

Date: 12 Mar 2023

Scripture Passage: Galatians 3:1-9

Title: Justification By Faith (Part 1)

Introduction

- Paul was writing to the Galatian churches to rescue them from influence of Judaizers. These Judaizers claim to have come from the church in Jerusalem. These Jews taught the people that faith in the Lord Jesus Christ was not sufficient. You must keep the laws of Moses, including circumcision. Paul had to defend the gospel. Namely that salvation is freely given by God. In Jesus Christ and we received that salvation, we received the blessing of salvation by faith in Christ alone, not by our effort at doing anything good.
- Paul was not saying that we do not keep the law of God. We do keep the law of God for our sanctification, which is different from for our salvation. We are saved when we are justified. Justification is when God declares us no more guilty. God declares us no more guilty and treats us as righteous by faith in Christ alone. Sanctification is the process of growing holier and holier in our Christian life. But you must be first be a Christian before you can grow in your Christian life.
- Salvation is by faith, sanctification is also by faith. You are you are able to continue on in the Christian faith, not by your effort. We keep the law of God because we are already saved by faith in Christ. The works that we do of keeping the law of God are the fruit of faith. The plant needs to first have life. We must have life in Christ.
- Paul further expands that the way we receive the blessing of God is by faith. In today's passage, Paul shows that the blessing of Abraham comes to all the nations through faith in Christ. Faith brings us into the blessing of Abraham. To enter the blessing of Abraham, we must have faith in Christ.

I. Faith brought you into the blessedness of salvation (1-2).

- “O foolish Galatians!” uttered out of sadness & concern, rather than frustration & despair. Paul must be doing so out of concern and love for them, and sadness in his heart. Who has bewitched you? To be bewitched means to be drawn away by falsehood. Bewitch, it is like a spell has been cast over you such that you can't see things clearly. You can't see the truth clearly. And often truth comes through the mind. And then it affects our heart or our affections. Then we act using our will. The mind, the heart, the will. But when people want to bewitch you what they do is they stir up your feelings, see and it muddies the truth. So if the truth becomes muddled, becomes not clear, and then they stir up your emotion, then it's easy for them to mislead you. So the Judaisms had been playing on the emotion of the people by clever, persuasive words by emotive arguments. These foolish Galatians... They had been led astray by flattery & false promises. Acted on emotion more than truth.
- Paul is protesting them now. When I was with you, did I not portray before you clearly Jesus Christ crucified? And that is the only way by which our sins are forgiven. The only way by which we are saved. Jesus Christ alone is our savior, and he died on the cross to pay for our sins. So if you have not heard of Christ and him crucified, if you do not believe in Christ who died not cross the safe sinners, you cannot be saved. The only way to be safe is to come to Jesus Christ who died on the cross and rose from the dead. He is the one who saves. When the apostle Paul says this, that Jesus Christ was clearly portrait among you as crucified, he was awakening all these thoughts in the mind of the Galatians. The Galatian Christians have in the first place come to faith by trusting in the message, by trusting in the person, by trusting in the work of Christ on the Cross.
- Paul ask a rhetorical to emphasize that the spirit is received by hearing of faith, not by works (3 cf Rom 10:17). If you did not receive the Holy Spirit, you are not a Christian. Many people claim themselves to be Christian when actually they are born in a Christian home or when they are baptized. To have the spirit of Christ in you, it is by faith in Jesus Christ. But how do you have faith in Christ? By first hearing the gospel, you must be clear about who Jesus Christ. He must be clear about his death on the cross and what it accomplishes. Then you repent of your sins. You have faith in Jesus Christ. So the moment you really make up your mind to turn from your sin to trust in Christ, that is the time when the Holy Spirit comes to live in you. The spirit begins to change you from within. You will know it. You will begin to have holy desires. You will

desire God's word. You will desire to mix with God's people. You desire to obey God's word. The Bible throughout the New Testament makes it very clear that when you have faith in Christ, you receive the Holy Spirit. When you have faith in Christ, his spirit works in you. You began by faith in Christ. You continue your Christian life by faith in Christ. True Christianity is shown by the spirit filled life. The spirit lives in you and empowers you all through your Christian life.

