

9. The Book of Galatians 3:8-9 (Topical)

Liberty From Law-Part 8

a message by Pastor Phil Ballmaier
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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

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 of one form or another.

REFLECTION: What does “paganism” mean to you? Think of some real examples:

One of the lies that Paul dealt with in his missionary journeys was the **lie of the Judaizers, which is legalism.**

The Judaizers were going around telling people that salvation was a mixture of Judaism and Christianity—of law and grace.

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 3:5–9 (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.”* ⁷ Therefore know that *only* those who are of faith are sons of Abraham. ⁸ And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel to Abraham beforehand, *saying, “In you all the nations shall be blessed.”* ⁹ So then those who are of faith are blessed with believing Abraham.

This morning I'd like to focus our attention on 2 main thoughts in Paul's defense of the Gospel—

1. What exactly did Abraham believe that caused God to declare him righteous?

Galatians 3:6 (NKJV)

⁶ just as Abraham *“believed God, and it was accounted [imputed] 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—3 times by Paul and once by James!

Which begs the question—*“What exactly did Abraham believe that caused God to declare him righteous?”*

Let's read Genesis 15:1-6 and try to find out—

Genesis 15:1–6 (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!”* 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.”* 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.”* ⁶ And he believed in the Lord, and He accounted it to him for righteousness.

➤ *So, what did Abraham believe exactly that caused God to pronounce him righteous (saved)?*

Some say it was simply that **Abraham had faith in general—that's what saved him.** However, that can't be true. **Faith has no power to save anyone in and of itself.**

>>> A person can believe a lie with all their heart, and it still won't save them!

The immediate context of Genesis 15:1-6 suggests several possibilities with regard to Abraham's faith:

- That he believed God's promise to be **his shield and great reward**—was that what he believed to be declared righteous by God?

- Maybe it was God’s promise that he would have **an heir coming** from his own body (verse 4)?
- Or maybe it was the promise that **his descendants would be as numerous as the stars** in the heavens (verse 5)?
- Or maybe it went back further to the **promise of land God would give to his descendants** someday (12:7)?

➤ **Which promise was it—or was it all of them that Abraham believed that caused God to declare him righteous?**

REFLECTION: Which promise (above) might cause you to think you were righteous in God’s eyes?

Well in Romans 4, which is the exposition of Genesis 15:6, we read—

Romans 4:16-22 (NKJV)

¹⁶ Therefore *it is* of faith [*salvation*] that *it might be* according to grace, so that the promise might be sure to all the seed, not only to those who are of the law, but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all ¹⁷ (as it is written, "*I have made you a father of many nations*") in the presence of Him whom he believed—God, who gives life to the dead and calls those things which do not exist as though they did; ¹⁸ who, contrary to hope, in hope believed, so that he became the father of many nations, according to what was spoken, "*So shall your descendants be.*" ¹⁹ And not being weak in faith, he did not consider his own body, already dead (since he was about a hundred years old), and the deadness of Sarah's womb. ²⁰ He 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. ²² And therefore "*it was accounted to him for righteousness.*"

***** So, it seems that Paul is telling us that the belief that God could bring life out of death—or in other words the belief in resurrection is what allowed God to declare Abraham righteous*****

As one author said:

"In a sense Abraham believed in the resurrection power of God. By this time both Abraham and Sarah's bodies were "dead" to childbearing. But Abraham believed that out of 'death' God could bring life!"

So many commentators hold to the interpretation that what saved Abraham was his belief that God could raise the dead.

➤ *Okay, but just the belief that God can raise the dead in general—is that all that’s needed for a person to be saved?*

The Bible records several resurrections in both the Old and New Testaments where God brought someone dead back to life. Does faith that God has the power to bring dead people back to life automatically save us?

Well, it isn't the *general* belief in resurrection that saves a person
it is the belief in a *specific* resurrection that saves us.

Romans 10:9 (NKJV)

⁹ that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.

So, then ***there is only one resurrection that we can put our faith in that will save us—the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ***—as Paul went on to say in Romans 4.

Romans 4:23–25 (NKJV)

²³ Now it was not written for his sake alone that it [*salvation*] was imputed to him, ²⁴ but also for us. It shall be imputed to us who believe in Him who raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead, ²⁵ who was delivered up because of our offenses, and was raised because of our justification.

At this point you might be thinking—“Okay, but how does that work with Abraham—he didn't know about Jesus”—or did he? Didn't Jesus say to the Pharisees in John 8:56, “Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw it and was glad.”

So, what did Abraham believe that allowed God to declare him righteous?

He believed the same thing that saves all of us—gospel of Jesus Christ!

