - When they were first together, both Paul and the Galatians were showing brotherly love and kindness.
- vv. 13-16
 - The Galatians were originally open to the Gospel and were changed by it (as evidenced by their outflow of goodness and kindness).
 - This changed, and as Paul is writing the Galatians, they are likely hostile toward him and treating him as an enemy.

- vv. 17-20
 - The Judaizers were clearly trying to destroy Paul's reputation. They were showing disingenuous flattery.
 - Paul reminds the Galatians that his motives were always service (so that they might become more and more like Christ).
 - **Application Point:** How do we respond to others pointing out truth (and where/when we have transgressed)?