

Galatians - Freedom Through Faith

The Great Adventurer

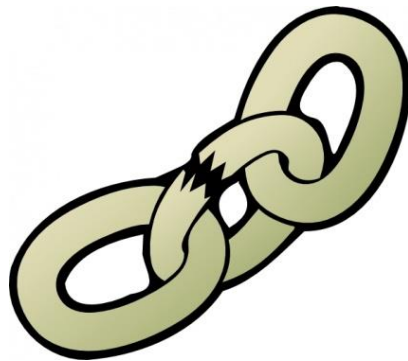
Galatia, situated at a Roman province in Asia Minor (today's Turkey), was mainly populated by the Gentiles who worshipped multiple gods. On the second missionary journey, St. Paul established churches and Christian communities in the area (Act16:6). After St. Paul had left these newly established churches, some Judaizers participated in the Church affairs and demanded that the Gentiles who wanted to be Christians should follow the Jewish laws, including Circumcision which was looked upon by the Jews who intentionally blurred the truth of the message from the Gospel. The Galatians who were influenced by the Judaizers adopted Jewish tradition and focused on the Law.

The blessing of salvation, according to Paul's explanation, is obtained through a system of faith, but not through a system of Law. It is our association by faith with Christ that enables us to share in His blessings. For baptism, it is just like a wedding ceremony when one unites with Christ and comes into all kinds of blessings.

Paul has mentioned two kinds of blessings. First, the blessing of righteousness, and second, the blessing of the Holy Spirit are dwelling in us. He said that these two blessings are obtained by faith, not by the works of Law, nor what the Judaizers were teaching. Paul emphasized that we Christians should maintain these blessings by faith, just as exactly the same way that we obtain them by faith. For example, one continues to be righteous before God because one continues to believe in Jesus. Paul spoke

precisely to both Jews and Gentiles who could both relate to these things in exactly the same way.

In Galatians 3:6, he mentions another blessing received by faith is the Promise of Abraham. This is the third blessing received exclusively in Faith through Christ. In Chapter 3, from Verse 6 to 29, he explained that the Promise of Abraham came through the faith in Christ, and this Promise comes to the Gentiles in the same way.



The Promise of Abraham that he received was the God's protection from his enemies. Then he would receive a great nation descended to him. There would also be a land for him and his descendants. And he would receive blessing for himself and all the nations will be blessed through him. With time, these

promises were summarized by the Jews as being the assurance that they were God's special children and their land is always be there and always be protected by God.

Paul tried to explain, however, the true accent of promise was that Abraham and his descendants were being blessed and preserved so that through them Jesus would ultimately come and all the spiritual promises would be given to Jesus who would be the recipient of the blessings. Once Christ has obtained all the blessings, everyone could have access to them through a system of faith. This is God's plan in distribute the spiritual blessings of heaven as promised to Abraham. "Even so Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness. Therefore, be sure that it is

those who are of faith who are sons of Abraham.” (Gal.3:6-7). Paul began to demonstrate that the faith system is always the principle by which God operated. “The Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, “All the nations will be blessed in you.” So then those who are of faith are blessed with Abraham, the believer. ” (Gal. 3:8-9). So the heart of the gospel message, the good news, is that through Jesus, the Lord, salvation is offered to man based on faith. Otherwise, man cannot obtain it. Paul said that God knew that this universal message be one day be preached, and began preaching to Abraham long before the distinction between Jews and Gentiles. As the first one to hear and believe the message, this is Abraham with himself be blessed with righteousness and this is he be the Father of believers who believe in the same way by faith. Abraham’s descendants were not just cultural Jews, but the people who would be justified by faith. Ultimately, all nations would be blessed because the Lord would obtain salvation and would offer to everyone through faith, just like God offers to Abraham through faith.

Paul continued to confront a rather contrast system of salvation by Law. “For as many as are of the works of the Law are under a curse; for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who does not abide by all things written in the book of the law, to perform them.” (Gal.3:10).

Paul said that the Law was given to reveal sins and condemn sinners. So everyone who is trying to justify themselves through law- keeping has to perform perfectly, and there is no grace in law.

“Now that no one is justified by the Law before God is evident; for, “The righteous man shall live by faith.” However, the Law is not of faith; on the

contrary,” He who practices them shall live by them. Christ 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.” (Gal.3:11-13).

The curse of the Law was that everyone was revealed by the Law and thus all would be condemned to death. The Law did not empower one to overcome sin or offer mercy to sinners, and there is no provision of Grace in Law that forgives one’s sin. That is the weakness of the Law. Thus, Jesus comes along and he annulled the curse in three ways. First, He fulfilled the requirements of the Law. Second, He offered a perfect life to satisfy the demands of the Law, and third, He promised the Spirit to empower all believers. Then, the curse is eliminated as He borne the curse on Himself. Once the curse has been removed, everybody could be blessed.

Paul clarified that “For if the inheritance is based on law, it is no longer based on a promise; but God has granted it to Abraham by means of a promise.”(Gal.3:18) “Why then was the law? It was added because of transgressions, having been ordained through angels by the agency of a mediator, until the seed would come whom the promise had been made.”(Gal.3:19). The “Seed” of Abraham was Jesus Christ. Then the blessings are not intended for the Jews alone as a special nation, but rather for Jesus Christ who comes out from this nation. The Law was given to people by angels through a mediator who was Moses. The Law was given for two reasons: Transgressions for revealing sin, mitigating evil and revealing condemnation; and Preparation for Christ (the Seed) to reveal God’s glory in how He dealt with sin. Since Law cannot make one want to be good, it cannot make one to be righteous. As concluded by Paul, Law is the custodian who prepares the Promise which is fulfilled by Jesus Christ.

