

# Galatians 3:1-9

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[ 0 : 00 ] Welcome to evening lunchtime talks.! We have a slight problem.! 11. But did Cephas go up to the end of the chapter? That is the question. I was thinking he did, but does anyone want to confirm or contradict? No? That's right, that confirms I thought. Very good. Well, I will read and then pray. No, last week we did 2.11, the 21. So we are starting at 3.1. Oh foolish Galatians, who has bewitched you? It was before your eyes that Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified. Let me ask you only this. Did you receive the Spirit by works of the law or by hearing with faith? Are you so foolish, having begun by the Spirit? Are you now being perfected by the flesh? Did you suffer so many things in vain, if indeed it was in vain? Does he who supplies the Spirit to you and works miracles among you do so by the works of the law or by hearing with faith? Just as Abraham believed God, it was counted to him his righteousness. Know this then, that it is those of faith who are the sons of Abraham. And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, in you shall all the nations be blessed. So then those who are of faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith.

For all who rely on works of the law are under a curse, for it is written, curse be everyone who does not abide by all things written in the book of the law and do them.

Now it is evident that no one is justified before God by the law, for the righteous shall live by faith.

But the law is not of faith, rather the one who does them shall live by them.

Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us. For it is written, cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree, so that in Christ Jesus, the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we might receive the promised spirit through faith.

Let us pray. Heavenly Father, we thank you that you are the one true God, you are our God, our covenant God, and we bless you, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

[ 4 : 01 ] We thank you for your words, your scripture, the word of life. We thank you that you led Paul to oppose those who would add something to faith, because it is through faith in your grace, in Christ Jesus, that we are made right with you and we have a proper standing before you.

And so we thank you that because of our Savior, we can have ready access now into your presence. We come to the throne of the King, the King of Kings, and rejoice.

And we pray, Heavenly Father, it's time that you would bring the King of Kings, and we pray that you would bring But we pray that in the meantime, you may still bless your word to us.

As you bless the Galatians, bless us in healing, we pray, for Jesus' sake. Amen. I'm still looking for him.

Still not found him here. So, well, what has been, Paul been doing? He's been, speaking to the Galatians because of their foolishness of going away from Christ as their only hope.

[ 5 : 27 ] They wanted to add something to the work of Christ. Circumcision. And Paul is at pains to tell them that if you add something to Christ, you're not really being put right with God through what the Lord Jesus Christ has done.

Another way you could look at what the Galatians were doing was they were really requiring new converts to become not only Christians through Jesus, but Jews through circumcision.

And Paul was opposed to this. He is telling them that he is the apostle to the Gentiles and he knows that Gentiles are received as are Jews through faith in Christ Jesus.

This is God's way of dealing with us now. And even today, anybody who wants to say you are received on the basis of Jesus and, whatever that and is, a common and, for example, would be a certain mode or time of baptism.

No. The way we are accepted through the Lord Jesus Christ is through him alone. And this is what Paul is teaching teaching to the Galatians.

[ 6 : 58 ] And to add to that, he talks to them about how they have received the Holy Spirit. He doesn't mince his words.

At the beginning, he talked about those who preach another gospel should be accursed. and you couldn't have stronger language than that. Here he calls the Galatians foolish, bewitched, that they have been led astray.

But he reminds them of how they have become Christians. It was before your eyes that Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified.

Now there are some people who reading that would say, well, they must have had some big crucifix or something put up in the church.

But we know that that wasn't the case. The way that Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed to the Christians was through the preaching of the word of God.

[ 8 : 06 ] And we don't need images of Jesus, paintings of Jesus as aids to devotion in any way. That's actually adding something to faith in Christ alone.

No, we need the eyes of our heart to be opened. We need the scales of sin to be taken away so that we see Jesus spiritually portrayed to us as crucified.

And Paul reminds them it is through the crucified Christ that they have received the Holy Spirit. Did you receive the Spirit by works of the law or by hearing with faith?

Well, he's reminding them that the way of receiving the Holy Spirit is through the work of the Lord Jesus Christ. we know how the salvation history goes.

Jesus comes into the world having left the presence of God his Father. He's born as a little baby in Bethlehem. He grows up about the age of 30.

[ 9 : 25 ] He starts his work when he is baptized he goes around filled with the Holy Spirit teaching healing miracles and then he's up to Jerusalem to die on the cross.

And after he dies then the third day he's raised again. He shows himself to his disciples by many infallible proofs. After 40 days he ascends into heaven they see him go up into the clouds now a man in the presence of God Almighty and they have a promise of his coming again but also they are told to wait in Jerusalem.

For 10 days later on the day of Pentecost then the Holy Spirit is poured out upon the church and the apostles who till then had been fearful and faint they are transformed into bold preachers of the gospel.

Now how have they received the Holy Spirit at that point? Is it by some works that they did? No. It was through the work of the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus his father have poured out the Holy Spirit on the church.

