

Galatians 3:1-14 | David Baumgartner

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Preacher: David Baumgartner

[0:00] We welcome you to the media ministry of Bethel Community Church, Knowing Jesus, Making Jesus Known. All right.

Well, we have a couple weeks of a little bit of a break. Today we're going to be returning to our study in Galatians. So if you have your Bibles, please turn with me to Galatians chapter 3.

You may recall that Paul wrote this letter because certain people were corrupting the churches that Paul had planted in the area known as Galatia.

Today that would be in Turkey. They were called Judaizers, and they were not only discrediting Paul, they were teaching that faith in Jesus Christ was not enough to be saved.

In addition, they said works of the law are also needed. And apparently some of the believers in these Galatian churches were persuaded by them.

[1:01] And so in the first two chapters in this book, we see that Paul defends his authority. He wanted these Galatian churches to know that, hey, I'm speaking for God.

I was called by Christ. I was illuminated by Christ. I've been sent by Christ. And so in these next two chapters, which we'll be beginning today, beginning in chapter 3, Paul's going to lay out the true gospel.

Salvation is by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone. And friends, I really believe that this is the meat of this letter. Yeah, Paul does defend himself.

But boy, he becomes a lion when he's defending the gospel. As we'll see, Paul has some very strong words for these believers in Galatia.

And I would say it's probably coming from a broken heart. Let's go ahead and read here chapter 3, beginning in verse 1. And we'll go to verse 14. So it's a big text.

[2:10] You foolish Galatians, who has bewitched you before whose eyes Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified? This is the only thing I want to find out from you.

Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law or by hearing with faith? Are you so foolish, having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh?

Did you suffer so many things in vain, if indeed it was in vain? Does he then, who provides you with the Spirit and works miracles among you, do it by the works of the law or by hearing with faith?

Even so, Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness. Therefore, be sure that it is those who are of faith who are the sons of Abraham.

And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, All the nations shall be blessed in you.

[3:20] So then, those who are of faith are blessed with Abraham, the believer. For as many as are of the works of the law are under a curse.

For it is written, Cursed is everyone who does not abide by all things written in the book of the law to perform them. Now that no one is justified by the law before God is evident, for the righteous shall live by faith.

However, the law is not of faith. On the contrary, he who practices 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. In order that in Christ Jesus, the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles.

So that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith. Heavenly Father, we are so grateful that we can be here.

[4:28] We're even more grateful, Lord, that we have your holy word. That instructs our hearts, Lord. That tells us how, why we are saved.

We find here, Lord, that it's not by works, but it is by faith in our Savior, Jesus Christ. And in the finished work that he did on the cross for us.

Thank you, Jesus. May these words come alive to us today. We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen. I want to ask you this question.

Have any of you had to confront somebody? Have you ever actually had to go and talk to somebody or maybe a group of people and confront them about something they said or something they did?

That's one of the fears that many people have. You know, you don't want to upset people. Who wants to do that? You want to upset someone?

[5:29] Maybe you want to be a nice person and, you know, you don't want to rock the boat. Maybe you're afraid of retaliation. You know, you hear these stories about dads who won't wear seatbelts.

And so you've got the family. Good time to confront dad. Wear your seatbelt. Well, we're talking today about something a little more important.

No, a lot more important than seatbelts. Salvation. The scriptures declare that it is by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone.

And Paul is confronting here those believers who allowed themselves to be duped in thinking otherwise. And in our passage this morning, he's going to show them just how illogical it is for them to go back to the law.

And so he challenges them on three different fronts, three different things to consider. First, consider your own faith. Secondly, he says, consider the faith of Abraham.

[6:34] And then thirdly, consider what do the Old Testament scriptures have to say about faith? So let's look at these together here. First of all, Paul says, consider your own faith.

And I want you to notice that verses 1 to 5 is basically a series of rhetorical questions. Each verse ends with a question mark. And you might think of these as rapid fire.

So here's the first question. Notice in verse 1. Now this might be somewhat of a hard verse to understand.

