

Galatians 3:1-14 “Freedom by Faith”

Pastor Bruce Zachary

Thesis: We are made right with God through faith in Christ, and enjoy being right by yielding to His Spirit. Let's discover the benefits and how to do it together...

Subject: Justification by Faith

Object: Experience the Spirit-filled life

1. God's Spirit is received by faith [1-5]

3 O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you that you should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed among you as crucified? ² This only I want to learn from you: Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? ³ Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now being made perfect by the flesh? ⁴ Have you suffered so many things in vain—if indeed *it was* in vain? ⁵ Therefore He who supplies the Spirit to you and works miracles among you, *does He do it* by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?

Paul calls them foolish twice [1,3]. They weren't incapable of thinking, but they weren't thinking. He reminds them that the gospel he had shared with them was the truth [1]. He asks rhetorically who had bewitched them. Paul knows who was trying to exert control over them. After Paul had proclaimed

the gospel, Jewish believers in Christ had come. These “Judaizers” persuaded the Galatians that they needed to be circumcised and follow the Mosaic Law to be right with God. In essence that these Gentiles needed to become Jews to be saved. Similar to the cults, their message was that salvation is by works, and that faith in Christ was not sufficient for salvation. Paul reminds them of their experience with God; and through a series of rhetorical questions helps them to remember what God had done in their lives through faith. They received the Holy Spirit by faith not the law of Moses [2]. They began in the Spirit and would not be perfect or complete by the law [3]. Miracles and the fruit of the Spirit were manifest by faith not by performance of the Mosaic Law [5].

Being filled with the Holy Spirit means being controlled by the Spirit. Being filled with the Spirit implies the Spirit’s freedom to occupy every part of your life, guiding and controlling. Sin hinders the filling and yielding encourages the filling [Eph. 5:18]. When the Spirit is free, you are free.

The need for the Holy Spirit’s guidance, and power cannot be over-emphasized. After Jesus’ resurrection, He told the disciples to wait in Jerusalem until they had received “the Promise of My Father” referring to the Holy Spirit. They needed power from on High, God’s power, to live the Christian life [Lu. 24:46-49]. The baptism or filling of the Holy Spirit is necessary to effectively represent Jesus [Ac. 1:4-8]. Bible learning and application cannot be effectively accomplished by self-discipline and intellectual rigor, they are in essence works of the Spirit. The issue is never needing

more of the Holy Spirit, but the Holy Spirit having more of us. As you yield to the Spirit, you are filled with the Spirit.

2. God's righteousness is received by faith [6-9]

just as Abraham “believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.⁷ Therefore know that *only* those who are of faith are sons of Abraham. ⁸ And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel to Abraham beforehand, *saying*, “In you all the nations shall be blessed.” ⁹ So then those who *are* of faith are blessed with believing Abraham.

Abraham's righteousness was given by God because of faith. Abraham believed God and it was accounted to him for righteousness [6, Gen. 15:1-6]. Abraham believed God's promise that he would have a son and more descendants than the sand on the shore, despite the fact that Abraham and Sarah were too old to have a child. Abraham's righteousness did not come from perfect obedience nor his ultimate expression of worship being willing to give his only son. And Abraham was declared right with God hundreds of years before the law. Only those who put their faith in Christ are truly descendants of Abraham [7]. Being of Jewish descent doesn't make you right with God any more than being raised in a Christian home can. The good news was declared to Abraham that he was right by faith, not works, to be an example for Gentiles. God had declared that through Abraham all nations,

Jews and Gentiles, would be blessed [8, Gen. 12:3]. Thus, all believers in Christ are blessed through faith like Abraham [9].

Paul uses the example of Abraham, to show that *God would justify Gentiles (non-Jews) by faith* [8], not by performance of the Mosaic Law, nor ritual such as circumcision. **Justification is the act of God removing the guilt and penalty of sin, and God's righteousness is credited to a believer.** Seven times in verses 1-9 we see the words *faith* or *believe*. The way to receive God's righteousness is through faith, or committing to Jesus.

3. God's redemption is received by faith [10-14]

¹⁰ For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse; for it is written,

“Cursed *is* everyone who does not continue in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them.” ¹¹ But that no one is justified by the law in the sight of God *is* evident, for “the just shall live by faith.” ¹² Yet the law is not of faith, but “the man who does them shall live by them.”

¹³ 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”), ¹⁴ that the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles in Christ Jesus, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.

The law brings a curse or judgment because no one can fully comply with all of the commandments [10, Dt. 27:26]. The law reveals God's perfect moral standard of holiness. The law reveals that we

don't measure up and thus need a Savior. Obeying God does bring blessings, but it is not how you are made right with God.

God declared "the just shall live by faith" [11, Hab. 2:4]. Habakkuk was written almost 1,000 years after the law. Here, the emphasis is *the just*, those seeking to be right with God, their lives are characterized by faith in God. The verse is quoted by Paul in Romans where the emphasis is *faith* [Rom. 1:17]; and is also quoted in Hebrews where the emphasis is *live* [Heb.10:38]. Thus, *no one is justified by the law in the sight of God* [11].

Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law [13]. **Redemption is the action of saving from sin or evil.** Jesus took the curse or judgment upon Himself at the cross to redeem us to God [13, Dt. 21:23]. To a Jew, there is a sense of shame, dishonor, or curse associated with an exposed corpse. The law provided that a corpse hung on a tree was to be removed before sundown. Thus, Jesus was removed from the cross and buried before sundown.

The blessings of being right with God like Abraham are available to Gentiles through faith in Jesus, and we speaking of Jews and Gentiles can also receive the promise of the Spirit and assurance of salvation through faith [14].

Study Guide Qs

Q1. Describe some of the ways that you were transformed by God's Spirit even before you grew in knowledge of God's commandments?

Q2. How have you discovered the need for the work of the Spirit to effectively accomplish Bible learning and application in your life?

Q3. What are some of the dangers of a performance based faith? In other words, the idea that God's blessings are earned by your performance of the law/commandments? How does the gospel set us free from those problems?

Q4. How would you like to apply this lesson to your life?

Digging Deeper

1. Here is an excellent article about being filled with the Holy Spirit <https://www.gotquestions.org/Spirit-filled.html>. What did you learn and how would you like to apply it to your life?

2. Here is an excellent article about Abraham <https://www.gotquestions.org/life-Abraham.html>. What did you learn about being right with God from the life of Abraham?

Group prayer or discussion

Pray for God's Spirit to be manifest and, for us to be yielded and transformed by faith.

Neighboring Idea:

Pray and ask God to guide you by His Spirit to love your neighbors this week. Reflect on the experience and what you learned about the Spirit-filled life.