

# ULTIMATE TRUST Sunday School- February 12, 2012

## Unifying Topic: FREED FROM LAW THROUGH CHRIST

### Lesson Text

I. Paul's Appeal (Galatians 3:1-5)

II. Abraham Was Justified By Faith (Galatians 3:6-9)

III. The Curse Of The Law (Galatians 3:10-14)

**The Main Thought:** That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith. (Galatians 3:14, KJV).

**Unifying Principle:** To know and accept the ultimate object of faith is to make everything else subordinate, if not useless. In what should we place this ultimate faith? According to Paul, faith in Jesus Christ's sacrifice for us makes adherence to the Law foolishness.

**Lesson Aim:** To understand Paul's contrast of adherence to the Law to trusting in Jesus Christ.

**Life aim:** To act out the believer's claim to faith in Jesus Christ rather than faith in the Law.

- 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?
- 3:2 This only would I learn of you, Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?
- 3:3 Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?
- 3:4 Have ye suffered so many things in vain? if it be yet in vain.
- 3:5 He therefore that ministereth to you the Spirit, and worketh miracles among you, doeth he it by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?
- 3:6 Even as Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.
- 3:7 Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham.
- 3:8 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.
- 3:9 So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham.
- 3:10 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.
- 3:11 But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident: for, The just shall live by faith.
- 3:12 And the law is not of faith: but, The man that doeth them shall live in them.
- 3:13 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:
- 3:14 That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.

### **HISTORY:**

People were always contradicting that people are saved only by faith in Jesus which is Paul's teaching. Faith in Christ was not enough they argue. It appeared that a Jewish group of professing Christians were teaching that "*it is not enough to trust Christ for righteousness. Anyone who wants to be a Christian must also obey the laws of Moses. God's work plus your work equals justification.*" These <sup>1</sup>influential people (*false teachers*) had joined the churches of Galatia and the churches took pride in their presence. The new members were so capable and the churches were so glad to have them that they were immediately placed in positions of leadership and teaching. However, these new members had not been truly converted by Christ or else their understanding of the gospel was all confused. They began to teach that faith alone was not enough to save a person; that a person had to undergo the basic ritual of religion (circumcision) and focus his life upon the law in order to become acceptable to God. The point was this: How do we know that God will justify us? How do we know that God will accept us and give us life with Him forever? Paul realized that God had been very kind to him. Christ's death had a very important purpose. Only Christ could give people the right relationship with God. Paul would not start back trusting in the laws and traditions of religion again. Instead, he would always trust Christ. Chapter 2 ends Paul's account about how he opposed Peter and the other Jewish Christians. It therefore, showed that Paul had authority as an apostle and that he wanted Christians to live free from the laws and traditions of religion. Paul addresses his readers directly with a series of piercing questions. These questions are asked in a tone of rebuke as he gives them real answers! The next passage will answer questions.

### **LESSON**

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.easyenglish.info/bible-commentary/galatians-lbw.htm>

## Galatians 3:1-5 Paul's Appeal

**3:1 O foolish Galatians,** — <sup>2</sup>Why does Paul call those to whom he writes, "Foolish"? -Because they were acting in error.

1. Error makes a person foolish. The Galatians were listening to false teaching and were not thinking through what was being taught.

Does he not know that if he insults those to whom he writes, they will pay no attention to his message? How is it that he violates the accepted principles of dealing with people? Wasn't Paul afraid that he would offend them? The word that our translators chose to translate "foolish" is the Greek word "*anoetos*," when originally coined for use, meant: "*to act as though the mind was inoperative, or worse, non-existent.*" This is a word that means to know the truth and to just simply act unreasonably or irrationally - basically to be an idiot. They were truly misunderstanding, thoughtless, and unthinking.

### **3:1b ...who hath bewitched you**

1. Error deceives a person. "*Bewitched*" is an odd word to the New Testament. It is used only this one time in all of the writings of the authors of the New Testament. *Barclay* translates bewitched as: "*put the evil eye on.*" The "*evil eye*" was thought to work in the way a serpent could hypnotize its prey with its eyes. Once the victim looked into the "*evil eye*," a spell could be cast. By using the term "*bewitched*," Paul gives the idea that the Galatians are under some type of spell being that the false teachers were very capable, fluent, and persuasive speakers. The teaching sounded reasonable and logical.

### **3:1c ...that ye should not obey the truth,**

2. Error shows disobedience. The Galatians simply were not obeying the truth. They were trying to become acceptable to God...
  - a. by undergoing the ritual of religion (circumcision, baptism, etc.) instead of trusting the death of Jesus Christ.
  - b. by subjecting themselves and focusing their lives upon the law instead of Christ.