You might ask, how was Jesus publicly crucified before their eyes? They're living in Galatia, right? Well, the key word there is publicly portrayed.

It's just one word in the Greek text. And it basically means to publicly display or show forth. In other words, Paul is telling them and reminding them that my initial teaching to you was so clear and powerful.

[7:46] It was though you yourselves were eyewitnesses to the crucifixion. We just sang that song. You know, we see the Lord on the cross.

That's a powerful thing. And of course, through Paul's teaching, they could see the mockers. Maybe they could hear the hammer blows.

Maybe they could see the blood of Jesus that saves them. And not only that, in addition to that, Paul would have been able to explain all the theology that's behind those things.

That Jesus was dying in their place. And now he's saying to them, After all of that, You're saying that the cross isn't good enough?

That the cross is insufficient? So much so that you have to go back to the law? You foolish Galatians. And he asked, Who has bewitched you?

[8:47] Now that word there, bewitched, it's not referring to sorcery or magic spells. It's talking about here to charm. To fascinate.

But to fascinate somebody in a misleading way. You might think of it as seeking to do harm to others through lies and deception. You think about fascination.

We love to be fascinated, don't we? We do. You know, we have this irresistible attraction to be entertained. You know, think about Hollywood.

Think about Disney World and Disneyland. They've built their businesses on fascination. And much of this is good. It's fun.

But when it comes to matters of doctrine and truth, we should not seek to be fascinated. And you think about the role that Satan has played throughout the ages.

[9:46] And he continues to do what he does best. He deceives people. Paul would say in his second letter to Timothy, that the time will come when people will not endure sound doctrine, but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate to themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires.

And so what's the result? It's that people become bewitched. They come bewitched by false doctrine that creeps into their lives.

It creeps into churches. And you wonder, how does that happen? Well, let's go on here to the second question here, verse 2. Paul asks them about their initial salvation.

Verse 2, did you receive the Spirit by works of the law or by hearing with faith? At the moment of faith, believers receive the Holy Spirit.

That's not in question. But the question that's before them is this. How does that happen? Was it by works or was it in response to faith?

[10:58] Well, obviously, the consistent teaching of Scripture is that we receive the Spirit upon faith in Christ. Works, friends, have nothing to do with it.

Notice here he talks about hearing with faith. That's talking about believing. Not just hearing, but hearing and believing. Next, he moves on from salvation to their sanctification.

Verse 3, look with me. Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh? When he says being perfected, he's talking about their sanctification.

That's the ongoing process where we're being transformed into the very image of Jesus Christ. I'm sure if we took the time this morning and if we went around the whole room, I'm sure many of you would be able to testify to just how different you are today than you were before when you were an unbeliever.

Isn't that true? Yeah, maybe we should do that sometime. But again, here's the question to them. To what or to whom do we attribute this?

[12:14] Our spiritual growth is God's work in us. It's not from legalistic works that we would do. Here's the fourth question. Did you suffer so many things in vain?

That word suffer there, that's talking about experiencing something. And it can be negative. Perhaps if you're tortured or maybe just suffering in general.

Or it can refer to something pleasant. Pleasant. Like what? Well, how about seeing other people get saved? What a joy that is.

Or how about watching others like Paul and some of the other apostles perform miracles? Yeah. It's a pleasant thing to see God move.

And in the early church, we see that very thing. Several miracles occurred through the hands of Paul and the other apostles. And the Christians in Galatia saw these things.

[13:14] They experienced both of these things. And Paul is challenging them here. Have these experiences taught you nothing? Here's his last question here, which kind of sums up his argument.

Verse 5. Does he then who provides you with the Spirit and works miracles among you, do it by works of the law or by hearing with faith?

There's that phrase, hearing with faith again. I want you to take a moment here and imagine you have a friend. I know you got friends.

I've seen some of them. One day, your friend confides in you, I've placed my faith in Jesus Christ. And then they begin to express their assurance of their salvation.

And then they say something to you like, you know, for the very first time in my life, I'm experiencing real joy. I'm experiencing peace.