➤ *But how did Abraham know the gospel?*

Well, in Galatians 3:8, **Paul tells us that God preached it to Abraham—**

Galatians 3:8 (NKJV)

⁸ **And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel to Abraham beforehand, saying, “In you all the nations shall be blessed.”**

There are those who point out that all Paul is saying is—God preached one aspect of the gospel to Abraham, that through his Descendant (Messiah)—all the nations of the world would be blessed. And if Galatians 3:8 was the only statement on the subject I'd be inclined to agree with them >>> **it's just that there are other passages that indicate Abraham knew more about the gospel than many give him credit for.**

For example, in Genesis 22 Abraham knew he was acting out *gospel* prophecy—

Genesis 22:1–8 (NKJV)

¹ Now it came to pass after these things that God tested Abraham, and said to him, “Abraham!” And he said, “Here I am.” ² Then He said, “Take now your son, your only *son* Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you.” ³ So Abraham rose early in the morning and saddled his donkey, and took two of his young men with him, and Isaac his son; and he split the wood for the burnt offering, and arose and went to the place of which God had told him. ⁴ Then on the third day Abraham lifted his eyes and saw the place afar off. ⁵ And Abraham said to his young men, “Stay

here with the donkey; the lad and I will go yonder and worship, and we will come back to you.”⁶ So Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering and laid *it* on Isaac his son; and he took the fire in his hand, and a knife, and the two of them went together.⁷ But Isaac spoke to Abraham his father and said, “My father!” And he said, “Here I am, my son.” Then he said, “Look, the fire and the wood, but where *is* the lamb for a burnt offering?”⁸ And Abraham said, “My son, God will provide for Himself the lamb for a burnt offering.” So the two of them went together.”

I like the King James Version (KJV) of verse 8—which I believe communicates what Abraham actually said and believed—

Genesis 22:8 (KJV)

⁸ And Abraham said, My son, God will provide Himself a lamb...

John 1:29 (NKJV)

²⁹ The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, "Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!

It’s interesting that the first time the word *lamb* appears in the New Testament it answers the question of the first time the word *lamb* appears in the Old Testament—

➤ **“Where is the lamb for the offering?” “Behold, the Lamb of God...”**

Genesis 22:9–14 (NKJV)

⁹ Then they came to the place of which God had told him. And Abraham built an altar there and placed the wood in order; and he bound Isaac his son and laid him on the altar, upon the wood.¹⁰ And Abraham stretched out his hand and took the knife to slay his son.¹¹ But the Angel of the Lord called to him from heaven and said, “Abraham, Abraham!” So he said, “Here I am.”¹² And He said, “Do not lay your hand on the lad, or do anything to him; for now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only *son*, from Me.”¹³ Then Abraham lifted his eyes and looked, and there behind *him* was a ram caught in a thicket by its horns. So Abraham went and took the ram, and offered it up for a burnt offering instead of his son.¹⁴ And Abraham called the name of the place, The-LORD-Will-Provide [Jehovah-Jireh]; as it is said to this day, "In the Mount of The LORD it shall be provided."

This tells me that **Abraham knew he was acting out prophecy**—the prophecy of God sending His Only Begotten Son who would be the Lamb who would die on that very mount (where God told him to offer Isaac—Mt. Moriah/Calvary) for the sins of the world—the gospel!

Once again:

John 8:56 (NKJV)

⁵⁶ Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw *it* and was glad."

Galatians 3:8 (NKJV)

⁸ And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel to Abraham...

So, Abraham knew the Gospel—but how exactly?

2. How and when did God preach the Gospel to Abraham?

Some believe it was when God brought him outside (Genesis 15) and said in verse 5, "Look now toward heaven, and count the stars if you are able to number them."

There are those who say that God wasn't telling Abram to try to literally count the stars—He was telling Abram to 'set them in order.' Or in other words God was telling him to read the *order* of the constellations for they tell the story of redemption—i.e., 'the Gospel'.

The Psalmist said, "the heavens declare the glory of God" (Psalm 19:1)—and **the greatest way God is glorified is through the work of redemption. It could be that God took Abram outside and showed him these constellations and used them to preach the gospel to him.**

>>> I believe that Abram then realized what God meant when He promised him so many descendants, they wouldn't be able to be numbered—and how that in Him (Abram's descendant, Messiah Jesus) all the families of the earth would be blessed. (Genesis 12:3) <<<

Abram had the Gospel preached to him, he understood the story of redemption—that God would send a Redeemer, and that He would be one of Abram's descendants. And that through this Redeemer people from all over the world would become part of Abram's descendants through faith and members of the family of God. So God preached the gospel to Abraham—but is it reasonable to think He used the stars to do it?

