Bible study: Galatians (Lesson Three)

PAUL EXPLAINS JUSTIFICATION (3:1-4:31)

A. Not by works but by faith alone (3:1-18)

B. Christians are free from the law (3:19-4:31)

Read 3:1-5

1. Why would Paul give such a harsh address as he does in verse 1?

2. What is mean by “receiving the Spirit?”

3. What is Paul trying to get them to realize with his series of rhetorical questions?

Read 3:6-9

1. What truth about “justification” (being acquitted in God’s eyes) does Paul clarify by using the example of Abraham.

2. What striking statement does Paul make in verse 7? Why might this even offend some in Galatia?
3. Paul could have used other examples of people justified by faith as the writer to the Hebrews did in Hebrews 11 (Noah, Rahab, and others). Why would the example of Abraham carry so much weight here?

4. Paul in verse 7-9 demonstrates from scripture (cf. Genesis 12) that anyone who has faith in God is a child of Abraham and is blessed like Abraham, how would this statement be an effective tool to combat the false teaching of the members of the congregations in Galatia?

Review of Biblical Covenants after the fall:
1. God's covenant of grace (undeserved love)

   Recorded in:
   - Genesis 3:15 The offspring of the woman will crush the serpent's heel (first prophecy about Jesus) for all people of all time
   - Genesis 12 &17 God's repeats the covenant to Abraham. More specific details are now given: the Savior will be an offspring of Abraham, God will create a nation to preserve the line of the savior (the Jews).
   - Isaiah 53 specific information is given about what this savior would do (pierced for our transgressions etc.)

     Applies to: All people
     In Effect: Through the Old Testament and is still in effect today
     Type of Covenant: It is a unilateral covenant God promises forgiveness to us because of Jesus death and resurrection without it being contingent on something that we do.

2. God's law covenant (sometimes called the Sianaitic covenant, or the Law of Moses)

   Recorded in:
   - Deuteronomy 5-29 Leviticus The O.T. Believers must keep the moral law (10 commandments) and the civil and ceremonial laws outlined in these books in order for God to remain with them and make their nation prosper.
   - Leviticus, then God would give them is blessing and they would be a special nation.
     - The civil and ceremonial laws were meant to point ahead to Jesus, and to keep the Israelites separate from those who might lead them into idol worship.
Applies to: Old Testament Israelites:

In Effect: until Jesus had come, then there was no longer a need to point ahead to a savior who had already come, or to preserve the line of the savior through an earthly nation.

Type of Covenant: bilateral—the Israelites had to obey the laws recorded in Deuteronomy and Leviticus in order for the Lord to be with them and fulfill his promises to them as a nation.

The “Law” - God’s moral law has been in effect from the time of Adam and Eve and still is in effect today. It is written on our hearts (conscience). Since consciences can become dulled, it was repeated as part of the two-way covenant with Israel, and it is repeated throughout the New Testament and applies to us today. If a person wants to earn salvation, he or she must keep God’s moral law perfectly.

The “Law” of Moses – The moral, civil, and ceremonial laws given in Deuteronomy and Leviticus. For the Israelites who were under this covenant, breaking the ceremonial and civil laws outlines in the Old Testament would have been a sin. In effect, God had created many more ways in which a person could sin in order to further demonstrate to the Israelites that only God’s grace can save us. Not keeping the civil and ceremonial laws of OT Israel is no longer a sin once Jesus has come.

Circumcision: The seal of both covenants for Old Testament Believers. It is done away with when Jesus work is complete. The sacraments are the New Testament seal of God’s one-way covenant with us.

The problem in Galatia: the “Circumcision group” is confusing the covenants; they are requiring adherence to the Law of Moses. They are further muddying the waters by requiring people to receive the old covenant seal of circumcision.

Read 3v 10-11

What is the “curse” one someone who tries to be acquitted before God by obeying God’s moral Law or the Law of Moses?

