

Lesson 10 6 July 2014

The Richer Relationship Through the Gospel

Lesson Scope: Galatians 3

Lesson Focus

Chapter 3 begins the second section of the Epistle to the Galatians. In chapters 1 and 2, Paul declared his apostolic authority by emphasizing the authenticity of the Gospel he preached. In chapters 3 and 4, Paul proclaimed the superiority of the Gospel by showing that it produces a more dynamic relationship and bestows fuller privileges than did the Law.

Paul expressed great surprise and perplexity that the Galatian believers had so quickly reverted to the Old Testament Law. In this chapter, he points out several specific ways in which the Gospel is superior to the Law: faith and Holy Spirit power versus "the works of the law" (Galatians 3:2-7), blessing versus cursing (Galatians 3:8-10), justification by faith versus life through obedience to the Law (Galatians 3:11-14), likeness to the Abrahamic Covenant of promise versus likeness to the Mosaic Covenant of law (Galatians 3:15-22), and mature sonship versus tutelage (Galatians 3:23-26).

The Gospel calls New Testament believers into a richer relationship than what Old Testament saints enjoyed. "For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus."

Be sure that you have grasped Paul's logic in this passage. Central to his argument is his use of Abraham's experience to show the fallacy of the Judaizers' claim that the basis of justification is Christ and the Law, rather than Christ alone. Abraham, however, was justified by faith four hundred thirty years before the Law. He and his spiritual seed were and are justified by faith, not by works (Galatians 3:6-9). In contrast, the Law cannot justify anyone, because no fallen person can fulfill it perfectly (3:10-12). Therefore, Christ died a shameful death to redeem us from the curse of the Law (Galatians 3:13-14). The Law, which was added four hundred thirty years later, cannot disannul God's promise to Abraham (Galatians 3:15-18).

Lesson Aim: To understand the new relationship provided by the Gospel.

Theme Verses: Romans 8:1-2. There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.

Lesson Text

Children of Abraham

Galatians 3:1-3 ¹ O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you? ² This only would I learn of you, Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? ³ Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?

Galatians 3:6-18 ⁶ Even as Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness. ⁷ Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham. ⁸ And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, *saying*, In thee shall all nations be blessed. ⁹ So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham. ¹⁰ For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed *is* every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them. ¹¹ But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, *it is* evident: for, The just shall live by faith. ¹² And the law is not of faith: but, The man that doeth them shall live in them. ¹³ Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed *is* every one that hangeth on a tree: ¹⁴ That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith. ¹⁵ Brethren, I speak after the manner of men; Though *it be* but a man's covenant, yet *if it be* confirmed, no man disannulleth, or addeth thereto. ¹⁶ Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ. ¹⁷ And this I say, *that* the covenant, that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law, which was four

hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect. ¹⁸ For if the inheritance *be* of the law, *it is* no more of promise: but God gave *it* to Abraham by promise.

Children of God

Galatians 3:19-26 ¹⁹ Wherefore then *serveth* the law? It was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made; *and it was* ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator. ²⁰ Now a mediator is not *a mediator* of one, but God is one. ²¹ *Is* the law then against the promises of God? God forbid: for if there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law. ²² But the scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe. ²³ But before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed. ²⁴ Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster *to bring us* unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. ²⁵ But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster. ²⁶ For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.

One in Christ

Galatians 3:27-29 ²⁷ For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. ²⁸ There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. ²⁹ And if ye *be* Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

Questions for Study

Children of Abraham

1. What does this passage teach about the doctrine of justification?
2. What blessings are ours through faith?
3. How might we seek spiritual improvement aside from faith in Christ, and why does that always bring frustration?

Children of God

4. Why can no law impart life?
5. How did the Law prepare men for Christ?
6. How should our lives demonstrate the new relationship with the Father, made possible through the Gospel?

One in Christ

7. How is being "one in Christ Jesus" a significant change from the relationship between God and His people in the Old Testament?
8. How does our position in Christ affect our relationship with others?

Analyzing the Passage

In 2:16, the apostle Paul had stated the thesis that forms the main argument of this epistle—the Law cannot justify man before God; only faith in Christ can do that. In chapters 3 and 4, Paul developed two main premises upon which he based his argument: Abraham was justified by faith before the giving of the Law (Galatians 3:1-18), and the Law was God's method of preparing men for the Gospel (Galatians 3:19-4:31).