So Paul says what's this about adding something to the work of Christ? Is it by something you've added? You've received the Holy Spirit? Not at all. And then again he says to them did you suffer so many things in vain?

[ 11 : 08 ] Why were you persecuted if it was indeed to no point? No. God who supplies the Spirit to you and works miracles among you he doesn't do it in response to the good works that you do.

He does it in response the way you respond to hearing the word of God with faith and trust in the Lord Jesus Christ. That's something that we must take to heart today.

We don't get the blessings of God and the gifts of his Spirit because we work for them. No. We get them through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

It's 100% God's grace unmerited on our part. I was just actually reading this morning a critique of a man called Creflo Dollar an American evangelist who well he preaches a prosperity gospel.

If you do what he says claim by faith certain promises then God will reward you.

[ 12 : 35 ] God will bless you. And he's doing very well from his prosperity gospel big house or two private jet Porsche cars etc.

But this is wrong. God doesn't bless us because we give so much to this man of ministry or to that good work. No.

God's blessing of us is in response to our faith and trust in the Lord Jesus Christ. So we don't need to earn God's favour by any works we do.

We need to believe in God and believe in God's promises. Paul goes right back to the father of the Jews Abraham.

He says Abraham believed God and it was counted to him as righteousness. Abraham was a man of faith.

[ 13 : 35 ] The man who trusted in God. And we read that God reckoned Abraham's faith as his righteousness.

Brother Capers welcome. Welcome. We have read to verse 9 of chapter 3 and I've done some exposition to verse 6 but it's all up to you now what you want to do.

I'm so sorry. So Paul found it necessary to address the challenge that the Galatian Christians had found themselves now facing.

Previously he contended with the Jews. He debated with the Jews and he argued against the fact that they wanted to insist on the Galatians to put on lifestyles that were contrary to the grace that God had revealed to them.

And he found them now going into the same error. He found them after having been helped to understand that they did not need circumcision to be accepted by God.

[ 15 : 00 ] They did not need to observe the dietary regulations of Jews to be accepted by God. He was afounded that they would now have been revealed to the fact that it is grace that leads us to salvation.

He was disappointed that they would go back to trusting in their own self-effort. And he considered that an act of foolishness which he referred to twice.

And I think it is very serious if Paul would twice have to say you are being foolish. And he said it was an act of bewitchment.

So the challenge, the important thing for us is what we see in verse 3 where he says, having begun in the spirit, are you now being perfected in the flesh?

Having started our Christian relationship and our Christian walk with God by faith in Christ, by believing in what God has done in our lives and by the work of sanctification going on by the power of the Spirit of God, should we now begin to rely on our efforts?

[ 16 : 13 ] So the question to us as Christians today is how do we grow in our Christian faith? How do we progress? Is it as people who now feel we have to do something to add to the faith, to the work of grace that we have received in Christ Jesus?

Or should we continue to rely on the help that comes from God? And the challenge many of us encounter is that there are times we feel dissatisfied with our Christian walk.

There are times we feel am I doing enough? Am I praying enough? Am I reading the Bible enough? Am I being a sufficient witness to the grace of God enough?

Am I shining forth the light enough to people? And when those thoughts begin to come, we become disappointed and sometimes it causes frustration, then we begin to think we have to do something. I must do something to kind of satisfy first myself that I am being good enough. So for some maybe, it's a faithful attendance of healing lunchtime talk, faithful attendance of Bible study meetings, faithful participation in prayer meetings, faithful going about from place to place to witness, so that when you look at a checklist of those things that make you a good Christian and you tick them up and you tick them up, then you get to feel good.

[ 17 : 44 ] So for some of us then, our salvation is a factor of how good we feel about what we are doing and how we are presenting ourselves. And Paul says this is also an act that could lead to foolishness.

Why? Because we didn't start by works. The salvation that we have received did not come to us because we did anything good. Just like Abraham didn't have to do anything good before he received of the grace of God.

So Paul presents Abraham as an example. He says therefore that Abraham believed God and it was counted to him as righteousness.

Not that Abraham walked hard for the Lord. Not that Abraham impressed God. It was what he did in believing, the only walk, we can call it walk of believing, choosing to place his faith in this God whom he did not have a clear knowledge of but whom he had heard and whom he believed was worthy of submitting to.

So Abraham believed God and it was accounted to him for righteousness. In the same way therefore the apostle Paul is saying if we, if the Galatian Christians for instance would find justification and would enter into the walk of being called the children of Abraham which was the thing that Jews held as something that made them peculiar because they received the covenant of circumcision from their father, they had received the covenant of the different promises from their father Abraham and that made them feel they were unique but Paul was telling them no, Abraham

did not become a man approved by God because of what he did, it's because of his faith.  
[ 19 : 46 ] so if you want to be children of Abraham, it is the faith you place in God and his finished work for you that makes you like Abraham and it compares to what Abraham did.

