

NOON BIBLE STUDY: GALATIANS 3 (PART 2)

GALATIANS 3:1-5 - SPIRIT & FAITH, NOT LAW AND COMMANDMENT

GOD WORKED THROUGH THESE BELIEVERS BY HIS SPIRIT, BASED ON FAITH, NOT BY THE KEEPING OF THE LAW

PAUL IS GOING TO TRANSITION NOW INTO SOMETHING THAT MIGHT AT FIRST GLANCE SEEM RANDOM, BUT ACTUALLY WILL SOLIDIFY HIS POINTS. THE STORY OF GOD'S RELATIONSHIP WITH ABRAHAM. ABRAHAM'S STORY BEGINS IN GENESIS 12 AND WILL SET THE COURSE OF THE REST OF THE STORY OF GOD'S PEOPLE. AFTER THE FALL OF ADAM AND EVE, THE TWO PEOPLE HE ENTRUSTED WITH CREATION, GOD TURNS TO ABRAHAM (AND BY EXTENSION HIS FAMILY) TO START THE NEW CREATION PROJECT. GOD HAD BLESSED THE CREATION YET ADAM AND EVE BROUGHT ABOUT A CURSE UPON THE LAND AND THEMSELVES.

WHEN ABRAHAM IS CALLED, GOD'S INVITATION SOUNDS LIKE THIS:

GENESIS 12:1-3 - NOW THE LORD SAID TO ABRAHAM, "GO FORTH FROM YOUR COUNTRY, AND FROM YOUR RELATIVES AND FROM YOUR FATHER'S HOUSE, TO THE LAND WHICH I WILL SHOW YOU; 2 AND I WILL MAKE YOU A GREAT NATION, AND I WILL BLESS YOU, AND MAKE YOUR NAME GREAT; AND SO YOU SHALL BE A BLESSING; 3 AND I WILL BLESS THOSE WHO BLESS YOU, AND THE ONE WHO CURSES YOU I WILL CURSE. AND IN YOU ALL THE FAMILIES OF THE EARTH WILL BE BLESSED."

GOD IS GOING TO SEND OUT HIS GOOD BLESSING THROUGH ABRAHAM AND GIVE HIM THE EARTH AS HIS INHERITANCE. ABRAHAM IS A NEW ADAM IN MANY WAYS. AND WHAT MADE ABRAHAM SO SPECIAL AND DESERVING OF THIS HIGH CALLING? NOTHING ACTUALLY. WHICH IS A GOOD PICTURE OF THE WORD "GRACE."

THE QUESTION IN MUCH OF THIS DISCUSSION IS "WHO ARE GOD'S PEOPLE?" AS WELL AS WHO INHERITS (AND HOW DO THEY INHERIT) ETERNAL LIFE? WITH ABRAHAM WE LEARN THAT THAT QUESTION OF WHO AND HOW HAS ALWAYS BEEN ANSWERED "BY FAITH".

ABRAHAM'S CALL BY GOD IS GENERATIONS BEFORE THE LAW OF MOSES. ABRAHAM WAS NOT A "LAW KEEPER" AND YET IS HELD UP BY GOD AND SCRIPTURE AS THE FATHER OF FAITH. PAUL USES ABRAHAM, RESPECTED BY ALL, AS AN EXAMPLE OF WHAT GOD IS LOOKING FOR FROM HIS "CHOSEN," AND FURTHER BOLSTERING HIS CASE FIRST MADE IN ANTIOCH:

ACTS 13:38-39 - "THEREFORE LET IT BE KNOWN TO YOU, BRETHREN, THAT THROUGH HIM FORGIVENESS OF SINS IS PROCLAIMED TO YOU, 39 AND THROUGH HIM EVERYONE WHO BELIEVES IS FREED FROM ALL THINGS, FROM WHICH YOU COULD NOT BE FREED THROUGH THE LAW OF MOSES.

SIDE NOTE: IN THE NEW TESTAMENT (MATTHEW-REVELATION), THE NASB SHOWS PLACES THAT ARE QUOTES FROM THE OLD TESTAMENT IN "ALL CAPS". NOTICE HOW 3:6 HAS THIS. IF YOUR BIBLE HAS REFERENCES THERE MAY BE A LITTLE LETTER OR NUMBER NEXT TO THE QUOTATION THAT WILL SHOW YOU WHERE IT IS FROM. FOR EXAMPLE, GALATIANS 3:6 IS FROM GENESIS 15:6. THIS IS A HELPFUL TIP. ESV WILL PUT THE CITATION IN "QUOTATION MARKS" AND OTHER VERSIONS INDICATE THIS IN OTHER WAYS.

