

8. The Book of Galatians 3:5-7 (Topical)

Liberty From Law-Part 7

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(2-4-24)

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We are studying the Book of Galatians here at Calvary on Sunday mornings—going through the book topically based on its main theme.

The main theme of Galatians is **liberty**—the liberty (or freedom) that is ours in Christ.

The book divides itself into 3 main areas of liberty that Paul brings up in this epistle—

- I. **Liberty from Lies**—verses 1:6-10
- II. **Liberty from Law**— verses 1:11-4:31
- III. **Liberty for Life**— verses 5:1-6:15

In our study we have entered into the second major section - **“Liberty from Law”** - which is really liberty from *religion and legalism* as a way of being made righteous in God's eyes.

- II. **Liberty from Law**— verses 1:1-4:31
 - A. The testimony of Paul— verses 1:11-2:10
 - B. The transgression of Peter— verses 2:11-21
 - C. The treachery of false prophets— verses 3:1-4
 - D. The truth of the gospel— verses 5-9

Galatians 3:1 (NKJV)

¹ 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?

As we have said—**the first century Greco-Roman world was loaded with paganism**, which meant everywhere Paul went proclaiming the gospel he **was dealing with demonic lies and spiritual attacks**.

One of the lies that Paul dealt with in his missionary journeys—and in fact, the one he is dealing with in his letter to the Galatians was **the lie of the Judaizers, which is legalism**.

The Judaizers were Jews that were following Paul around, telling the *Gentiles* that it was necessary for them to **become Jews first (get circumcised and keep the Law of Moses)**

before they could believe in Jesus for salvation—and that the *Jews* had to remain loyal to the Law and keep practicing its tenets if they wanted to exercise faith in Jesus and be saved.

The Judaizers were going around telling people that salvation was a mixture of Judaism and Christianity—of law and grace—of works plus faith. The sad thing about it was that after Paul had spent a considerable amount of time in Galatia teaching them the true gospel of Jesus Christ (the gospel of grace)—many in the churches of Galatians were listening to the Judaizer’s lies!

Therefore, Paul fires them off this letter in an attempt to reason with them—to challenge them to think through the Judaizer’s false doctrine to its logical conclusion—

Galatians 3:2–3, 5 (NKJV)

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?...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?*

>>> In other words, “Does God trade you His Spirit and miraculous power in return for all your religious works and good deeds or does He work simply by His grace through your faith?” Again, the real issue that Paul is dealing with is how a person is made right with God, how do they get saved and guaranteed a place in heaven someday—is it by law or by God’s grace?

So now, he goes all the way back to the father of the Jewish people, to the patriarch of the nation of Israel—**father Abraham!**

Galatians 3:5–6 (NKJV)

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?* ⁶ just as Abraham “*believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.*”

It could be that Judaizers were using their hero Abraham to prove their argument that even though Abraham believed God he was still circumcised and that proved that the Gentiles needed to do both also if they wanted to be saved—to believe and be circumcised!

Paul hits that heresy hard in both Galatians 3 and Romans 4—but before we look at that, I want to look for a moment at the statement, “Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.”

The concept that Abraham was declared righteous (saved) by simply believing God is so important to our Christian faith that it is repeated 4 times in the New Testament and 3 times by Paul and once by James!

REFLECTION: How might you explain the logical conclusion Paul was trying to get the Galatians to understand?

That statement first appears in Genesis 15:6 (the backstory is Genesis 14).

Genesis 15:1–3 (NKJV)

¹ After these things the word of the Lord came to Abram in a vision, saying, “Do not be afraid, Abram. I *am* your shield, your exceedingly great reward.” ² But Abram said, “Lord God, what will You give me, seeing I go childless, and the heir of my house *is* Eliezer of Damascus?”

³ Then Abram said, “Look, You have given me no offspring; indeed one born in my house is my heir!”

In that culture if a man had no children his oldest servant born in his house became his heir.

Abram is saying to the Lord, “*How can I rejoice in the material blessings You give to me when You haven’t given me a child of my own to pass them down to.*”

>>> You see God had promised Abram back in Genesis 13:16 that his descendants would be as numerous as the dust of the earth—but as of chapter 15 he and Sarai were still childless. God first promised Abram children back in Genesis 12:2 when he was 75 years old. **Now he’s 83 and still God hasn’t fulfilled His promise to give Abram a son.**

At this point we would be prone to think that Abram was beginning to doubt God’s promise to him that he would have a son and through him more descendants than could be numbered. We’d most likely think that if Paul hadn’t told us otherwise—

Romans 4:20-21 (NKJV)

²⁰ He [Abraham] did not waver at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strengthened in faith, giving glory to God, ²¹ and being fully convinced that what He had promised He was also able to perform.

You see in Genesis 15:2-3 what seems like doubt is just a sincere desire to understand God’s promise in a deeper way.

A person can ask God a question in one of two ways—

1. In a defiant, accusatory way, “*Why God did You let that happen!?*” as they shake their fist in His face.

OR

2. In a humble and sincere way that simply says:
“*Lord I don’t understand why You allowed this but I want to understand Your ways better—please help me.*”

REFLECTION: Have you experienced “doubts” regarding God’s promises to you?

