

GALATIANS 3:6-9

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PERSONAL APPLICATION – GALATIANS 3:10-18

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“You are, yourself, your own best proof that Christianity is “for real,” because it has worked and works in you; it has worked a miracle in you.”

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GALATIANS 3:1-5

Just once it would be nice, wouldn't it, if God showed up in a blaze of glory, with the angelic trumpets and the Marine Band, maybe for background, with great flashes of lightning and pounding thunder, to prove to all the cynical once and for all that this religion we embrace is the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth? That's not an unfamiliar thought, is it, this yearning that our trust be vindicated?

It would be nice to have some proof, obvious enough to rub scoffing noses in it, that we Christian folk, far from being naive or old fashioned or totally unsophisticated, are on the side of truth and fact, and when it comes down to it, we really are in the know. If only we could prove the validity of our faith. Maybe a virgin stepping right out of a religious painting in South America would suffice or a statue of Christ weeping 'real tears' in the backwoods of France. Healings, maybe miraculous signs.

There are convincing miraculous signs all around us - and in us. When Elisha desperately needed reassuring he was shown 7,000 fellow believers (1 Kings 19:11-12 & 18). The fact of the Christian church today, fellow believers in Christ, is a better demonstration that Christianity is true, that the Holy Spirit is at work and that Jesus lives and reigns to all eternity, than all the partings of the sea, raising from the dead, and healings put together. You, with your sometimes faltering faith, the fact that you believe, however feebly, is just about the greatest miracle around.

For one thing, left to yourself about the last thing you would think to do, or want to do, is to be a believing Christian. Your intellect fights against it, your senses deny it, and your will resists it. Your own preferred choices run to self-determination and self-help. Your inclinations are to self-preservation and self-indulgence. Your preferences on a Sunday morning turn to “sleeping in,” or a terry cloth robe, a cup of coffee and the Sunday paper spread around. What in heaven’s name has happened to you? How did you get in this Christian way? It certainly wasn’t your idea, was it?

If ever you had proof that there is essence and validity in the claim of the Gospel, you’re it. Sure, you are anything but perfect. Certainly, you fall far short of the mark. That you know it and care is a sure sign that Someone from the outside, from above and beyond (the Holy Spirit) is at work in you. You are, yourself, your own best proof that Christianity is “for real,” because it has worked and works in you; it has worked a miracle in you.

Paul uses that fact as an argument in favor of the Gospel of grace. God’s work, begun in you while you were a disinterested and disinclined sinner, is the same work you must cling to in order to continue your Christian life and faith. Several lessons down the line dealing with that point will be a part of Paul’s great doctrinal presentation. For now, let it suffice to recommend that when doubts assail and the spirit goes through its eclipse, your midnight of the soul, you recall how without the Holy Spirit and His leading and His patient guiding there is no way (left to yourself) you would have this piece of paper before you now or would be reading these words. Who you are with reference to God, what you do in connection with His holy Word, how you are inclined over against His saving love, are the proofs that the Holy Spirit and His Gospel of grace is at work. That’s the most telling miracle of all and the foremost proof of the validity of your faith: it is at work in you.

GALATIANS 3:6-9

Paul does again what he so often does. He gives voice to a fleeting thought, almost unconscious of it as he says it. Once he sees it on paper, however, he thinks it a worthy enough thought to develop a little. All this talk about Gospel versus Law and faith rather than works puts him in mind of Abraham (just about the ultimate hero for Jewish people and one the Judaizers were honor bound to respect). Faithful Abraham.

Abraham, Paul recalls, enjoyed the contentment of a very successful and satisfying life. Suddenly into his reverie, interrupting it, the voice of God had come telling him to leave it all behind for a city somewhere out there, in one direction or another. And Abraham asked no questions, just packed up (a considerable undertaking when you consider the facts and figures which describe his retinue; just think of the baggage alone and no moving van to call) and went out “not knowing where.”

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Abraham, Paul remembered now that he thought about it, had trusted that God knew what he was doing even when God ordered the execution of Abraham's only son. How he loved and doted on that boy! But more, all the chances that God's extravagant promise would come true, "in you shall all nations be blessed" were wrapped up in that young lad. But Abraham said, "God will provide," and to Isaac, "God will provide for himself the lamb" (Genesis 22:8). No use telling Isaac how desperately he needed a lamb at that point to take his place.