[14:13] And I have seen God's hand work in other people's lives. Really bad people. Like Mark. But I've seen them getting saved.

What an amazing thing. And then a year later, you talk to that person. Same guy. Same gal. And they've forgotten everything that they've said.

As if it never, ever happened. And not only that, they take hold of a false gospel based on works. You might ask this question, what happened? Well, I'd say this, maybe they've been bewitched from false teaching. And you may say, that would never happen to any of my friends.

Right? Pause there for a second here. As you know, on October 31st, in 1517, Martin Luther posted 95 theses, or what you could say problems, that he had against the Roman Catholic Church.

[15:30] And he posted those things on that door of the church in Wittenberg, Germany. Now, there were many issues, obviously, that he had. But the main issue is this.

I'll put it in the form of a question. Is eternal salvation attained solely through faith alone? Or is it through a combination of faith plus good works?

And that last one, that's the traditional Roman Catholic position. And I think it's still today, based on the Vatican II. If you bring it up to date here, this was less than six years ago, in 2017.

Protestant churches all around the world were preparing to celebrate the 500th anniversary of the Reformation. And that's when the Protestant church broke away from the Roman Catholic Church. Well, in preparation of that, a survey was done by the Pew Research Foundation. They asked thousands of people, not only in America, but also in Western Europe.

[16:38] And they asked this question. Is salvation by faith alone? Or is it by faith plus good works? What do you think the results were?

Well, I'll give you the ones in North America. North America. Of course, you'd expect 82% of the Roman Catholics said it's by faith and good works. What do you think evangelical Protestants? Your friends, my friends, what do you think how many they said? It's 52%. 52% faith plus good works.

This is a problem, friends. I would say that many of them, amen, Carol, many of them have become bewitched. What's the remedy?

Well, let's go on here. Paul's second challenge. He says to consider the faith of Abraham. Most people, I'm going to speed it up here. Most people look to Abraham as one of the heroes in the Bible.

[17:41] Isn't that true? And many Jewish people rely on their heritage with Abraham for their salvation. We see this many times in Scripture. They'll say that since Abraham is our father, I'm okay with God.

Well, friend, you may be a physical descendant of Abraham, but that alone does not save you. So here's a question. What made Abraham righteous with God?

Well, look with me. Verse 6. Even so, Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness. Paul is quoting here from Genesis 15, verse 6.

He was a little bit over 75 years of age, and he and Sarah had no children. It says in Genesis 15, 5 and 6, that he, God, took him, that's Abraham, outside and said, Now look toward the heavens and count the stars if you're able to count them.

And then the Lord said, So shall your descendants be. Then it says, Then Abraham believed in the Lord, and God reckoned it to him as righteousness.

[18:56] You see, Abraham was justified because of his faith, not because he kept any laws. Faith alone has always been the basis of salvation.

Paul says in verse 7, Therefore, be sure that it is those who are of faith who are the sons of Abraham. Not only that, he goes on, and scripture says in verse 8, For seeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, Preach the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, All the nations shall be blessed in you.

Here's the logic. If God promised to save Gentiles by faith, Then the Judaizers are wrong by wanting to make salvation dependent upon a work salvation.

It never was by works. I want you to notice a couple things in verse 8. Notice it says that scripture preached the gospel to Abraham.

Isn't that kind of odd? How did scripture preach to Abraham? Well, scripture here is being equated with the voice of God.

[20:12] In other words, anything scripture says, God says. And the very first thing that we can take home here is that when we read God's word, we can be assured God is speaking to us.

But here's the second question. What gospel was preached to Abraham? I mean, gospel means good news, right? Well, we're told here, All nations, verse 8, Shall be blessed in you.

In other words, through his offspring. In other words, God was saying, Jews and Gentiles alike will be saved through faith. You might ask, faith in what?

Faith in who? Abraham hadn't heard the name of Jesus. This actually came up in our Lord's Supper meeting this morning. It's faith in God.

Faith that God will do whatever he promised at any point in redemptive history. And when people did, what we find is that their account with God was credited with righteousness.