Read 3v 12-13

Paul is backing up what he says in verses 10 and 11 with scripture passages.

- Habakkuk 2:4 tells us that the people who are acquitted before God are the ones who are acquitted by faith in God’s promises

- Leviticus 18:5 tells states the same thing negatively. It says that the person who “does these things” (all the things written in the Law of Moses) “will live” (have eternal life) because of them “things that they do.”

Read Verses 13-14

Sometimes we refer to these words as “God’s great exchange” explain the exchange between Jesus and us referred to in these verses.
What was Paul's preaching/teaching about?

What was the purpose of miracles in the time of the apostles?

But if I do it, even though you do not believe me, believe the miracles, that you may know and understand that the Father is in me, and I in the Father.” (John 10:38)

Believe me when I say that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; or at least believe on the evidence of the miracles themselves. (John 14:11)

"Men of Israel, listen to this: Jesus of Nazareth was a man accredited by God to you by miracles, wonders and signs, which God did among you through him, as you yourselves know. (Acts 2:22)

READ and give the lesson each teaches:

Hebrews 2:1-4:

2 Thessalonians 2:9-12:

2 John 10:

3:6 Was Abraham righteous by LAW-WORKS or GOSPEL- FAITH?

3:7 Who are Abraham's children? (even Gentiles?)

3:8 A/D: The Gospel was the same in the Old Testament as in the New.

3:10 What has to be done to earn heaven?
"Continue to do ________________ written in the Book of the Law."

Read *James 2:10*. What does this add?

Read *Genesis 5:1-3*. What more do we learn?

Read *Psalm 51:5*. Who must say this?

Read *I John 1:8-10*. Whose fooling whom?

3:11 The answer:

3:12 Could someone be admitted to heaven by works of the law, if that person were somehow not born in sin, and if somehow that person kept the Law perfectly?

How big are those ifs? (Is it possible?)

3:13 Define: REDEEM:

Christ "for us" is the Gospel. Use other words to amplify what "for" means here.

3:17 Paul views the time of the patriarchs (Abraham, Isaac and Jacob) as one time period. The Egyptian slavery lasted about 400 years. Then God gave the Law to Moses on Mount Sinai.

The Sinaitic Covenant was not given to replace Abraham's Covenant. Abraham's was before it, and continues. See illustration below:

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Abraham's Covenant

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Sinai/Moses LAW Covenant
3:18 Our salvation doesn't depend on the Law, but God's _____________.

Notes on Chapter 3

This chapter begins the doctrinal portion of Galatians (3:1-4:30). Paul's main concern is to show that salvation comes by faith and not by works. He offers four proofs of this:

1. Proof from the experience of the Galatians. 3:1-5
2. Proof from the words of Scripture concerning Abraham. 3:6-9
3. Proof from the nature of the Law and of salvation. 3:10-14
4. Proof from nature of the promise as a testament (will). 3:15-18

First Proof

V1 "Christ...." Paul's line of thought follows the previous verse. Christ's death on the cross and righteousness which his death brings to us is the opposite of salvation by the Law. Paul had shown the Galatians that Christ had indeed been crucified for them. How could the Galatians have forgotten that? They must have been bewitched - literally "had an evil eye cast on them," or "hypnotized."

V2 "believing" Literally, "the hearing of faith." Paul was expressing this idea: "You received the Spirit by hearing that we are saved by faith alone in Christ's sufferings and death." This message also produced faith in their hearts. They had experienced this. Note by way of contrast how the charismatics receive their spirit. They claim that we must do something to receive it. This shows it is a false Spirit.

V3 "beginning" The Spirit and works are opposites. The Spirit leads us to Christ. In Christ we have the victory over death, the guilt of sin, and the sins we are tempted to commit in life. Works give us none of these things.

V4 "suffered" Had they suffered persecution in vain? Paul hopes not. "if it really" Paul is seeking to encourage the Galatians. Hopefully his words would take hold. If so, the fruits produced by their suffering for the sake of the Gospel would remain.