REFLECTION: When you look up to the heavens on a nice clear evening – what words and thoughts goes through your mind?

Let's turn to Genesis 1 and look at the 4th day of creation—

Genesis 1:14 (NKJV)

¹⁴ Then God said, "Let there be lights in the firmament of the heavens to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs and seasons, and for days and years."

Now while it is true that since the beginning of time man has used the sun, moon, and stars to determine the time of day and the seasons of the year (the Jews could look at the moon and tell you what day of the month it was and be very accurate because they were on a lunar calendar).

So, for many centuries man used the sun, moon and stars to determine the time of day, the seasons of the year and even to navigate with—but the Hebrew in Genesis 1:14 gives us further insight into why God created the sun, moon, and the stars.

The Hebrew word for 'seasons' is *moed* which is translated 'feasts' in Leviticus 23:2-3. Hebrew scholars point out that the most accurate translation of the Hebrew word *moed* is "**divine appointment**". In other words, part of

the purpose of these heavenly bodies was to announce the coming each year of the feasts of God which were divine appointments where He and His people connected in a very special way.

The 7-Feasts of Moses outlined in Leviticus 23 were divine appointments not only as yearly feasts—but feasts that commemorated significant events in their past—such as with **Passover** which commemorated their exodus from Egypt.

Or as with the Feast of **Tabernacles** which served to remind them of the way God took care of His people during their 40-year wilderness wanderings. Once they entered the Promised Land how He provided an abundant harvest of good things to eat each Fall (which is why the Feast of Tabernacles is also known as the Feast of Ingathering).

As New Testament Christians we know these feasts had a very important *prophetic* significance to them as well in that they prophesied of a coming time when God would keep some very special appointments with His people.

- A) **The first three feasts: Passover, Unleavened Bread, and Firstfruits** speak of **Jesus' First Coming** and the work of redemption He accomplished by dying for our sins and rising from the dead.
- B) **The last three feasts: Trumpets, Yom Kippur, and Tabernacles** speak **of His Second Coming** and the work He has yet to accomplish in establishing His Kingdom upon the earth—He will fulfill that appointment soon!
- C) **And in the middle, you have the Feast of Pentecost which signifies the time between Jesus' First and Second Coming, or the Church Age when God the Holy Spirit** was sent to keep a special appointment that Jesus promised He'd keep in the upper room the night before His crucifixion (John 14:15-18)

REFLECTION: How well do you know and understand the Jewish feasts noted above? When you reflect on the feasts, do they draw you closer to God?

However, Genesis 1:14 gives us another reason why God created the sun, moon, and stars—they would not only be used to mark the passing of time in the sense of days and months and seasons of the year—but in verse 14 **God said they would also be for "signs".**

The Hebrew word for "**signs**" is *oth*, meaning "**beacons**" or "**signals**" and suggests that the stars especially were placed in the heavens by God to serve as beacons to guide the people of earth in a particular direction.

Of course, it begs the question—"What direction?" And for that matter, *what did God want to signal or announce to the inhabitants of the earth through the stars?*

Well, many believe the stars exist as *astrological* signs to announce important events or simply to predict a person's future. However, astrology is an occult, pagan practice and all such forms of divination and fortunetelling are strictly forbidden in Scripture (Deuteronomy 18:10–12; Isaiah 7:12–14).

No, what we're talking about is the **Mazzaroth**.

We know that Satan is a counterfeiter of God's truth and so many see the zodiac as a satanic counterfeit of the Hebrew 'Mazzaroth.'

➤ What is the **Mazzaroth**?

Well, the precise meaning of the word is uncertain but its context from Scripture has something to do with the **constellations**—

Job 38:31-32 (NKJV)

³¹ "Can you bind the cluster of the Pleiades, Or loose the belt of Orion? ³² Can you bring out Mazzaroth in its season? Or can you guide the Great Bear with its cubs?"

There are many who believe that the stars, and particularly the *constellations*, were placed in the heavens by God to point to and announce to the people of earth **the Gospel of His Son**. So, when we say that God preached the gospel to Abraham—many believe it was through the **Mazzaroth, which some have called the 'gospel in the stars'**.

The late (or early depending on how you look at it) Dr. D. James Kennedy writes on this subject using Genesis 1:14 where God said He made the stars "for signs" as a launching off point—

"A sign is something which proclaims a message. What is the message proclaimed by the stars? I would like to talk to you about what might be called... "The Gospel in the Stars."

We are told [in Psalm 19:1-3]: "The heavens declare the glory of God; And the firmament shows His handiwork. ² Day unto day utters speech, and night unto night reveals knowledge.