[21:24] For example, Adam believed God's promises in Genesis 3, verse 15, about the seed of the woman will crush the head of the serpent. Noah believed that God would deliver him from the judgment of the flood.

Genesis 6, 9. You can read Hebrews 11, and you'll see more and more examples of this. Here's Paul's point. He says in verse 9, So then, only, I'm putting that word in there, only those who are of faith are blessed with Abraham, the believer.

And that's what we call each other. Those of us who are in Christ, the believer. Let's go to Paul's third argument here. Consider what Scripture says.

He says in verse 10, In other words, Why is that?

In verse 10, he says, For it is written, Cursed is everyone who does not abide by all the things written in the book of the law. Paul, again, is citing the Old Testament.

[22:36] Deuteronomy 27, verse 26. Our problem is that the law demanded perfection. And notice, there's a curse attached for anyone who failed to keep any part of it.

You know, you think about today. What do you hear? It's common for people to say, People are basically good. And they'll point to something that they've done.

You know, like for instance, People who volunteer to help victims in tornadoes or floods or something like that. Yes, relatively speaking, some people are better than others.

But none of that makes a person righteous before God's eyes. We're reminded in Romans, All have sinned. All fall short of God's glory.

Therefore, all of us have a curse hanging over our heads. Someone says, Well, what about all the good deeds I've done?

[23:43] I'd say, That makes you a nice guy. That's all. You're a nice guy. Come over my house for lunch.

Suppose for the entire year, You kept all the laws of the state of Missouri perfectly. You kept all the traffic signals. You obeyed them. You got your taxes in on time and accurately.

Let me ask you, Do you expect to get an award for that? Will there be a street named after you? No. No, these things are expected.

But notice here in verse 11, He says that no one is justified by the law before God. It's evident. Yes. Yes.

Yes. These things are evident. How do we know this? Well, there's two reasons here. First of all, Paul quotes from Habakkuk chapter 2 verse 4.

[24:45] The righteous man shall live by faith. I know many of you ladies probably studied that verse. But the second reason, Oh, in other words, Even during the period of the law, No one was justified by the law.

The second reason, He says that the law is not of. In other words, It's not based on faith. What that says, Is that the law required no faith.

None. From the outside, Anyone can look like a perfect saint. Just obey all the laws. Today, we would say to someone, Or they may say, Yeah, I go to church.

I go faithfully. I go religiously. I am deeply religious. Or I give money to causes. I want to ask you, How far will that get you?

Well, in God's eyes, He says, On the contrary, He who practices them, He's talking about the law, Shall live, Or that is, Be held accountable by them. That's the bad news.

[25:59] The law cannot justify. It can only condemn. We're told in Romans chapter 3 That through the law Comes knowledge of sin.

What that tells us Is that living under the Mosaic law Or any other form of legalism Does not bring a blessing. Tell that to people.

Tell that to those who are, Who have been bewitched. Living under the law Doesn't bring a blessing. It brings a curse. And they might ask why.

Well, it's because you have to Keep the law perfectly. And no one can. Even one failure Brings a curse. You may think of that illustration Like a chain Hanging from the ceiling.

How many links does it take To break for it to fall? If you're on it. One link. So everybody Has this curse Hanging over their head.

[26:56] And someone may say, Well, where's the good news? How can we escape God's wrath? Well, our passage does end With some good news.

Because, in fact, There are two curses That are mentioned In this passage. The first one Is the divine curse On everyone.

That's in verse 10. But there's also a curse That was placed On one man In particular. We may ask Whom I talk to? Whom am I referring?

Verse 13. Jesus Christ. He redeemed us From the curse of the law. The curse of the law Is the curse That's pronounced On lawbreakers.

That's what it says In verse 10. Well, Jesus Isn't a lawbreaker. He was righteous In all his ways. Well, here's the good news. Verse 13.

[27:53] Having become A curse For us. This tells us That the curse Of the law Was transferred From us Who are lawbreakers To Christ Jesus.