Abraham did not find approval by works, he found approval by faith, therefore you should struggle to find approval not by works but by faith.

In verse 10 then, he raises what is the problem of trying to depend on the law and the things we do. He said, for all who rely on the works of law are under a curse, for it is written, cursed be everyone who does not abide by all the things written in the book of law and do them.

Now, this raises the challenge. If you want to believe in works and obedience to the law as the basis of finding salvation and grace, then you should be ready to obey everything that is found in the law.  
[ 20 : 58 ] Because in Deuteronomy 27 verse 26 we are told that when Moses presented the law of the Lord to the children of Israel, he challenged them that everyone must be willing to obey everything and they answered Amen.

So, if we will find approval, we should be ready to obey everything, every single law. But that's quite a difficult thing to do because whoever falls short of one law has fallen short of all the laws. And because it's not possible for us to obey all the laws, Jesus now became the curse for us because whoever breaks the law of God becomes cursed but Jesus took that curse on himself and died for us so that in him we do not need to see the obedience to all the laws as the requirement of acceptance with God.

all we need is placing faith in what God has done for us in Christ Jesus. And when you place your faith in Christ Jesus, before God you are now accepted as righteous in right standing with God, you are now no longer held to the need, you are no longer held by the need to obey all the laws because in Christ Jesus, because you place faith in what Jesus has done, you will now become accepted.

So, whoever tries to now trust in his works to gain salvation is nullifying like we read last week, is nullifying the grace that has come to us by virtue of what Jesus has done.

[ 22 : 52 ] It's making the death of Jesus of no benefit. It's making the suffering and the sacrifice of Jesus of no benefit. But whoever places his faith in Christ Jesus and accepts that, he stands accepted by God only by virtue of what Jesus has done, then you will find approval, then you will find peace, then you will enter into eternal rest.

God only will be so does it require that we just sit idle and not do anything? That's not what scripture is saying.

But scripture is also not saying rise and walk. But we have an encouragement in Philippians 2 verse 13 where Paul himself says it is God who is at work in us, both to will and to do of his good pleasure.

Which means as I submit to the Lord and I submit to the Spirit of God with whom I have been sealed from the day I repented, from the day I placed my faith in Jesus, as I submit to the Lord in that regard, then it is God now who will be walking in and through me.

I do not seek pleasure, I do not seek to derive pleasure or confirmation by what I do, I only avail myself so that the Lord himself will do what he has set out to do in and through me.

[ 24 : 30 ] We are therefore mere extensions of the Lord, we are therefore merely instruments that should be made available to the Lord, so that he can walk in and through us.

When we speak to people, it will be the Lord speaking through us. if we do anything that humanly we have categorized as good and those things that Christians should do, we will not be seeking approval because we have done what Christians should do, but we would be acting in grateful response by availing ourselves so that the Lord himself will honor himself in and through us.

Therefore we do not put confidence in ourselves. Listen to how John Piper says these things as he addresses the challenge of the Galatians.

He says the essence of the Galatian heresy is the teaching that you begin the Christian life by faith and then you grow in the Christian life by works. That is by drawing on paths in yourself to make your contribution to salvation.

One modern form of heresy therefore is God helps those who help themselves. And this is a very popular approach that many of us have in Nigeria.

[ 25 : 54 ] In Nigeria the common expression would be like we say it in which means God said arise so that I will help you.

And that kind of falsifies the truth of the grace of God because whoever receives help from God at that point would feel I contributed something at least I did the rising and when I arose God saw my seriousness God saw my commitment in my rising and he went on to help me.

John Piper went on to say faith is the only response to God's word which makes room for the spirit to walk in us and through us flesh on the other hand is the insubordinate self-determining ego which in religious people responds to God's word not with reliance on the spirit but with reliance on self. it can nullify the grace of God and what the Galatians were doing here in now beginning to think what should help them is they were making useless all of the teachings that have been received in saying circumcision is not the basis for salvation obeying their regulations is not the basis for salvation it is faith in Jesus alone that helps us they have nullified that by beginning to rely on their self effort these days that's the same challenge we have that's the same challenge we see among Christians these days the only thing many of us have to boast of in our Christianity is the fact that we have to draw people to our churches and I find that an unfortunate development because when people go to evangelize they are more interested in getting people to attend their churches than getting people to develop a right relationship with Jesus and to seek to find salvation by faith and several think it is in their in the manifestation of their spiritual gifts that we gain a right standing the apostle Paul challenged the Galatian Christians when you receive miracles did you receive miracles because you walked for them when you received healing was it because you walked no it's because you placed your faith in

[ 29 : 01 ] Jesus brethren if the Lord will be glorified in our lives it's not going to be through the obedience or through the walks the beautiful wonderful walks we do it will be because we have chosen to place faith in Jesus and we have allowed Jesus to be seen and to be experienced by the world in and through us let us pray