GALATIANS 3:6-9 - ABRAHAM 101

ABRAHAM "BELIEVED" GOD. THIS IS FROM THE GREEK WORD **πίστις** (PISTIS) WHICH IS A WORD THE NEW TESTAMENT WRITERS USE FOR "FAITH" OR "BELIEF". PAUL ASSUMES THAT HIS AUDIENCE IS WELL ACQUAINTED WITH THE STORY OF ABRAHAM, SO IN THIS CASE ALL HE

NEEDS TO DO IS CITE A PORTION OF THE STORY. THE PORTION HE CITES SHOWS THAT ABRAHAM HAD "FAITH" AND GOD'S RESPONSE TO ABRAHAM'S FAITH WAS THAT HE CONSIDER HIM "RIGHTEOUS". THE WORD RIGHTEOUS COMES FROM THE GREEK WORD "δικαιος" (DIKAIOS) WHICH MEANS "RIGHT, CORRECT, INNOCENT."

IN OTHER WORDS, EVEN THOUGH ABRAHAM WAS NOT "INNOCENT" IN THE SENSE THAT HE WAS SINLESS OR PERFECT, HE WAS CONSIDERED TO BE "INNOCENT" AND "RIGHT/RIGHTEOUS" BY GOD WHEN HE HAD FAITH IN GOD'S WORD AND PROMISE. LET'S USE ANOTHER ANALOGY: ABRAHAM DEPOSITED "FAITH" IN GOD'S BANK, AND GOD ADDED "RIGHTEOUSNESS" TO ABRAHAM'S ACCOUNT. THIS IS WHAT THE WORD "RECKONED" MEANS. PREVIOUSLY BECAUSE OF SIN, ABRAHAM HAD A NEGATIVE BALANCE IN HIS ACCOUNT. HE WAS IN TROUBLE, HE OWED AN AMOUNT HE COULD NOT PAY BACK. THE FEES WERE PILING UP. CONSEQUENCES WERE LOOMING.

AND YET THE OWNER OF THE BANK WAS WILLING TO WIPE OUT THE DEBT AND ADD BLESSINGS INTO ABRAHAM'S ACCOUNT, NOT BECAUSE HE WORKED REAL HARD AND PAID IT OFF, NOT BECAUSE HE HAD SOMETHING EXPENSIVE HE COULD SELL TO PAY OFF THE FINES AND FEES - BUT BECAUSE ABRAHAM HAD FAITH IN GOD AND HIS WORD. THAT WAS ALL THAT WAS REQUIRED TO FIX HIS PROBLEM.

AND PART OF THE PROMISE THAT GOD MADE TO ABRAHAM WAS THAT THIS GREAT BLESSING WOULD NOT BE A LIMITED OR ONE TIME OFFER, BUT AVAILABLE TO ANYONE RELATED TO OR INVITED BY ABRAHAM.

AND SO, MINDFUL OF THE GALATIAN CHURCH MAKE UP (BIOLOGICAL JEWS/DESCENDANTS OF ABRAHAM AND GENTILES), PAUL REMINDS THEM OF ANOTHER FOUNDATIONAL PART OF THE ABRAHAMIC PROMISE IN 3:8

GALATIANS 3:8 (NLT) - WHAT'S MORE, THE SCRIPTURES LOOKED FORWARD TO THIS TIME WHEN GOD WOULD DECLARE THE GENTILES TO BE RIGHTEOUS BECAUSE OF THEIR FAITH. GOD PROCLAIMED THIS GOOD NEWS TO ABRAHAM LONG AGO WHEN HE SAID, "ALL NATIONS WILL BE BLESSED THROUGH YOU."

THIS IS QUOTE FROM GENESIS 12:3. THE POINT IS THIS. THE WAY SOMEONE IS MADE RIGHT WITH GOD IS NOT BY THEIR GOOD WORKS OR HUMAN EFFORT - IT IS - AND HAS ALWAYS BEEN - A DECLARATION THAT GOD MAKES ABOUT SOMEONE WHO HAS FAITH IN HIS PROMISE.

GALATIANS 3:10-14 - BE CAREFUL WHAT YOU WISH FOR

FOR THOSE PREACHING THAT YOU NEED TO KEEP THE LAW OF MOSES TO BE MADE RIGHT WITH GOD IN ADDITION TO (OR INSTEAD OF) FAITH IN CHRIST, PAUL REMINDS THEM OF THE PROVERBIAL OTHER SIDE OF THE COIN. IF YOU DECIDE TO KEEP THE LAW, YOU ALSO HAVE TO ABIDE BY THE CONSEQUENCES SPELLED OUT IN THE LAW! YOU CAN'T HAVE ONE WITHOUT THE OTHER.