Paul built his first premise (chapter 3) largely upon Old Testament quotations: verse 6 from Genesis 15:6, verse 8 from Genesis 12:3, verse 11 from Habakkuk 2:4, and verse 13 from Deuteronomy 21:23. He also called attention to exact grammatical interpretation (Galatians 3:16).

Accounted (Galatians 3:6) means "inventoried, reckoned." When Abraham believed God, his act of faith was reckoned to his account (imputed to him) for righteousness. (Compare Romans 4:10-25 and James 2:23.)

"The curse of the law" lies in man's inability to live up to all that the Law commanded (Galatians 3:10-13). Christ was "made a curse for us" only in the sense that He allowed Himself to be treated as an accursed criminal. He did not in any sense become sinful or suffer God's curse.

Paul built the second premise of his argument by first answering the question, What was the purpose and nature of the Law? (Galatians 3:19). It was added because of sin, it was temporary, and it was mediated by angels. Paul then illustrated the preparatory nature of the Law (Galatians 3:22-25). The Law kept the Old Testament saints as under a military guard, and it was a schoolmaster, that is, a servant responsible to conduct a child to school. This word suggests supervision and discipline rather than instruction.

Galatians 3:26-29 are the capstone—all is fulfilled in Christ.

Principles and Applications

Children of Abraham

1. Through faith we are born of and perfected by the Holy Spirit (Gala-

tians 3:1-3). The crucified, risen, and ascended Christ has bestowed the promise of the Spirit upon His people (Acts 2:16-33). In contrast to the Old Testament saint, the believer is perfect; he enjoys fullness of redemption and fulfills "the righteousness of the law" (Romans 8:4).

2. Justification comes by faith, not by obedience to the Law (Galatians 3:6, 8-12). As with Abraham, as well as with all saints of all ages, "the just shall live by faith." "Without faith it is impossible to please" God, but the moment we exercise that faith, God forgives our sins and clears the record of our moral debt to Him without first putting us on probation.

3. Whereas the Law placed men under a curse, Jesus Christ secured the promised blessings as the possession of all who believe (Galatians 3:10-14, 16-18). No man, through Law motivation alone, can continue "in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them." Through His once-for-all offering, Jesus Christ, the promised seed, has removed the curse of the Law and opened the way for both Jew and Gentile to experience regeneration and the indwelling of the Spirit.

Despite the efforts of many false teachers, part of the emphasis of this Scripture, and certainly of chapters 5 and 6, is that "the just shall live by faith." They receive the life-changing gift of the Spirit. Although justification is provided wholly by God's grace and received wholly by faith, it always issues into a Biblical way of life that complements a profession of faith.

Children of God

4. Whereas the Law lacked life-giving power, Jesus Christ is God's ultimate answer to the sin problem (Galatians 3:19-24). The Law revealed God's ethics for man, and because of man's inability to attain that high standard, it also revealed the universality and ugliness of sin. But "the promise by faith of Jesus Christ" offers justification, life more abundant, access to divine resources for present victory, and the hope of future blessing.

5. The Law held man under strict discipline, but Christ offers a new relationship with the Father (Galatians 3:23-26). The Law helped to preserve godly conduct among God's people, but it also created within them a deep longing for the promised Messiah, who was foreshadowed in the Law and the prophets. Jesus fulfilled the Law, bringing the offer of salvation to all men and giving those who believe all the privileges

and benefits of direct access to the Father (John 16:26-27).

Does our relationship with the Father show that we understand and revel in this wonderful privilege? Do we truly love to meditate on His Word and pray to Him? Is He in our thoughts in the moment of crisis, of decision, of temptation, of opportunity? Could our family and our business acquaintances guess that this relationship is our top priority?

One in Christ

6. Faith, rather than earthly standards or family connections, is the basis for the New Testament relationship with God (Galatians 3:27-29). All men have equal need of Jesus' redeeming work. And all who come in faith and in surrender find equal acceptance with God. This acceptance with God must translate into a spirit of acceptance toward our fellow brethren regardless of their financial means, their social status, or their family background.