Abram's question was the latter of the two—he wasn't accusing God of lying or breaking His promise he was just asking God for some deeper insight into His plans for his (Abram's) life.

How did God handle Abram's question? By repeating His promise to him once again—

Genesis 15:4 (NKJV)

⁴ And behold, the word of the LORD *came* to him, saying, "This one shall not be your heir, but one who will come from your own body shall be your heir."

Why did God repeat His promise to Abram again? Because God wanted Abram to know that nothing, He had promised him had changed—the **promise was still valid!** God's unconditional promises don't have a 'shelf-life', an 'expiration date' or a 'forfeiture clause' attached to them (salvation).

Genesis 15:5 (NKJV)

⁵ Then He brought him outside and said, "Look now toward heaven..."

It's interesting how in Scripture God is always trying to get us to look up.

Genesis 13:14 (NKJV)

¹⁴ And the LORD said to Abram..."Lift your eyes now and look..."

Psalms 3:3 (NKJV)

³ But You, O LORD, *are* a shield for me, My glory and the One who lifts up my head.

➤ **Why does God want us to look up?**

1. **To remember Him and His great power in light of whatever circumstance we're going through.**
2. **To keep our eyes on the eternal so that our perspective of life is always proper.**

The psychologist says, "Look in".
The opportunist says, "Look around".
The optimist says, "Look ahead".
The pessimist says, "Look out".
But God says, "Look up!"

For example:

Colossians 3:2 (NKJV)

² Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth.

Genesis 15:5 (NKJV)

⁵ Then He brought him outside and said, "Look now toward heaven, and count the stars if you are able to number them." And He said to him, "So shall your descendants be."

The Hebrew word translated 'descendants' (plural) is actually 'seed' (singular—KJV).

It has a dual application - yes God is telling Abram that he would eventually have many physical descendants which is why God renamed him 'Abraham' ('father of a multitude').

But the deeper interpretation is that God was promising Abram that the Messiah would come from him - **one particular Descendant or "Seed".**

This is something that Paul repeats in Galatians 3:16—

Galatians 3:16 (NKJV)

¹⁶ Now to Abraham and his Seed were the promises made. He does not say, "And to seeds," as of many, but as of one, "And to your Seed," who is Christ.

Through this Messiah many would become descendants of Abram and children of God through faith.

Paul is telling us in Galatians 3 that through Jesus Abraham's descendants would go beyond the Jewish people.

That all who believe in Jesus, the Messiah of all mankind (Genesis 12:3), would be the spiritual children of Abraham by faith and members of the family of God made up of people from all the families of the earth.

Genesis 15:6 (NKJV)

⁶ And he believed in the LORD, and He accounted it to him for righteousness.

***This verse is without a doubt one of the greatest in the Bible –
for it lays the foundation for the greatest doctrine of the Christian faith,
justification by faith apart from works.***

In fact, all of Romans 4 is an exposition of Genesis 15:6—which we'll be studying soon in our Romans study on Wednesday night.

Romans 4:3 (NKJV)

³ For what does the Scripture say? "Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness."

The word **accounted** in Romans 4:3 is the Greek word 'logizomai.' This same word is used eleven times in Romans 4—translated "**counted**" (Romans 4:4); "**accounted**" in verses 3, 9, 10, and 22 and "**imputed**" (in verses 6, 8, 11, 23 and 24).

It's a banking term that means "to put to one's account" (think of a digital money transfer from one account to another).

Now this becomes the crux of Paul's argument not to mention the foundation upon which our salvation is built - that the righteousness that comes from God is *imputed by faith not earned.*

Romans 4:4 (NKJV)

⁴ Now to him who works, the wages are not counted as grace [a gift] but as debt.

Paul is using a simple illustration.

When a man works, he *earns* a paycheck—in other words, his employer owes that man a debt. The employer doesn't hand him his check at the end of the week saying, "*Here's a gift.*" But if the man

couldn't work for some reason and his boss went to his house and handed him a check without him working for it—then it would be a *gift*.

Abraham did not work for his salvation—he simply believed the promise of God. The Hebrew word translated **believed** means, “to say amen.” God gave a promise, Abraham responded with “**Amen!**” (‘truly’—a pronouncement of faith) and God declared him righteous.

REFLECTION: What does “justification” mean to you?

Abram wasn't declared righteous because he kept the Law—that wouldn't be given for another 430 years!

It just says, ‘God promised—
Abram **believed**—
God said “**righteous!**” (saved).

Abraham did not work for his salvation; he simply trusted God's Word.

It was Jesus Christ who did the work of redemption on the cross—and His righteousness was put to Abraham's account because of Abraham's faith. (Revelation 13:8)

Romans 4:5, 9-12 (NKJV)

⁵ But to him who does not work but believes on Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is accounted for righteousness...