SO FOR THOSE WHO ARE MADE RIGHT WITH GOD BY FAITH, DOES THAT MEAN THERE ARE NO LONGER CONSEQUENCES TO THEIR SIN? GOD FORBID ANYONE WOULD CONCLUDE THAT! BUT THE GOSPEL TELLS US THAT THE CONSEQUENCES OF SIN WERE METED OUT ON JESUS INSTEAD OF US. OUR SIN WAS TRANSFERRED TO CHRIST AND HE PAID THE PENALTY OF IT, NAMELY DEATH. AND THE "CURSE" THAT COMES UPON THOSE WHO SIN WAS ABSORBED BY JESUS AS HE DIED ON THE CROSS.

SO INSTEAD OF CURSING, WE RECEIVE BLESSING - WHICH IS THE MAJOR THEME OF THE ABRAHAMIC PROMISE TO BEGIN WITH. GOD BLESSED THE CREATION, HUMANITY'S SIN BROUGHT ABOUT A CURSE. GOD BLESSES ABRAHAM AND CURSES THOSE WHO CURSE HIM. AS A RESULT, THOSE WHO ARE ABRAHAM'S FAMILY (WHICH IS NOT SIMPLY A MATTER OF BIOLOGY BUT RATHER A MATTER OF FAITH), ARE GIVEN BLESSING INSTEAD OF CURSING.

GOING BACK TO THE BANK ANALOGY: OUR NEGATIVE BALANCE, FEES AND DEBTS ARE TRANSFERRED INTO JESUS' ACCOUNT AND WHAT WAS IN HIS ACCOUNT (RIGHTEOUSNESS AND BLESSING) IS TRANSFERRED TO OURS. HE NOW PAYS THE CONSEQUENCES OF OUR SINFUL HABITS, AND WE RECEIVE THE BLESSING OF HIS HOLY LIFE. HOW DOES THIS TRANSFER GET INITIATED? BY US HAVING FAITH IN WHAT JESUS DID ON THE CROSS. WE, WITH GRATEFUL HEARTS, REALIZE WE NEEDED THE HELP AND TURN TO HIM AND RECEIVE GOD'S FORGIVENESS AND GOD'S SPIRIT.

FINAL POINT IN THIS SECTION: IT'S INTERESTING TO OBSERVE HOW MANY OLD TESTAMENT QUOTES THERE ARE IN THIS GROUP OF VERSES. PAUL IS DROPPING OT TRUTH EXTENSIVELY TO COMMUNICATE TO THE UNSURE GALATIANS THAT THESE TRUTHS HAVE BEEN THERE ALL ALONG.

GALATIANS 3:15-18 - DID SOMETHING CHANGE?

PAUL USES A COMMONLY UNDERSTOOD PRINCIPLE TO HELP THE CHURCH. ONCE A COVENANTAL AGREEMENT IS MADE, EVEN IN THE SECULAR WORLD (WHAT PAUL CALLS "HUMAN RELATIONS" IN 3:15), IT IS UNABLE TO BE CHANGED OR MODIFIED. GOD MADE THESE PROMISES 430 YEARS BEFORE THERE EVEN WAS A MOSAIC LAW, CERTAINLY THE COMING OF THE MOSAIC LAW DOESN'T CHANGE SOMETHING ALREADY AGREED UPON AND RATIFIED CENTURIES BEFORE! TO ABRAHAM GOD SAID THE BLESSING WOULD COME THROUGH HIS PROMISE, IF SOMEONE WOULD NOW SAY THE BLESSING COMES THROUGH THE KEEPING OF THE LAW, THEN THEY ARE IMPLYING THAT THE PROMISE IS NO LONGER VALID - AND THAT GOD DIDN'T KEEP HIS WORD!

SO DOES THAT MEAN THAT THE LAW ISN'T A BIG DEAL OR IRRELEVANT? THAT'S WHAT PAUL WILL ADDRESS NEXT.

GALATIANS 3:19-25 - WHAT'S THE PURPOSE OF THE LAW?

THE LAW OF MOSES WAS A SACRED CODE GIVEN BY GOD HIMSELF TO MOSES AND THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL THROUGH DIVINE AND ANGELIC MEANS. THOSE SAYING THE LAW IS IRRELEVANT OR ORDINARY ARE FOOLISH TOO. THE LAW WAS FROM GOD AND HAD MANY PURPOSES. THE LAW HELPED TO GUIDE THE PEOPLE TOWARDS GOD'S HEART. IT SHOWED THEM RIGHT AND WRONG. IT SHOWED THEM HOW THEIR WORSHIP COULD BE PLEASING TO GOD AND KEEP THEM NEAR HIM. IT GAVE INSTRUCTIONS FOR HOW TO BE HEALTHY, STAY SAFE, DO JUSTICE AND LOVE OTHERS. IT WAS A GUIDE TO HELP THEM SHINE AS LIGHTS TO THE NATIONS AND HELP THEM REPRESENT GOD WELL.