Important Teachings

1. Through faith we are born of and perfected by the Holy Spirit (Galatians 3:1-3).
2. Justification comes by faith, not by obedience to the Law (Galatians 3:6, 8-12)
3. Whereas the Law placed men under a curse, Jesus Christ secured the promised blessings as the possession of all who believe (Galatians 3:10-14, 16-18).
4. Whereas the Law lacked life-giving power, Jesus Christ is God's ultimate answer to the sin problem (Galatians 3:19-24).
5. The Law held man under strict discipline, but Christ offers a new relationship with the Father (Galatians 3:23-26).
6. Faith, rather than earthly standards or family connections, is the basis for the New Testament relationship with God (Galatians 3:27-29).

Answers to Questions

1. What does this passage teach about the doctrine of justification? Justification is by faith alone (Galatians 3:6). Abraham was declared by God to be righteous; that is, he was justified when he "believed God." God did not put him on probation until he had proved his faith by a sufficient number of good works. God has always desired to make possible the way of justification for all

men (Galatians 3:8-9). In the New Testament era, this desire is realized through the redeeming work of Jesus Christ (Galatians 3:14).

Justification always issues into holy living, for the just live out their faith (Galatians 3:11); they receive the Holy Spirit, who changes their lives (Galatians 3:14).

2. What blessings are ours through faith?

Through faith, Jews and Gentiles alike receive the blessings of being part of God's family. They are justified before God, they receive His Spirit, and they become heirs of eternal life.

3. How might we seek spiritual improvement aside from faith in Christ, and why does that always bring frustration?

We might neglect cultivating a deep, personal commitment to Jesus Christ and subconsciously suppose that maintaining high ethical standards keeps us in God's family. We might fall into the trap of comparing ourselves with others rather than with God's Word. We might slip into the "try a little harder" syndrome in contrast to maintaining the outlook of trust in Jesus Christ and of full surrender to His will.

To acknowledge total dependence upon God and to crucify self is very humbling. Man's natural pride, therefore, motivates the efforts to save himself. But any attempt to improve one's own self is of necessity a repudiation of God's grace and the power of Jesus' blood. Failure always results.

4. Why can no law impart life?

The law principle works condemnation and wrath (Romans 3:19-20; 4:15; 5:20). Law has no intrinsic power to change the inner desires; it can merely reveal the standards by which a man should live and place discipline and outward motivations to help him attain those standards. Only grace can provide justification, make us "partakers of the divine nature," and fill us with the Holy Spirit.

5. How did the Law prepare men for Christ?

The Law not only revealed God's standard of righteousness but also impressed upon man the universality and ugliness of sin, because man was never able to attain to God's high standards. It helped to preserve godly conduct among God's people. It also created within them a deep longing for the promised Messiah and the blessings He would bestow. The requirements for blood sacrifice and the priestly system prepared men to understand the great work of redemption that Jesus accomplished.

6. How should our lives demonstrate the new relationship with the Father, made possible through the Gospel?

Our daily lives should demonstrate that this relationship is the most important thing in life to us. We should love to meditate on His Word and study it. We should have a daily, meaningful time of prayer. Moments of crisis, of decision, of temptation, of opportunity, and so forth, should prompt us to cry out to God. We should cultivate practical godliness in our appearance, our behavior, and our conversations. We should blend with and support a Scriptural brotherhood.

7. How is being "one in Christ Jesus" a significant change from the relationship between God and His people in the Old Testament?

This relationship involves an inner regeneration as one is born again in Christ. The Holy Spirit of God now indwells every believer, rather than coming sporadically upon certain saints with a special calling. This relationship is open equally for all—Jew or Gentile, bond or free, male or female.

8. How does our position in Christ affect our relationship with others?

Knowing that all men have equal need of Jesus' redeeming work, we reach out to all men without respect of persons. Within the brotherhood, we feel an equality unaffected by financial means, social status, and family background. Although the headship principle is well maintained, women are treated with dignity and respect.

Summarizing the Lesson

The keeping of the Law did not atone for man's debt of sin apart from faith that God would provide a sacrifice to take away sin. In Christ the believer is no longer a child under the schoolmaster of the Law; he is a mature son and an heir of the promise made to Abraham. Truly the Gospel provides the New Testament believer an incomparable relationship.

Research Guide

1. Study the life of Abraham, especially in Genesis 12, 15, 17, and 22. Also study Romans 4 and Hebrews 6:13-18.

3. Study the concept of God's covenant in a Bible word-study resource or a Bible dictionary.