And because of this He hung On a tree. Paul illustrates this By saying Verse 13. For it is written Cursed is everyone Who hangs On a tree.

Paul Illustrates this By saying In verse 13. It's written Cursed is everyone Who hangs on a tree. And this is from Deuteronomy 21.

In other words In the Old Testament Blasphemers Transgressors Those who Broke the law Were stoned to death. Then they would Hang the body On a tree As a visible sign Of God's rejection And displeasure With that person.

It was a curse. This is an important Distinction. A person wasn't A person wasn't Cursed by God Because he hung On a tree. A person hung On a tree To show everyone That he was Cursed by God.

[29:08] The main point here Is Jesus Voluntarily Became a curse For us. And he took The wrath That we deserve. Paul says In his second letter To the Corinthians That God In other words He made him Who knew no sin That's Jesus To be sin On our behalf That we might become The righteousness Of God in him.

He's talking here About the great exchange. We give him Our sins And upon faith We receive His righteousness. And here's the result. Verse 14 In order that In Christ Jesus The blessing of Abraham Might come to the Gentiles.

Do we have any Gentiles In this room? We do. So that we might receive The promise of the Spirit Through faith. That's going back To verse 2.

All those who believe Will receive the promise Of the Spirit. If that pertains to you And I hope it does Blessing Replaces curse.

There's some strong Statements here About substitutionary Redemption. Jesus died For us.

[30:21] And by that He redeemed us. So Paul has demolished This notion of works Needed to be added To faith.

Salvation is by grace alone Through faith alone In Christ alone. And this teaching Is very important. In our last I picked on Mark here Because in our last message He was He said that He was talking about Various doctrines That churches have And he said that This doctrine here Is very important And he's correct.

In fact He was pounding On the podium. It's a good You know it's a good Message when Mark Is pounding On the podium. Paul said In chapter 1 If any man Is preaching To you a gospel Contrary to that Which you have received Let him be accursed.

But friends For some reason This is difficult For some people To accept. I want to ask you Why is that? Why are there So many people That do not accept That it's faith alone In Christ alone?

Why is that? Is there an unwillingness To give God All the credit That he deserves? Does it give You and I Something to brag about?

[31:46] Do we need to brag About our salvation? I once had I was going to tell you My testimony But I know You've heard it before But I'm going to tell you Another story I had an aunt We were home Visiting Here in St. Louis And I had an aunt And I met with her And she told me That She looked at me And she said You know You are deeply religious And I said No I'm not

I said I don't really like That word She kind of Looked at me And she I explained to her Well religion Is just Us trying to Get to God Through our works And you know Jesus did it all For us And she didn't Like that She did not Agree with me And I think What she was Thinking That I was I was dissing

Works Somehow That I was saying That you know You can just get drunk And you can do it Party Do whatever you want You know If you're a Christian I wasn't saying that I was saying that Works Have a place But it comes In thanksgiving To our salvation Do I hear an amen?

It is not To earn us A place In God's Favor It is by Faith alone That we receive What Jesus Did for us And I do Good works Many of you Do good works But we do it Not out of Legalism Not out of Trying to Earn God's Favor But we do it Out of Thanksgiving To God That's the Pureest thing That I think That's my story About my Dear aunt Who She's dead Now So it's Okay to Talk about Her But if I Can have the Musicians come Up here You know You might Want to ask This question How can we How can we What can we do About that Personally I Believe that For other Churches There's really Not a whole Lot that we Can do But I tell You what For this Church For your Family Friends Let's settle

This issue Once and for All Take a Stand Let Let Let these Truths Dominate Your speech Pound on Your pulpit If you Must As a Church And in All that We do In our Teaching Not just From here But I'm Talking about All that We do Our Sunday School Time Our Teaching Of the Children Our Outreaches The Camps That we Do Let all Of these Things Reflect The Truth The Truth That Salvation Comes By grace Alone Through Faith Alone In Christ Alone Amen Let that Be Settled In our Hearts And let's Give glory To God The glory That he Deserves Year You You