

“Those of Faith Are Blessed”
(Galatians 3:1-9)

I. Introduction.

A. Orientation.

1. As we begin this section of Paul’s letter to the Galatians, it would be good to review why he wrote it:
 - a. Simply put, he wrote it to prove to the believers at Galatia that his Gospel is the true Gospel and that of the Judaizers was false.
 - b. There have always been false “gospels”/lies preached as long as there has been a true Gospel/truth.
 - (i) Lucifer fell away from God and became the devil shortly after man’s creation.
 - (ii) But as soon as he did, he began to undermine God’s truth.
 - (iii) In the garden, he convinced Eve that disobeying God would be a good thing to do, and she fell and so did Adam.
 - (iv) He has been at work in the human race ever since trying to lead people astray, trying to get them to believe a lie.
 - (v) He was doing the same here at a particularly vulnerable time for the Jewish believers (since this was a transitional time between the Old Covenant and the New; Cf. Hebrews)
 - (vi) The Gentiles were also vulnerable, since they were dependent on the Jewish believers for the message of salvation.
 - c. Paul’s entire letter then is a series of arguments meant to prove to the Galatians what they had already discovered, but were in danger of leaving: that the blessings of God in salvation do not come through the works that I do, but through the work of Christ alone, and they are received by faith/believing alone.
2. Last week, we finished up a series of arguments Paul gave through his own testimony and interaction with the other apostles.
 - a. I won’t go through them again, except to remind you of his argument from last week.
 - b. When Peter had fallen – at least in some measure - into the errors of the Judaizers, Paul confronted him and those who followed him with the truth and won them back, showing that he acknowledged Paul’s Gospel to be correct.
 - c. He did this through a logical argument (*reductio ad absurdum*) where he took Peter’s position – and that of the Judaizers – and showed its disastrous conclusion. Basically, his argument goes like this:
 - (i) Peter, you know that we (Jews) are not saved by the Law, but through faith in Christ alone, as the Gentiles also are.

- (ii) But if you turn back to Judaism and withdraw from the Gentile believers, you're acting as though faith in Christ makes us sinners and not saints.
- (iii) If that's true, what are you saying about Christ and His work? What is He actually ministering to us: sin or righteousness?
- (iv) If you turn back to Judaism and say that the Gentiles, to be acceptable to God, must also embrace the Law, and that Christ is not enough, then aren't you cutting off the *only way of salvation*?
- (v) You're also saying that Christ died for nothing, if we can be saved by the Law – a conclusion you don't want to embrace.
- (vi) The Law cannot save us, it can only kill. And it must kill us – we must see that we are dead and without hope through the Law – so that we will come to Christ to be made alive.
- (vii) Paul through this argument shows Peter how absurd his position is, so that he can bring Peter, the Jews who were with him, Barnabas and the believers in Galatia back to the true Gospel.
- (viii) We realize that if they were true believers, God would not have allowed them to fall away completely; but certainly one of the ways He calls them back to the truth is through admonition.

B. Preview.

1. But just because Paul has finished arguing from his own testimony and experience doesn't mean he's finished arguing his case.
 - a. Now he turns to the Galatians own experience.
 - (i) The Gospel had changed their lives – they know it had.
 - (ii) Would they now abandon the very truth that God used to save them?
 - b. He also turns to the one the Judaizers themselves would respect above everyone else – Abraham – to show that he was saved by faith.
 - c. And he quotes a promise God made to Abraham to show that it was always God's intention to save the Gentiles (even the Galatians) in the same way.
2. This is what we'll consider this morning as we continue to see that God's blessings come through faith and not by works. We'll look at three things:
 - a. The Galatians' own experience of God's blessings through faith and not through works.
 - b. How Abraham himself was saved.
 - c. God's revealing to Abraham that this salvation by grace through faith would eventually be brought to the Gentiles.

II. Sermon.

- A. First, let's consider that the Galatians received the blessings they did through faith in Christ and not through works.
 1. Paul begins by reproofing them: "You foolish Galatians, who has bewitched you, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed *as* crucified?" (v. 1).
 - a. The Galatians were being very foolish.
 - (i) They were surrendering the wisdom of God for the wisdom of man.