### **3:1d ...before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you?**

3. Error leads a believer away from Christ. The Galatians had clearly seen the death of Christ through the preaching of Paul. Paul's preaching had plainly pointed out and explained the death of Christ. Therefore, they knew...
  - a. that He had sent His Son into the world to die for them.
  - b. that God expected all men to believe in the death of His Son, Jesus Christ.
  - c. that God took their faith and love in His dear Son and accepted them because they believed and loved His son.

How could they be so foolish and bewitched and not obey the truth—especially when they had clearly seen and understood the death of Jesus Christ? That is the question!

**3:2 This only would I learn of you,** — He's saying, I want to ascertain from your personal testimony, not from hearsay; it's always good to get a clear understanding. **...Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?** When you received the Holy Spirit, was it by the works of the law or by the hearing of faith? Did God give the Spirit and work miracles in their midst because they observed the law? Paul is stirring the Galatians to think! No, it was the result of their hearing the gospel and believing it. The present question strikes at the very heart of the gospel: How did you begin your Christian life? This is one thing every believer should know. Every person must hear the glorious message of faith. The message of faith is the gospel of salvation. The hearing of faith is the only way a person can ever become acceptable to God. A person must hear and believe the report of faith. All believers receive the Holy Spirit at the time of salvation. "*Receive the Spirit*" refers to the new covenant work of the Holy Spirit that comes after saving faith, at the beginning of the Christian life, to sanctify and to empower the believer in life and various kinds of ministry. Some people think that we need to work for the gift of the Holy Spirit, or earn this gift from God. But Jesus made it plain that all we have to do receive by faith.

**3:3 Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?** Again, Paul asks, "*Are you so foolish?*" Is God so low that corruptible and dying man can achieve so much? Is man so exalted that he has so little to achieve in order to be perfected? Note the question: having begun your Christian life in the Spirit, are you now maturing and being made perfect by the flesh? A believer does not become spiritually mature by focusing on...

<sup>2</sup> [http://www.bereanbiblechurch.org/transcripts/galatians/3\\_1-5.htm](http://www.bereanbiblechurch.org/transcripts/galatians/3_1-5.htm)

- his efforts
- his works
- his goodness
- his discipline
- his morality
- his just behavior

No matter how strong and disciplined one's flesh is, it does not make him grow spiritually. It only causes him to focus upon himself. Spiritual growth only happens because God perfects him.

- A man begins his journey to God when he truly believes in Jesus Christ and is born again (spiritually).
- A man continues his journey as he is daily renewed by the Holy Spirit (spiritually).

The word "*perfect*" (*Gr epiteleō*) most certainly does not mean sinless, but complete, spiritual maturity. It happens moment by moment while God is continually drawing our mind to spiritual things. Remember, the Spirit of God lives within the believer. He is there to work within the believer and to help him grow and mature in Christ. "*Christ is the Author and Finisher of our faith*" (Heb.12:2). What God begins, He finishes (Phil.1:6). Flesh is neither the Author nor Finisher.

**3:4 Have ye suffered so many things in vain? if it be yet in vain.** Because of their identification with Christ, they experienced many hardships. The point is this: if the Galatians now turned away from Christ to some false teaching, then the suffering they had borne for Christ would be in vain. They would have suffered for nothing. In fact, they would now appear foolish if they turned away from Christ when they had suffered so much in order to embrace Him.

- Every believer who truly turns to Christ has some suffering to bear. It may be sufferings of...
  - separating from the world.
  - denying self.
  - taking up the cross—dying to one's own will and way every day.
  - giving everything that one has to Christ and His cause (money, time, energy, effort).

The list can go on and on, but the point is clearly seen. If Christ is worth suffering for, why then forsake him and turn to some false teaching? Remember your old life, remember how Christ has changed you, and remember his forgiveness. Then stay true to Christ!

**3:5 He therefore that ministereth to you the Spirit, and worketh miracles among you, doeth he it by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?** This is a rhetorical question; and a repetition of the argument in verse 2. By the word "he," would certainly mean God who had furnished or imparted to them the remarkable influences of the Holy Spirit. The Galatians knew they received the Holy Spirit when they believed, not when they obeyed the law. People are still insecure in their faith because faith alone seems too easy; people still try to become close to God by following rules. By asking these questions, Paul hoped to get the Galatians to focus again on Christ as the center of their faith. What had occurred was that the Galatians had quickly turned from Paul's Good News to the teachings of the newest teachers in town. Often the Holy Spirit's greatest work in us is teaching us to persist, to keep on doing what is right even when it no longer seems new and interesting. If we get bored with the Christian life, we may not need the Spirit to stir us up—we may need him to settle us down and get us to see the challenges of the ordinary.