That's what got past Paul's racing mind and found its way onto the page (3:8). Later he'd come back to it again (4:22-31). Right now you can almost see Paul's quick mind at work. He has found another nail to help hammer home his point. God has all along planned a religion of grace, not good works. That's why He told Abraham in the opening chapters of human history that Abraham would be set right with God - which is the measure of rightness - through faith, that is, by believing in Jesus, the resurrected Son of God and in the forgiveness of sins which He freely gives. The formal doctrinal argument, as we will see later, looks like this: The promise made to your father, Abraham, establishes that "The righteous shall live by faith."

We'll do well, starting just about now, to think in political terms about what was going on in Galatia. They had developed a two party confrontation there. There was the "faith" party and there was the "circumcision" party. Each was vying with every trick in the communications book to convince the constituency of its point of view. Whether or not it constituted a high grade, logical argument, to identify Abraham, the very bed-rock of the Jewish religion, with the "faith" party, was pretty shrewd, not unlike the name dropping which goes on from June to November every election year in those 30 second commercials between television programs right here in the USA. So, Paul brings Abraham into the argument, on his side.

It is probably only right to credit Paul with a little more depth than that. It's good that in the following verses he adds a little flesh to the bare bones claim that Abraham of old is on his side. Still, don't miss the flavor of these words. Paul's gotten up on his soap box; he's moving now. He's laying hold of every random thought that comes his way to help underscore his point. There's something breathless about it, and dramatic, like a TV evangelist whose mouth has raced ahead of his brain. And there is something sobering about it too. This stress that we are saved by faith and powered for Christian life by the Holy Spirit, that Christ is the active agent in our Christian religion, predates Martin Luther. It is not an amendment offered by Paul and seconded by segments of the Early Church. It goes back as far as Abraham. Actually, it goes back as far as Adam and Eve (Genesis 3:15).

PERSONAL APPLICATION – GALATIANS 3:10-18

I pray, heavenly Father, for all who with me are studying Your word and will. Give them a rich measure of Your Holy Spirit, that they, with me, may have life and light through Your most precious Scriptures. Amen.

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1. In Deuteronomy 11:26-28, what is the minimum requirement for those who take the “law path” to justification and eternal life?

 2. Read Malachi 2:9. What results from anything less than perfect obedience to the law?

 3. List common moral failures prevalent in:
the business world;

the area of personal relationships;

daily life;

the church.

 4. Read 3:10. “All things” implies perfect obedience. What is implied by the word “abide” or “continues”?

 5. Paul talks about the “law path” versus the “grace path” to salvation. What does the word “curse” refer to? (Ezekiel 18:4, 20; Romans 13:2).

 6. Habakkuk 2:4 is the verse Paul quotes in 3:11. The RSV translates verse 11, “He who through faith is righteous shall live.”
a. Do you think Paul would agree with that translation?

b. What does that translation tell us about good works?

 7. Try reading verse 11 like this: “The way of the law is not the way of faith.” If that accurately reflects Paul’s thought:
a. What does he mean in verse 12 when he adds, “the one who does them shall live by them”?

b. What is the result of trying to live by the law?

8. In verse 13, to what does Paul refer when he says that “[Christ became] a curse for us”?

a. How are our failures punished according to Isaiah 53:11?

b. How do we achieve righteousness (lawfulness)? (2 Corinthians 5:21)

9. How are the blessings promised to Abraham to be achieved? (3:14)

10. Which of the following belong together? Gospel. Curse. Law. Grace. Promise. Works.

11. The Bible often illustrates spiritual truth with human experience. In the following references (a.) state what is illustrated and (b.) what is the point.

Romans 7:1-3:

Luke 13:15-16:

Luke 14:3-5:

12. In verse 15, Paul is speaking about a will; a last will and testament. Who alone can alter a will?

13. What is God’s will, His testament, made with Abraham and all His children? (3:14)

14. Verse 16 is a parenthetical remark. In whom was the promise made to Abraham fulfilled?

15. Read Exodus 12:40-41, 19:17-20.

a. Where (at what place) did God deliver the law?

b. How long were the Children of Israel in Egypt?

How long after the promise was made to Abraham did God deliver the law?

c. Did God deliver the law to nullify or to supersede the promise?

16. According to Galatians 3, verses 3, 10, 12 & 18, if one chooses to seek justification by law, what does that choice say as far as faith, the Gospel of grace, is concerned?

17. What are the practical implications of Paul's conclusion, "God gave it to Abraham by a promise" in the area of: Volunteerism in the church (James 2:18)?

Evangelism efforts (Romans 10:12; 1 Timothy 2:4)?