II. Faith sustains you in the Christian life (3-5).

- Again, you so foolish? Begun Christian life by the Spirit, now falling back on self-effort? Suffered for the faith, all in vain? "...if indeed in vain" shows obviously not. Cf. Acts 14:22. Paul is asking, have you suffered so many things in vain, if indeed is in vain? True Christianity involves suffering. If your Christianity is without self denial of any kind then we have to conclude that that is not true Christianity. When you first were challenged by the gospel, did you not struggle? How should I trust in Christ and Christ alone? Is not this a big matter, that once I am trusting in him, I will follow him for the rest of my life. But you became convinced that you couldn't save yourself. You convinced you were convinced that Christ is the way provided by God for you. You were afraid perhaps your parents would object. That your friends might laugh at you. Self denial was needed when you first began, but after you have begun and become a Christian, you discover that self denial is still needed. You may have to give up certain friends who are not helpful to your Christian life. You have to give up certain hobbies which are not wrong in themselves, but you know that they're taking you away from God's word. They're taking you away from living a God pleasing life. What was true of Paul's life, true also of Galatian Christians (2:20-21). Following Judaizers would make everything in vain.

III. Faith makes you an heir of Abraham's blessing (6-9).

- These Jews are saying that you have to keep to the law of Moses in order to receive the full or fuller blessing from God. But they don't realize that their forefather Abraham was treated as righteous in God's sight, not because of works of the law. It was because of his faith. God promised to Abraham that a son will be given to him, and that son will lead to the coming of the Savior. (Gen 15:3-6) Because Abraham believed what God promised, he was treated as righteous. So was Abraham treated as righteous because of works of the law? No, Abraham was counted as righteous because he trusted in what God said, namely that a seed will come. Through the seed all the nations in the world will be blessed. That seed is Jesus Christ (v16).
- Abraham understood that one day one of his descendants will be the savior (V8). So Abraham trusted in that savior. God has promised because he trusted in that savior that God promised Abraham was counted as righteous in God's sight. So Abraham had heard the gospel. Abraham had understood. And Abraham knew that one day he will be a blessing to many nations. So how is this blessing going to come to us? Through his descendant the Lord Jesus Christ. So all the nations that believe in Jesus Christ and the blessing promised to Abraham will come to them. That is how we receive the blessing of Abraham, by trusting in his descendant Jesus Christ. Those who have faith in Jesus Christ are the true children of Abraham.
- Those who have faith in Christ are sons of Abraham (7), blessed with him (9). The promise of God was more spiritual in nature, not physical. God was promising blessing to all nations, not just to the Jews, and we enter into that blessing promise to Abraham by faith in his descendant, namely Jesus Christ. In that way, the blessing promised to Abraham comes to us. Therefore, we can rightly say we are the true children of Abraham. We are spiritual children of Abraham. Jews are not to rely on law-keeping. Gentiles are not to be drawn away by the Judaizers. It is by faith alone!

Summary and Application

- "Justification by faith alone" the article of the standing or falling church. "Justification by grace, through faith, in Christ alone" battle cry of the Reformation. Seek out church that preaches this. That is the core of the Christian faith. If that core is attacked. If that core is perverted, then you know that that church has gone seriously astray. It cannot be treated as a true church anymore. It will do you harm if you continue to go to such a church. And in fact, we would extend that further and say if the message of the Gospel of justification by faith is not clearly thought and not regularly, that is a deficient church. That is why you must identify

yourself with a faithful church, a church that holds to the doctrine of justification by faith alone. So choose carefully the church you are going to. We are not a perfect church, but we do want to be faithful to God. We do want to preach the true gospel, faithfully and regularly.