Paul has made his appeal to the Galatians by showing them the error of their ways: how the deception of error can cause them to react foolishly; how much their error deceives a person; how disobedient they were to the truth they already knew about being acceptable to God; and how their error led them far away from Christ. He brought back to their remembrance of what it took to be acceptable to God—it was not by the works of the law or perfect flesh, but by the Spirit of God working in them by faith. His appeal was to the point to get them back on track but he hadn't quit yet!

## Galatians 3:6-9 Abraham Was Justified By Faith

**3:6 Even as Abraham believed God, and...** — Paul issues a second appeal to the Galatians. It is not just their own experience of receiving the gospel by faith that should teach them that salvation is not by the law but of grace. Old Testament example of Abraham is used to illustrate the truth that justification is through genuine faith and faith alone. Abraham followed and trusted God unquestionably! His faith was not a meritorious action that deserved reward. It was not Abraham's keeping of the law that pleased God. That would have made salvation by works. In fact the law had not yet been given. <sup>3</sup>The chronology is important because Abraham was circumcised in Genesis 17 and the Law was given to Moses 430 years later. What pleased God and what caused God to justify Abraham was Abraham doing as God had said. **...it was accounted to him for righteousness.** — meaning, to reckon, put down on the ledger, credit to one's account. The moment Abraham believed, he was justified. His faith preceded his obedience. Abraham simply believed the promise of God that God would give him a new life—in a new nation—with a new people. He had nothing to add, and God required nothing. Abraham committed himself completely and unreservedly to God. It

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.keepbelieving.com/sermon/2001-06-17-Two-Ways-to-Go-to-Heaven-Make-Sure-You-Choose-the-Right-One/>

was only a promise given to Abraham; no other information whatsoever was given. And he was judged righteous! When the sinner trusts Christ, God's righteousness is put to his account. More than this, the believer's sins are no longer put to his account (Rom.4:1-8). This means that the record is always clean before God, and therefore, the believer can never be brought into judgment for his sins. "*Righteousness*" means, being in right standing with God. The Righteousness of God is imputed to a person only on the basis of faith in Christ, and what Christ has done at the cross. The Christians are righteous, because they have placed their faith in Jesus Christ and are washed in the blood of the Lamb.

**3:7 Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham.** The Jewish people were very proud of their relationship with Abraham. The trouble was they thought that this relationship guaranteed them eternal salvation. Jesus made a clear distinction between Abraham's seed physically and Abraham's children spiritually (Jh.8:33-47). Some people today still imagine that salvation is inherited. Because mother and father were godly people, the children are automatically saved. But this is not true. The point is: <sup>4</sup>If we are truly the children of Abraham, then we must believe the same thing he believed. We are like Abraham in the fact that we have faith in God, and faith that what God promised He will do.

**3:8 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.** The word "*Scripture*" refers to the Old Testament. The Scripture is said to foresee, because the Holy Spirit that incited the Scripture did foresee. Paul believed that when the Scriptures speak, God speaks. The word "*heathen*" simply means Gentiles and it proves that from the beginning that the blessing of salvation was promised to all the nations of the world only through faith, not by the works of the law. It showed that the Gentiles would be blessed — not by becoming Jews virtually; but made right through faith. God announced the "*good news*" beforehand, before the blessing came to the Gentiles in Abraham's day, when God said, "*In thee shall all nations be blessed.*" This gospel preaching took the form of the basic promise made to Abraham. The point is: This verse teaches that the reason the Scripture promises blessing to the nations through Abraham is that the Messiah was to be descended from him. Since the Scripture saw God justifying the Gentiles, therefore, the Scripture promised blessings to the Gentiles through Abraham. So the promised blessing of Abraham was intended to justify people from every nation.