³ There is no speech nor language where their voice is not heard."

God gave to all of the world a proclamation of the Gospel in the stars. A picture is worth a thousand words, we are told, and God has indeed painted the sky and made it a picture gallery, replete with the glories of his redemption.

There exists in the writings of virtually all civilized nations a description of the major stars in the heavens—something which might be called the "constellations of the zodiac" or the "signs of the zodiac," of which there are twelve. If you go back in time to Rome, or beyond that to Greece, or before that to Egypt, or to Persia, or Assyria, or Babylonia —regardless of how far back you go, there is a remarkable phenomenon: All nations had the same twelve signs, representing the same twelve things, placed in the same order.

Archaeologists, historians and antiquarians have searched the dustiest libraries, uncovered the oldest tablets, ciphered the most difficult hieroglyphics, and have failed to discover how it is that all over the world, the same signs exist.

Remarkably, the stars in the heavens which represent those twelve signs bear absolutely no resemblance to the pictures or the signs themselves.

For example, what we call the Big Dipper has been called Ursa Major (Great Bear). One thing is that it does not look like is a great bear! Neither do any of the other signs look like what they are supposed to represent.

Where did their names come from? The Bible tells us that God has named all of the stars, the host of heaven—that He has numbered them, ordered them and set them in the firmament to be signs.

The original meaning was corrupted into something which was demonic, something which was satanic, something which was counterfeit, something which has given birth to what is known as modern astrology, which the Bible repeatedly condemns and warns Christians against. The corruption began in Babylon with the Tower of Babel.

It is well that you have nothing to do with modern astrology whatsoever because of its corruption and satanic aspects.

But in order that you might appreciate what God has done, let us look briefly at a few pictures of the zodiac.

The word “zodiac” is thought to mean “circle of animals,” although some linguists say that it comes from an ancient Hebrew word meaning “a path” or “step”—that it actually is displaying the way of salvation...”

I won't read you the entire article but let me whet your appetite to study this on your own—

The Mazzaroth (zodiac) starts with **'Virgo'** a picture of a woman—

Kennedy says,

“You can look at the stars in Virgo until you are green in the face, and they would never look like a woman! But the picture which has gone with them down through the ages in every nation in the world is a picture of a woman. This woman is clearly identified as a virgin. Virgo means “virgin” in Latin, Hebrew, Greek and Arabic. So, the first thing we see is the emphasis upon the virginity of this woman.”

The next sign is **'Coma'**

*“Coma means “the desired” or “the longed for one.” It is a picture of a woman with a child in her lap. The book of Haggai tells us, **“The desire of all nations shall come” (Haggai 2:7)**. Jesus Christ is the Desire of all nations who was to come.”*

The fourth sign is **'Crux'**

Kennedy says,

“Crux, [is] the Southern Cross. This is one constellation which looks like that for which it is named, because it consists of four stars placed very clearly in the shape of a cross, as if God did not want us to miss it. In Hebrew it is called Adom which means “cutting off.” Christ is that One who was cut off out of the land of the living for our sins.”

The last sign is **'Leo'**

Kennedy—

“Finally, we come to Leo the Lion—a picture of Christ who is the Lion of the tribe of Judah, coming again. He is coming this time not in humiliation but in great power and glory. The Lion's claws are right over Hydra, the serpent, who He is about to finally and totally destroy.”

Dr. Kennedy finishes by saying,

“The art gallery of God painted in the sky is a great and glorious picture. All ancient traditions, all ancient mythologies, all pagan religions (which some skeptics say Christianity has adopted and fashioned into the Christian religion), are all nothing more than corruptions of the ancient [gospel] given by God to Adam and written in the celestial sky for all the world to see.

How glorious it is that whether we talk about the special revelation God has given to us in His Word, or the general revelation which He has given to us in nature, the story is always the same: the seed of the woman will destroy the seed of the serpent. At last there came that One who was born of a woman, who came to die and rise again that we might live forever.

I hope that as you go out on a given evening and look up at the glories of the starry skies, you will be more impressed than ever with the greatness and wonder of our God and the majesty of His grace and mercy.”

I sincerely doubt is you'll ever read the first 4 verses of Psalm 19 the same ever again—

Psalm 19:1–4 (NKJV)

¹ The heavens declare the glory of God; And the firmament shows His handiwork. ² Day unto day utters speech, And night unto night reveals knowledge. ³ *There is* no speech nor language *Where* their voice is not heard. ⁴ Their line has gone out through all the earth, And their words to the end of the world. In them He has set a tabernacle for the sun.

REFLECTION: Can you explain the difference between “Zodiac” and *Mazzaroth*?

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