⁹ Does this blessedness then *come* upon the circumcised [Jews] *only*, or upon the uncircumcised [Gentiles] also? For we say that faith was accounted to Abraham for righteousness. ¹⁰ How then was it accounted? While he was circumcised, or uncircumcised? Not while circumcised, but while uncircumcised. ¹¹ And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which *he had while still* uncircumcised, that he might be the father of all those who believe, though they are uncircumcised, that righteousness might be imputed to them also, ¹² and the father of circumcision to those who not only *are* of the circumcision, but who also walk in the steps of the faith which our father Abraham *had while still* uncircumcised.

Here Paul seizes on a historical fact that most of us would have missed. He informs us that **Abraham was justified** (Genesis 15:6) 14 years *before* he was circumcised (Genesis 17:24).

Paul's point—if the father of the nation of Israel could be justified while he was still *uncircumcised*—then the logical question arises, “*Why can't other uncircumcised people be justified?*” The Judaizers were telling the Gentiles that they had to be circumcised *before* they could be *saved*—just like Abraham.

Paul is saying to them, “**Oh really?!! God accounted Abraham's faith for righteousness 14 years before he was circumcised!**”

REFLECTION: Why is trust in God's Word so very important?

In a very real sense, Abraham was justified while still on *Gentile* ground, which opened the door for other Gentiles to be justified, entirely apart from circumcision.

➤ **Then why was circumcision given?**

- **It was a sign of the covenant that God made with Abraham (the Abrahamic Covenant).**
- **A sign is not the covenant but simply points to the covenant,** it's a symbol of the covenant—like a wedding ring is a symbol of the marriage covenant.

Paul's conclusion is—**if Abraham was justified before he was circumcised**—why can't he be the father of other uncircumcised people—that is, of believing Gentiles? Of course, Paul's contention is "*They absolutely can!*" **They can be justified the same way he was - by faith.**

Galatians 3:7, 9 (NKJV)

⁷Therefore know that *only* those who are of faith are sons of Abraham...⁹ So then those who *are* of faith are blessed with believing Abraham.

God promised Abram in Genesis 12:3, "In you all the families of the earth will be blessed." In other words, through Abraham, Messiah would be born—the Savior of all mankind. That through Him *all* the families on earth would have access to salvation by faith apart from human works just like Abraham.

Obviously, then, the rite of circumcision, which many Jews rely on for salvation—contributes nothing to one's status before God.

It gives them no special standing before Him because they must be declared righteous on the basis of faith (in God's Messiah, Jesus Christ) - just like Abraham believed and God pronounced him justified (saved)—before he was circumcised.

Just like the rite of water baptism doesn't save those living under the New Covenant but is simply a 'sign' of our faith in Jesus and in what He did for us through His death, burial, and resurrection.

The bottom line is—don't put your faith in a ritual of any kind whether it be circumcision, communion, water baptism—or any combination thereof as necessary for salvation.

Please understand, nothing we do outwardly in the way of going to church, reading our Bibles, helping the poor, evangelizing the lost, lighting candles, praying the rosary, or any other religious work will earn us God's favor and a place in heaven—**salvation is only by our faith in Jesus—PERIOD!**

Galatians 3:7, 9 (NKJV)

⁷Therefore know that *only* those who are of faith are sons of Abraham...⁹ So then those who *are* of faith are **blessed** with believing Abraham.

This of course was directed by Paul at the Judaizers who put all their faith in being descendants of Abraham who had been circumcised.

Romans 2:28–29 (NKJV)

²⁸ For he is not a Jew who *is one* outwardly [*as descendants of Abraham*], nor *is* circumcision that which *is* outward in the flesh; ²⁹ but *he is* a Jew who *is one* inwardly; and circumcision *is that* of the heart, in the Spirit, not in the letter; whose praise *is* not from men but from God.

In God’s mind a true Jew is not simply a man who has Abraham’s blood flowing in his veins or who has the mark of circumcision in his body.

A person may have both these things and be a total unbeliever (think of another of Abraham’s sons— Ishmael).

God isn’t interested in outward rituals or bloodline (nationality)—He looks for true saving faith in the heart by which He bestows salvation and adopts that person into His family as one of His children—

John 1:12–13 (NKJV)

¹² But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: ¹³ who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

Becoming a born-again child of God is—

1. **Not of blood**—you don’t become a Christian because your parents are Christians or because you were born a Catholic, Lutheran, Baptist etc. It isn’t something that’s passed down through your bloodline, as the Jews thought.
2. **Not of the will of the flesh**—you don’t become a Christian by sheer will power, determining that you’re going to start living like a Christian because that will ‘make you a Christian’ (without being born-again) or by deciding to punish yourself in some way.

(Every year at Easter time the people in Mexico City whip themselves and then crawl for miles on their knees to a certain Cathedral hoping to impress God and earn their salvation.)

3. **Not of the will of man**—no one becomes a Christian because a man, like a priest, proclaims you a Christian because you fulfilled some religious duty or received some sacrament like water baptism.

REFLECTION: What does it mean to you: “to be born again”?

**You simply believe in Jesus and receive Him into your heart
and God gives you new life!**

If you would like to know more about what it means to be a Jesus-follower— please, reach out to us. It would be our greatest privilege to lead you into a saving relationship with Jesus Christ.

Reach out to us [here](#).

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