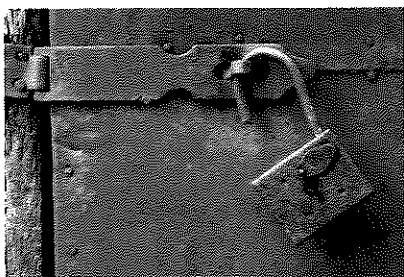


Lost under the Law



Topic

Spiritual blessings

Theme

Spiritual growth and blessings come by faith, not the law.

Desired Learner Response

The learner will enjoy the blessings God gives to those who live by faith.

Materials

- Resources 1 and 7

Scripture Focus

Galatians 3:1–14

Summary

The Judaizers taught that a person obtains a righteous standing in God's sight by observing religious laws. However, Paul referred to the life of Abraham to show the Galatian churches that justification and spiritual blessing are based on faith, not works. Abraham believed God, and God justified him based on his faith. Paul showed, too, that the law pronounces a curse on all who disobey its demands, however Christ took this curse on Himself on the cross.

Outline

I. Logic Discredits the Judaizers (Gal. 3:1–5)

- A. Jesus' witness (3:1)
- B. The Holy Spirit's witness (3:2–4)
- C. Paul's witness (3:5)

II. History Discredits the Judaizers (Gal. 3:6–14)

- A. Abraham's example of faith (3:6, 7)
- B. God's blessing on Abraham (3:8, 9)
- C. Man's failure to keep the law (3:10–12)
- D. Christ's substitutionary death (3:13, 14)

Memory Verse

"But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident: for, The just shall live by faith" (Galatians 3:11).

GETTING STARTED

Heritage Statements

Write the following on the board: “I’m _____, so that means I . . .” Have students fill in the blank with their nationality (e.g., German, Irish, Mexican) and then finish the sentence by listing benefits or characteristics of their nationality.

ASK: In what ways are you proud of your heritage, at least what you know about it? (Q1)

ASK: How might learning more about your heritage affect your life? (Q2)

Paul spoke to the Jews about claiming they were sons of Abraham just because they were Jewish. They believed their heritage entitled them to eternal life. His teaching shows that faith, rather than nationality or keeping the law, makes a person a child of God. We will examine his teaching and consider the application for our lives.

Grace Testimonies

Have two or three volunteers share a testimony about trusting in Christ as Savior after they realized that trusting in good works could not save them.

Paul provided arguments from logic and history to discredit those who think salvation could ever come through works. His arguments should encourage us to be grateful for God’s saving grace.

SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES

The Judaizers appealed to Old Testament Scriptures to argue that the Gentiles must keep the law to be saved. They claimed that the gospel of Christ included keeping the law. However, in Galatians 3:1–14 Paul reasoned that spiritual life had always come by faith. Using the example of Abraham and quoting from the Old Testament, he showed that the Judaizers’ claims were illogical and unhistorical. He charged that the Galatians would be foolish if they persisted in following these false teachers.

I. Logic Discredits the Judaizers (Gal. 3:1–5)

Paul began his counterattack against the Judaizers by showing the Galatians how the Judaizers’ illogical teaching had deceived them.

A. Jesus’ witness (3:1)

Paul addressed his readers bluntly: “O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you?” (Gal. 3:1). The word “bewitched” suggests the casting of an evil eye on a victim. The Judaizers controlled the Galatians’ minds just as if they had cast an evil spell on them. The Galatians resembled impressionable children, for they were deceived by the Judaizers’ slick words. The Judaizers made their message appealing through grand oration. The Galatians, who knew the truth, were mesmerized into believing a lie.

Satan is probably the “who” Paul is referring to. The word “who” is singular in the original language. So, Satan prompted the Judaizers to cause the bewitching in Galatia. Satan would want nothing more than to have people on a road they thought led to Heaven but that actually led to Hell.

ASK: Name some popular religious speakers who sound convincing but do not preach the truth. (Q3) *Joel Osteen, Kenneth Copeland.*

The Galatians should have known better than to act as fools, for Paul had taught them the truth when he was with them. He presented Jesus as crucified and as the final answer for sin. If they had exercised some caution, they would have realized that the Judaizers’ message contradicted the truth of the gospel.

