

Galatians 3:1-14

Introduction

- I. We live in a very skeptical and cynical time
 - “If it sounds too good to be true, it probably is”
 - “You get what you pay for”
 - “You can’t believe everything you hear”
 - “Life is pain. Anyone who says differently is selling something.”
- II. But that skepticism can keep us from fully embracing the gospel of grace
 - “If it sounds too good to be true, it may be grace.”
 - “We get what Christ paid for.”
 - It can be so hard for us to fully come to terms with God’s grace, and it’s a constant temptation for us to add our own works/efforts to His grace.
- III. So many of our actions reveal we don’t believe God accepts us as we are
 - The time we spend in front of the mirror
 - Assuming that bad things that happen in our life are a punishment for bad behavior
 - When life is good, assuming that all the good will soon be taken away
 - Tiring ourselves out, trying so hard to be good

The Passage

- I. Background: 3 Groups of People
 - A. Paul: former Pharisee, converted, now a missionary of Christ
 - B. Gentile Christians in Galatia (probably attending synagogue)
 - C. Jewish Christians in Galatia
 - Raised in Jewish customs, converted to Christ, but assume that to follow Jesus you still need to be a good Jew (keep the OT laws)

Paul’s message: You are acceptable to God based on FAITH ALONE

- II. Paul’s argument from experience (v. 1-5)
 - A. Main idea: you experienced God’s blessing through faith in Christ well before these Jewish Christians started pressuring you to get obey the Jewish law
 - B. Your experience of conversion was through faith (v. 2)
 - C. Your experience of sanctification is through faith (v. 3)
 - D. Your suffering will be in vain if you move to works now (v. 4)
 - E. Think about your ongoing experience of the Spirit (v. 5)

Paul’s opponents would respond: “That’s just an appeal from experience. What about scripture?”

- III. Paul’s argument from Scripture (v. 6-14)
 - A. The experience of Abraham (v. 6-9)
 - 1. Abraham’s relationship with God was based on faith, not works (v. 6)
 - 2. Abrahams’ true children are not ethnic Jews, but rather those who have a faith like his. They receive the promises given to Abraham (v. 7-9)

Paul's opponents would respond: "So, what about the law?"

B. The purpose of the law (v. 10-14)

1. The purpose of the law was never to bring the blessing that only comes by God's grace through faith.
 - a. In fact, the law brings curse to the one who tries to achieve God's favor by it
 - b. If you want to try to earn God's favor, you will be judged by how well you follow the law (and no one can perfectly follow the law, so everyone will be cursed)
2. So how can we experience the blessing of God?
Christ became a curse for us by becoming a curse on the cross
We get what Christ paid for

Implications

- I. If the experience described in v. 1-5 is totally foreign to you (if you are not a Christian), just know that you can have a relationship with God through faith in Jesus Christ.
- II. If you are a believer, where are the places in your life where you are skeptical of God's grace? Where do you have a hard time accepting that God accepts you just as you are?
- III. We have an opportunity to live a life with a radically different perspective: a life that is a response of gratitude rather than a project to be good enough.

Discussion Questions

1. Opening questions: What struck you most about the sermon/the passage? What surprised you? What confused you? What did you disagree with?
2. In verses 1-5 Paul appeals to the Galatians' experience as Christians. What sorts of things seemed to be their common experience as Christians? To what extent and in what ways should we expect to have similar experiences as Christians? In what ways were their experiences unique?
3. Explain and discuss the logic of Paul's thought as he uses the example of Abraham to argue that God's blessing comes through faith not law.
4. Why, in Paul's mind, are all those who rely on observing the law under a curse?
5. Look back at some of the examples in point III of the Introduction. What actions/thoughts do you have that reveal that you are still skeptical of God's grace (skeptical that he accepts you just as you are)? In what areas of your life do you still struggle with that idea?