**3:9 So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham.** There he closes that part of the subject, proving that the blessing depends upon faith, and not upon the works of the law or circumcision. Abraham receives from God the promise of blessing, and of blessings for others

## Galatians 3:10-14 The Curse Of The Law

**3:10 For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse:** Those still attached to law observance (works) are in exactly this position. <sup>5</sup>The Christians from a Jewish background who believed we should still live under the Law of Moses thought that it was a path to blessings. Paul boldly declares that instead of blessings, living under the works of the law puts them under the curse. <sup>6</sup>He doesn't mean that the law is bad or the Word of God is wrong. He simply means that God never intended the law to be the way we find our approval before Him. The word "*curse*" (*kataran*) means to be condemned and doomed to punishment by the righteous judgment of God. That means they have failed to obey the law, so they stand under the curse. The wrath of God is hanging over them. **...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.** Paul quotes from *Deuteronomy 27:26* – "*Cursed be he that confirmeth not all the words of the law to do them...*" The important words are "*all*" and "*do*." Law demands obedience and this means obedience to do all things. *First*, the law demands performance: You must do what the law commands. *Second*, the law demands complete performance: You must do all that the law commands. *Third*, the law demands continual performance: You must continue to do all that the law commands. Paul uses a strong word to describe the situation of those who try to achieve salvation by keeping the law. They are "*cursed*."

**3:11 But that no man is justified** — <sup>7</sup>The law cannot make the guilty guiltless because the individual has committed

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.lovetheLord.com/books/galatians/05.html>

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.studyLight.org/com/guz/view.cgi?book=ga&chapter=003>

<sup>6</sup> [http://www.bereanBibleChurch.org/transcripts/galatians/3\\_10-14.htm](http://www.bereanBibleChurch.org/transcripts/galatians/3_10-14.htm)

<sup>7</sup> <http://versebyversecommentary.com/galatians/galatians-311/>

sin already. The law cannot undo what is done. The law can reveal sin but it cannot relieve it. The law exposes sin but it does not save us from its penalty. **...in the sight of God, it is evident: for,** — The place of justification is "*in the sight of God.*" The judgment of our neighbors is incidental when it comes to salvation. God is the only one who can let us into His presence. The word "*evident*" conveys the idea of clear or manifest. It is plain to everyone who reads the Bible that no one can go to heaven by works. We must look at salvation how God looks at it. **The just shall live by faith.** This phrase is a quote from *Habakkuk 2:4* — "*...but the just shall live by his faith.*" The "*just*" here are those who stand legally right in God's eyes. God's chosen way to approach Him is to "*live by faith.*"

**3:12 And the law is not of faith: but, The man that doeth them shall live in them.** The law is completely opposite of faith as to living a life pleasing to God. Therefore, Paul is saying whichever one you live by, you must do it; that's the one you follow. According to *Leviticus 18:5* — "*Ye shall therefore keep my statutes, and my judgments: which if a man do, he shall live in them: I am the Lord.*" If you choose to live under the law, then you must live by their perfect norms. This expresses the principle of the law. Men are not commanded to believe the Old Testament law, but to do it. Failure to render absolute obedience is fatal! However, the Judaizers had distorted the law into legalism.

**3:13 Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us:** — What the law could not do, Christ did (Rom.8:3-4). Man has broken the law of God unquestionably, therefore, man stood guilty before God and must be judged and condemned to bear the curse and punishment of the law. But, this is the glorious news: Jesus Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law.

What is redeemed? "*Redeemed*" (*Gr exagorazō*) means "*to buy out from*" the slave market so that the liberated slave shall never be put on sale again; to ransom. Christ has bought man back and ransomed him from the curse of the law. Can you get that, we are no longer under the curse of the law; we can never be perfect under such a law we are released! Our debt is paid in full! We are redeemed!!!!!!!!!!!!!! HALLELUJAH!

How? Jesus took our condemnation, doom, death, and punishment upon Himself and bore them all for us on the cross. He took our place as the lawbreaker and guilty party.

How could He do this? - Because Jesus Christ had obeyed and kept the law of God perfectly. He had never broken the law, not even once. He was sinless and perfect. He had secured the Ideal Righteousness and Perfection before God. Therefore, He bore no guilt and no penalty and no mark of death. He had the right to stand before God and claim eternal life; the right to be accepted by God and to never experience death. He was perfect. He had secured incorruptible righteousness. — Because God is love. He was determined to swap (substitute) His Ideal Righteousness for man's unrighteousness; to swap (substitute) his Ideal obedient Life for man's sinful disobedient life!

**3:13b ...for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree:** In verse 10, it said, "*Cursed is everyone who does not continue to do everything written in the Book of the Law.*" Now we're dealing with "*Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree.*" I know everyone wants to deal with this understanding, I know I do. Everything Paul quotes is from the Book of the Law to bring an astonishing truth of faith in what Christ has done for us. <sup>8</sup>This is a quotation from Deuteronomy 21:23.