YES, MANY PURPOSES FOR GOD'S LAW, BUT SALVATION WAS NEVER ONE OF THEM. IN FACT, ONE OF THE MAIN PURPOSES OF THE LAW WAS TO POINT OUT HUMANITY'S INABILITY TO BE RIGHTEOUS BY THEIR OWN EFFORTS. NO ONE WAS ABLE TO KEEP THE LAW PERFECTLY - THAT'S WHY MUCH OF THE LAW SPOKE OF SACRIFICE FOR SINS AND ACTIONS OF REPENTANCE. THE LAW WAS PERFECT AND WAS A MIRROR AND SPOTLIGHT INTO HUMANITY'S IMPERFECTION.

THE LAW COULDN'T SAVE, IT WAS A "TUTOR" IT WAS A GUIDE WHICH POINTED THEM TO THEIR NEED FOR A SAVIOR. THE ESV, NET, NIV & OTHERS TRANSLATE THIS WORD AS "GUARDIAN", ONE WHO IS NOT ONLY INSTRUCTING, BUT MORE GUIDING ALONG THE GOOD WAY...BUT WITH THE GOAL OF ARRIVING AT THE SAFE HOME.

GALATIANS 3:26-29 - CHILDREN OF GOD

AS HELPFUL AS THE ANALOGY MIGHT BE, WE AREN'T JUST CONSUMERS OR SHOPKEEPERS IN NEED OF A LOAN TO BRING OUR BOOKS INTO THE "BLACK". WE, JEW OR GENTILE ALIKE, ARE SINNERS IN NEED OF GRACE AND FORGIVENESS. WE ARE NOT JUST MISGUIDED, WE'RE REBELLIOUS. NOTHING WE HAVE DONE AND NOTHING WE CAN DO CAN FIX THIS PROBLEM. THE ANSWERS DO NOT LIE WITHIN OURSELVES, FOR WHAT'S INSIDE OF US IS A BIG PART OF THE PROBLEM.

PAUL BRINGS TOGETHER ALL OF HIS POINTS TO THIS CRESCENDO - BECAUSE OF THE GOOD WORK GOD HAS DONE, WE CAN BE FORGIVEN, RIGHTEOUSNESS CAN BE APPLIED TO OUR SIN-CAUSED DEBTS, WE CAN RECEIVE GOD'S BLESSING, AND INHERIT LIFE IN THE AGE TO COME - AND IT ALL IS OURS WHEN WE TURN AWAY FROM OUR SIN, (INCLUDING OUR SINFUL ATTITUDE THAT WE CAN FIX THIS OURSELVES) AND HAVE FAITH THAT JESUS' SACRIFICIAL DEATH ON THE CROSS IS GOD'S PERFECT SOLUTION!

AND WHAT HAPPENS AFTER THAT? DO WE GET BUSY WORKING HARD TO MAKE UP FOR ALL THE WRONGS WE HAVE DONE? DO WE SULK AND CARRY THE WEIGHT OF OUR EVIL THAT SENT JESUS TO CALVARY? THE ANSWER IS FOUND IN THESE FINAL VERSES.

THE NEW RELATIONSHIP WE HAVE WITH GOD IS AS "SONS (AND DAUGHTERS) OF GOD, THROUGH FAITH IN CHRIST JESUS." SO AS CHILDREN WE DO OBEY OUR FATHER, BUT NOT TO EARN HIS LOVE, BECAUSE WE ALREADY HAVE HIS LOVE. AS CHILDREN WE DO LIVE HOLY, NOT TO EARN FORGIVENESS, BUT BECAUSE WE HAVE BEEN CALLED RIGHTEOUS AND WE LIVE A NEW WAY. WE NO LONGER HOLD FAST TO OUR OLD IDENTITIES AS JEW OR GENTILE, RICH OR POOR, KNOWLEDGABLE OR FOOLISH, OR EVEN MALE OR FEMALE - BUT OUR NEW IDENTITY IS FOUND IN THE REALITY OF JESUS CHRIST. WHEN WE ARE BAPTIZED AS A DISCIPLE OF JESUS, WE SHED OUR OLD NAME AND LIFE AND TAKE ON HIS.

THE FINAL VERSE OF GALATIANS 3 TIES THE BOW. GOD'S PROMISES TO ABRAHAM, WHICH IN THEIR FULLEST FORM ARE ALL ABOUT GOD MAKING THE WORLD RIGHT AGAIN AND LIVING IN AN UNHINDERED RELATIONSHIP WITH HIS CHILDREN, ARE GIVEN TO ABRAHAM'S DESCENDANTS, JUST AS GOD SAID. AND WHO ARE ABRAHAM'S DESCENDANTS? THOSE WHO BELONG TO HIS GREATEST DESCENDANT - JESUS. AND HOW DO WE BELONG TO CHRIST? WHEN WE RESPOND TO HIS INVITATION TO BE HIS OWN - BY FAITH.