ASK: What might people today add to Jesus’ sacrifice for sin? (Q4) *Church membership, communion, baptism, religious observances, good deeds.*

B. The Holy Spirit’s witness (3:2–4)

Paul continued to ask questions designed to discredit the Judaizers. His intent was to get the Galatians to think about what they already knew. They had been deluded because they had accepted the false teaching instead of examining it.

READ: Galatians 3:2.

Paul inquired, “Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?” (3:2). If the Judaizers were right in tying the coming of the Holy Spirit to the keeping of the law, then Gentile believers could not have received the Spirit. However, the Gentile believers knew they had indeed received the Spirit when they responded by faith to the gospel. Their experience proved that the works of the law had nothing to do with receiving God’s gift of salvation.

READ: Galatians 3:3.

Paul intended his questions in verse 3 to snap the Galatians back to reality. They needed to understand that their reasoning was illogical. When a person accepts by faith God’s gift of salvation, the Holy Spirit comes to live in the believer. The Holy Spirit’s presence enables the believer to live righteously—something the believer could never do in his own strength. So why would the Galatians return to the law after receiving the Spirit at salvation? Paul couldn’t come up with a logical reason, so he asked if perhaps the Galatians were foolish, or silly-minded. His point is that mixing law with faith is idiotic. “Don’t be idiots, you believers in Galatia,” he essentially said.

ASK: Why was Paul so direct with the Galatians? (Q5) *The furtherance of the gospel in Galatia was at stake.*

READ: Galatians 3:4.

In Galatians 3:4, Paul asked, “Have ye suffered so many things in vain?” First-century Jews persecuted Christians because the gospel presented Jesus as the Savior and declared salvation by grace through faith in Him. Some of the Galatians

had seen Paul assaulted by Jews, and some of them had themselves suffered persecution.

The Judaizers had incorporated the Jewish regulations into their message, so the Jews did not persecute them. If the Judaizers' message was the truth, why had the Galatians willingly suffered for the sake of the gospel? All such suffering, including Paul's, would have been meaningless.

TESTIMONY: Have the learners share how the Holy Spirit has made a difference in their lives. (Q6)

ASK: Although the Holy Spirit dwells permanently in every Christian, it seems some Christians are ineffective. To what do you attribute this ineffectiveness? (Q7) *The ineffective believers aren't yielding control of themselves to the Spirit.*

C. Paul's witness (3:5)

Paul's final question invited the Galatians to recall his own ministry among them. He asked, "He therefore that ministereth to you the Spirit, and worketh miracles among you, doeth he it by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?" (3:5). Paul preached the good news of the gospel to the Galatians. In response to their faith, God gave them many blessings, including salvation from sin, eternal life, and the gift of the indwelling Spirit of God. Those blessings came as gifts to the Galatians.

Paul didn't give the Galatians a list of meritorious deeds to accomplish in order to earn the blessings that come with salvation. So, it made no sense for them to want to return to the law.

II. History Discredits the Judaizers (Gal. 3:6–14)

In Galatians 3:1–5, Paul argued that the teaching of the Judaizers was illogical. Galatians 3:6–14 reveals that their teaching was also unbiblical. The Old Testament supports the doctrine of salvation by grace through faith and shows that the law pronounces God's curse.

A. Abraham's example of faith (3:6, 7)

The Jews traced their spiritual and national history to Abraham. God had called Abraham to follow Him and had given him the Abrahamic Covenant (Gen. 12:1–3; 15:18–21). Since the Jews regarded themselves as "Abraham's seed" (John 8:33), Paul chose to focus the Galatians' attention on Abraham as one whom God justified based on faith, not works.

READ: Genesis 12:1–3. **ASK:** What did God promise Abraham? (Q8) *Numerous descendants, a great name, blessing, blessings for all nations through him.*

READ: John 8:37–47. **ASK:** Why did the Jews in Jesus' time think they were special? (Q9) *Because they were physical descendants of Abraham.*

ASK: How did Jesus answer those Jews? (Q10) *He said they would perform the works Abraham performed if they were his descendants. They did not, so He told*

them they were of their father the devil.

In Galatians 3:6, Paul mentioned Genesis 15:6, “Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.” This event in Abraham’s life happened several centuries before God gave the law to Moses. In fact, Abraham was still uncircumcised when God justified him. Obviously, Abraham’s righteousness, or right standing before God, did not depend on his obedience to the law. Abraham simply believed God. He accepted God’s word by faith, and faith alone marked Abraham’s acceptance by God.