*If a man guilty of a capital offense is put to death and his body is hung on a tree: you must not leave his body on the tree overnight. Be sure to bury him that same day, because anyone who is hung on a tree is under God's curse. You must not desecrate the land the LORD your God is giving you as an inheritance. Deuteronomy 21:22-23 NIV.*

In the Old Testament, they had the custom of taking the dead body of a criminal stoned to death and hanging them on a tree. That was in that day, that every one that hanged on the tree was cursed; looked upon with shame. When Christ died, he took upon Himself the curse intended for us.

- <sup>9</sup>He took the pain.
- He took the shame.
- He drank the cup of God's wrath.
- He bore the punishment meant for us.
- He suffered for our sin.
- He paid a debt he did not owe.
- He stood in our place.

At the climax of his sufferings, he cried out, "*My God, My God, Why have you forsaken me?*" Those mysterious words mean that in that terrible moment, the Father turned away from the Son. The Father became Sonless and the Son

<sup>8</sup> <http://versebyversecommentary.com/galatians/galatians-313/>

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.keepbelieving.com/sermon/2001-06-17-Two-Ways-to-Go-to-Heaven-Make-Sure-You-Choose-the-Right-One/>

became Fatherless. The Trinity was ruptured because of our sin. This was the cost of our salvation. He set us free from the curse by taking the curse upon Himself.

- He was rejected that we might never be rejected.
- He was forsaken that we might never be forsaken.
- He was punished that we might never be punished.
- He took the curse that the curse might be lifted from us.
- The Cesspool of Sin

This is a picture of a cursed individual. Jesus' death on the cross represents a public death of a **cursed** person. "...who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the **tree**, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness—by whose stripes you were healed" (1 Peter 2:24). Christ did not remain a curse in God's eyes. He was a curse only while He died on the cross. The cross was where He showed His love and the cross was where He bore His love. This is our way out from the curse of the law, by accepting God's curse on Jesus Christ through the cross. God demands righteousness from us that is equivalent to His own righteousness. None of us can live up to that standard. Jesus paid for every sin that we ever committed on the cross and gave us His righteousness.

**3:14 That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.** Why did he purchase us? – First, to set us free from the bondage of sin and the law into the liberty of God's grace through Jesus Christ! The Judaizers wanted to lead the Christians into slavery, but Christ died to set them free. Why would any believer deliberately want to choose bondage instead of liberty? Perhaps part of the answer is found in the word bewitched that Paul used in Gal.3:1. The word means "to cast a spell, to fascinate." That is what the Judaizers tried to do. Second, "that the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ:" Jesus Christ bearing the curse of the law was to open the door of blessings to all men. That was God's way to give the promises made to Abraham to the world. Any man who believes in Jesus Christ and accepted what He did would receive the blessings of the Promised Land eternally. In summary, the man who believes in Christ receives the promise of God's Holy Spirit that reaches to the promise...

- of the divine nature
- of the new birth
- of being made a new creature
- of being into a new man

It's all through faith!

#### SUMMARY:

<sup>10</sup>Paul tackled the tragedy of slipping into legalism. His first argument, recorded in verses 1-5, was an argument from experience; he asked them to look back at their own conversion: "Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the Law, or by hearing with faith?" They would have had to answer: "By the hearing of faith." Then Paul asks, "Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh?" In other words, both justification and sanctification (i.e. both salvation and spiritual growth) come by grace through faith, not by works. Starting in verse 6 we find Paul offering a second argument for salvation by grace alone through faith alone. This one is not from personal experience, but rather an argument from the Old Testament Scripture itself. Paul turns to Abraham to prove his point of justification by faith alone. <sup>11</sup>6-14- The main argument of the Judaizers was that Gentiles had to become Jews in order to become Christians. To show the error of their way Paul now turns from subjective experience to the objective evidence of the Word of God. We should never judge the Scriptures by our experience but should always test our experience by the Word of God. The Law says "do and live" but grace says "believe and live," The Law could only inform man of his sin and it could never save him from his sin. In these verses Paul quotes Old Testament statements to prove that salvation is by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law

This is an awesome lesson. Please share it with many others!

#### APPLICATION:

"*Ultimate*" means final, crucial, and critical. If you can see the ultimate test Christ went through you can ultimately trust Him with your life. There should never be "should I" or "if I" anymore. It's all been taken care of; already been foreseen; demonstrated, bound, gagged, and tied in a bow for us. The law does not determine our Salvation, just simple faith in the grace of God! Just knowing our justification came through Christ frees us for all the promises! Accept it by faith!

<sup>10</sup> [http://www.bereanbiblechurch.org/transcripts/galatians/3\\_6-9.htm](http://www.bereanbiblechurch.org/transcripts/galatians/3_6-9.htm)

<sup>11</sup> <http://www.family-times.net/commentary/galatians-36/>