- (ii) They were giving up the Gospel of Grace for a gospel of works.
 - (iii) They were trading their salvation for something that would damn them in the end.
- b. Paul asks who it was that had bewitched them?
- (i) Who had deceived them, placed them under this spell?
 - (ii) Who had turned them away from the truth?
 - (iii) It was the Judaizers.
- c. But how could they be deceived?
- (i) Paul had preached to them the crucifixion/the death of Christ.
 - (ii) They knew what He had done, that He had obeyed, that He had been put to death.
 - (iii) They knew He had to do this to save His people.
 - (iv) Were they now saying He died in vain?
 - (v) No, it wasn't in vain, and Paul sets out to prove this.
2. Paul asks them a series of questions:
- a. "This is the only thing I want to find out from you: did you receive the Spirit by the works of the Law, or by hearing with faith?" (v. 2).
- (i) How did they receive the Spirit?
 - (a) The Holy Spirit.
 - (b) He is the One who gave them the power to live a godly life.
 - (c) Who gives them the comfort and assurance that they have been saved, that they have been adopted into God's family, that they can cry out, "Father," from the heart and know God receives it.
 - (ii) It wasn't through the gospel of good works.
 - (a) They didn't earn it.
 - (b) Their "good works" would only increase their judgment, because no one can do anything truly good in God's eyes.
 - (c) Our works are like filthy rags (Isa. 64:6).
 - (d) They didn't receive the Spirit by some Judaizer preaching to them the message of works righteousness, submitting to circumcision, and the sacrificial system (remembering at that time that the temple system was still in operation).
 - (iii) It was by hearing the Gospel of God's grace and believing it.
 - (a) That message taught them to turn away from their works and to turn to Christ.
 - (b) It was through this message that the Spirit of God entered into their hearts and raised them to life.
 - (c) They were not raised under the Law, but under the Gospel.
 - (d) Should they now turn from the Gospel to the Law to save them?

- b. He continues, “Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh?” (v. 3).
 - (i) And how will this salvation now be completed?
 - (a) Salvation is from the damnation of hell.
 - (b) But also from the power of sin.
 - (c) The Spirit had brought them to life, applied Christ to them, saved them from hell, and given them a measure of victory over their sins.
 - (d) Now are they going to take over and finish the work?
 - (e) They couldn’t do it without Him before; they won’t be able to do so now.
 - (ii) Obedience to God’s Law is very important.
 - (a) The Lord saved us from disobedience/rebellion so that we might obey/serve Him.
 - (b) But we could never obey Him apart from His Spirit.
 - (c) We could certainly never save ourselves by our works.
 - (d) Having begun by the Spirit, He must complete that work. We can’t.
 - c. “Did you suffer so many things in vain -- if indeed it was in vain?” (v. 4).
 - (i) They contended for the Gospel, suffered persecution, struggled with the Judaizers, fought against Satan.
 - (ii) Was it all for nothing? If they gave it all up for the gospel of works, it will all have been for nothing.
 - (iii) But their suffering was not in vain: it showed that what they had was the truth, since the devil, the world and their flesh all fight against it.
 - d. “So then, does He who provides you with the Spirit and works miracles among you, do it by the works of the Law, or by hearing with faith?” (v. 5).
 - (i) God sent Paul to bring the message of the Gospel to the Galatians.
 - (ii) Through the Gospel God gave them His Spirit.
 - (iii) He also showed them it was His Gospel through the miracles He gave Paul to do.
 - (iv) God didn’t ordain that these blessings would come through the Law, but by listening to the Gospel message and responding in faith and repentance.
 - (v) He was telling them that Paul’s message was the truth.
- B. Second, let’s consider that Abraham himself was justified in precisely the same way.
1. Having argued their own experience, he points to Abraham as the foremost example of how someone was saved in the Old Testament. This would have particular weight with the Judaizers, since they considered Abraham to be their father physically and spiritually.
 2. How was Abraham declared by God to be righteous/just?
 - a. “Even so Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness” (v. 6).

- (i) He believed the promise of God that he would be the father of many nations, that through his seed all the nations would be blessed, when he didn't have even one child.
 - (ii) Because He trusted God's promise to send the Redeemer – through whom all the nations would be blessed: “Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw it and was glad” (John 8:56) – God imputed/credited the righteousness of His Son – yet to come – to him.
 - (iii) He was saved by God's grace through faith.
- b. So then, who are the true children of Abraham?
- (i) Not the Judaizers – though they may be his physical children, they are not his spiritual children, since they are trusting in their works.
 - (ii) But those who believe, “Therefore, be sure that it is those who are of faith who are sons of Abraham” (v. 7).
- C. And finally, Paul argues that God told Abraham through a promise that He would save the Gentiles in the same way: by grace through faith.
1. “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’” (v. 8).
 - a. When God made the promise that all the nations would be blessed in Abraham, He was preaching the Gospel to Abraham.
 - b. The Messiah would be Abraham's seed – his offspring (Gal. 3:16).
 - c. The Gospel – which is the message of what this seed did to save sinners – would reach all the nations – all kinds of people would be saved.
 2. But how would they be saved? In the same way Abraham was: “So then those who are of faith are blessed with Abraham, the believer” (v. 9).
- D. Abraham was saved by faith; God foretold that the Gentiles would be saved in the same way as Abraham, through His seed; the Galatians had received the Spirit through the Gospel of Grace through faith, and they were being perfected and would be made perfect in heaven by faith.
1. And so whom should the Galatians listen to?
 - a. The Judaizers who say salvation is by Christ plus their works?
 - b. Or God who tells us that salvation is by grace through faith alone?
 2. Whom should we be listening to?
 - a. Brethren, trust in the works of Christ.
 - b. Do not try to add to your salvation.
 - c. Do not think you can.
 - d. Trust in Jesus Christ and in Him alone, and then you will be safe.
 - e. This evening, we'll consider what God says about those who try to save themselves through their own works. Amen.