The Jews depended upon their physical descent from Abraham and their keeping of the law for their spiritual standing. However, Paul stated clearly in 3:7 that “they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham.” Just as Jesus distinguished between the physical seed of Abraham (John 8:37) and his spiritual children (John 8:39), so Paul said only those who come to God by faith are spiritually related to Abraham. In looking only at the surface issues, such as keeping the Jewish regulations, the Judaizers had missed the crucial point that Abraham was justified by faith. To be a child of Abraham, one must exercise faith, as he did.

B. God’s blessing on Abraham (3:8, 9)

READ: Galatians 3:8, 9.

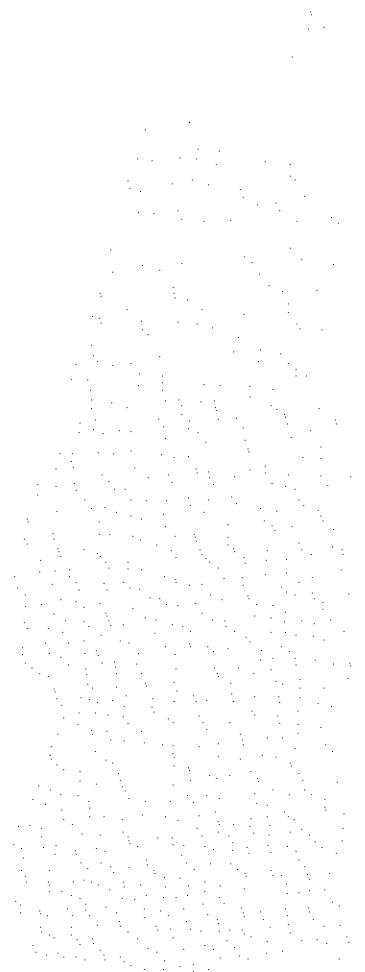
In Galatians 3:8 and 9 Paul advanced his argument another step. He cited Genesis 12:3, in which God promised Abraham, “In thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.” Paul reasoned from this promise that God was promising to justify Gentiles who exercised the same kind of faith that Abraham had exercised in God. When the Lord gave this promise to Abraham, He did not specify how the blessing would come to all the nations. Looking back two thousand years, Paul understood the promise in the light of the Cross. Through Abraham’s physical line came Jesus Christ. When Jesus died on the cross, He made God’s gift of salvation available to the whole world. The gift was not limited to the Jews, and it could not be earned. Abraham had received the blessings of God’s grace by faith. He had simply taken God at His word and trusted Him. In the same way, people of all nations can receive God’s blessing by faith in Christ (Gal. 3:9).

C. Man’s failure to keep the law (3:10–12)

READ: Galatians 3:10.

Paul pointed out in Galatians 3:10 that those who trust in their ability to keep the law are under God’s curse. Sinners cannot conform to God’s standards revealed in the law. The law demanded complete obedience. Anything less brought God’s punishment. Citing Deuteronomy 27:26, Paul charged, “Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.” Trying to approach God based on works is futile and doomed to failure from the start.

The first three chapters of Romans prove that all people, whether Jews or Gentiles, are guilty before Holy God. Paul explained to the Romans that no one is capable of keeping God’s law. In fact, he announced God’s sentence of judgment on the entire human race when he wrote that “as many as have sinned without



law shall also perish without law: and as many as have sinned in the law shall be judged by the law” (Rom. 2:12).

The prophet Habakkuk told the people of Judah their spiritual need could be remedied only by turning to the Lord by faith (Hab. 2:4). Only trusting God makes a person righteous before the Lord and brings spiritual life.

ASK: How is the role of the Old Testament law like the role of X-ray equipment? (Q11) *They both reveal problems but are powerless to provide a cure.*

READ: Galatians 3:11.

Verse 10 looks at the negative side of the issue, that trying to please God by the law is futile. Verse 11 looks at the positive side. Paul referred to the pronouncement in Habakkuk 2:4 that justification and life come by faith. The reasonable conclusion is that “no man is justified by the law in the sight of God” (Gal. 3:11a).