V5 God's continual care for them is based on faith and not on their degree of works or sanctification.

"miracles" Probably as in many other congregations in the early Mount"Galatians" church, the Lord confirmed his word in Galatia with miraculous signs.

Second Proof

V6 Genesis 15:6. Abraham's faith that he would have a son is linked with his faith in the promised Messiah, since the Messiah would come through his Son.

V7 The Jews boasted that family lines and observing the Jewish laws made them children of Abraham. But a person becomes a child of Abraham by believing in God's promises as Abraham did.

V8-9 Paul's conclusion: Abraham was saved in the same way the Galatians were saved - through the preaching of and faith in the Gospel message.
Third Proof

V10 Paul does not have to prove that a person has not kept the Law perfectly. All people can see that truth in their hearts. So he skips to the point that all who don't keep the law (and that means everyone) is under a curse.

V11 Here Paul is making his point about the Law by appealing to the Old Testament which states that the just man (the man who is seen by God as being just) is declared to by his faith, not by what he does (as the Law states).

V13 Paul uses a passage from the Old Testament to show us that Christ became a curse for us. He came under the Law, and as a man who was carrying our sins, he came under its curse. In this way all are saved by faith.

Fourth Proof

V15 A will is an unbreakable document. So is the promise of salvation as a gift.

V16 "seed" The word "seed" can either mean an individual or a group of individuals. In the Old Testament where this promise was given, it obviously refers to a collection of individuals (the nation of Israel). Paul here makes it a singular, and says it refers to Christ. (See Genesis 3:15 where it obviously refers to an individual) What he means to say is that Abraham's offspring is not made up of various different groups who all physically came from Abraham yet were of various religions.

Rather, his offspring were connected to him by faith. This faith centered in Christ, who was the seed (singular) who made the promises possible for those descendants who were children of Abraham by faith. This verse is a rather difficult one. But the main truth is clear. Paul is centering the promises given to Abraham on Christ, and telling us that in Christ these promises find their fulfillment. See Genesis 12:3 and 22:18.

V17-18 The figure of 430 years is taken from Exodus 12:40.

(V26-29)

V27 "baptized" Baptism clothes us with Christ, that is, with his righteousness.

V28 These are all distinctions that found their basis in the Law. These distinctions still remain as far as the Law goes and as long as this earth continues there will be distinctions. But in Christ they all fade away. We are all equals in Christ. We receive forgiveness of sins equally, and we receive the gifts of the Spirit equally.

In chapters 3 and 4 Paul is intent on making two points. The first is that "Salvation does not come from works, but by faith in Christ" The second is that we are "Free From the Law." He explains this second concept in four paragraphs:

1. We are free from the Law because the nature of the Law. (3:19-29)
2. He makes the comparison between the Law and the "guardian" of a minor child. (4:1-11)
3. He gives admonitions to all to return to the Gospel. (4:12-20)
4. He gives another proof from the allegory of Hagar and Sarah. (4:21-30)
God’s Covenants With Humans

**Abrahamitic:** Everlasting, all nations blessed *(Gen. 15:17)* through his offspring, Land of Canaan promised to his offspring. He would become a great nation, Covenant Sealed by the act of Circumcision (a show of trust in God’s promise)

**Sinaitic:** For Believers (Israelites) before *(Ex. 19-24)* Christ came God’s Favor promised on the condition of Israel’s Obedience of all His laws Agreed upon by the Nation of Israel *(Ex. 24:3)*

**New Covenant of Grace:** For all people of all time, restates the promises of the Abrahamitic covenant God’s favor and forgiveness at no cost. *(Jer. 31:31-34, 2 Cor. 3:7-18, Hebrews 1-10)*
Takes away the requirements of Sinaitic Covenant. Sealed by the Blood of Jesus on the Cross.