Paul explained further that for a person to have spiritual life through the law, he would have to keep the law flawlessly. In Galatians 3:12, he appealed to Leviticus 18:5: “Ye shall therefore keep my statutes, and my judgments: which if a man do, he shall live in them.” Experience has proved amply that no one can keep the law completely. Therefore, a person must approach God by faith in Christ.

ASK: Why do you think so many self-righteous people fail to accept the fact that God saves sinners by grace through faith? (Q12) *They are too proud to admit they have a problem they cannot fix on their own.*

D. Christ’s substitutionary death (3:13, 14)

What we could not attain through the law, Christ accomplished for us. As Paul argued in Galatians 3:10, the law pronounced a curse upon those who could not completely obey it. The message of grace is that Christ chose to take the curse of the law upon Himself by dying on the cross. He redeemed us by dying as our substitute. He was “made a curse for us” (3:13).

Christ’s death satisfied the requirements of the law, but it also fully satisfied the righteous demands of God that lay behind the law. Therefore, His death was sufficient to bring blessing to both Jews and Gentiles.

God promised blessing to Abraham and to all nations of the earth. Abraham received God’s blessing by faith. The law could not bring blessing, because it could only show how guilty a person was. By accepting by faith what Christ did on the cross, both Jews and Gentiles can receive the blessing that God promised to Abraham. And the tangible evidence of this blessing is the presence of the Holy Spirit in the believer (3:14).

MAKING IT PERSONAL

Sentence Completion

Have volunteers complete the following sentence without using the word “found”: I once was lost but now am . . .

Blessings of Living by Faith

RESOURCE: Display resource 7. **ASK:** What are some blessings God gives to us as we live by faith? (Q13) (Record or reveal answers.) *Peace, joy, eternal reward, enabling for service, answered prayer.*

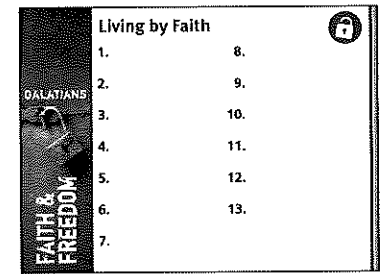
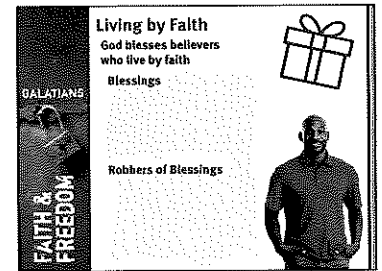
ASK: What robs us of the blessings that come through faith in Christ? (Q14) *Prayerlessness, pride, greed, worry, self-centeredness, selfishness.*

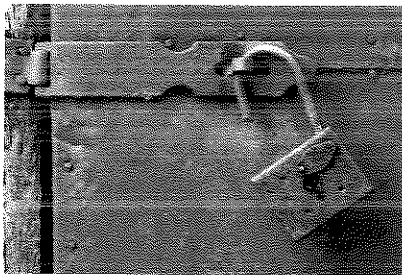
ASK: What, if anything, is robbing you of the blessings God offers to you? (Q15)

Summary and Memory Verse

Use resource 1 to record a summary for this lesson: Realize God's blessings through faith in Christ.

Encourage your learners to memorize Galatians 3:11. Give them an opportunity to say the verse in class next week.





God Keeps His Promises

Topic

God's promises

Theme

God always keeps His promises.

Desired Learner Response

The learner will draw comfort and encouragement from God's promises.

Materials

- Resources 1 and 8

Scripture Focus

Galatians 3:15–22

Summary

God's promise to Abraham included His blessing of life through Jesus Christ. The law that came later could not invalidate God's promise. Its purpose was to communicate God's high and holy standards, declare sinners guilty and condemned, and convince them of their sin and need of Christ.

Outline

I. God's Promise and the Law (Gal. 3:15–18)

- A. How promises work (3:15)
- B. What God promised (3:16)
- C. When God made His promise (3:17)
- D. Why God's promise remains (3:18)

II. God's Purpose of the Law (Gal. 3:19–22)

- A. Reveals sin (3:19, 20)
- B. Points to Christ (3:21, 22)

Memory Verse

*"But the scripture hath concluded all under sin,
that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe"
(Galatians 3:22).*