



Lessons Five, Six and Seven

TEXT

O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you? It was before your eyes that Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified. Let me ask you only this: Did you receive the Spirit by works of the law or by hearing with faith? Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh? Did you suffer so many things in vain--if indeed it was in vain? Does he who supplies the Spirit to you and works miracles among you do so by works of the law, or by hearing with faith--just as Abraham "believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness"?

5 Word Summary of 3:1-6 (ESV): _____

Know then that it is those of faith who are the sons of Abraham. And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, "In you shall all the nations be blessed." So then, those who are of faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith.

For all who rely on works of the law are under a curse; for it is written, "Cursed be everyone who does not abide by all things written in the Book of the Law, and do them." Now it is evident that no one is justified before God by the law, for "The righteous shall live by faith." But the law is not of faith, rather "The one who does them shall live by them." Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us--for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree"--so that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we might receive the promised Spirit through faith.

5 Word Summary of 3:7-14 (ESV): _____

To give a human example, brothers: even with a man-made covenant, no one annuls it or adds to it once it has been ratified. Now the promises were made to Abraham and to his offspring. It does not say, "And to offsprings," referring to many, but referring to one, "And to your

offspring," who is Christ. This is what I mean: the law, which came 430 years afterward, does not annul a covenant previously ratified by God, so as to make the promise void. 18For if the inheritance comes by the law, it no longer comes by promise; but God gave it to Abraham by a promise.

5 Word Summary of 3:15-18 (ESV): _____

Why then the law? It was added because of transgressions, until the offspring should come to whom the promise had been made, and it was put in place through angels by an intermediary. Now an intermediary implies more than one, but God is one

5 Word Summary of 3:19-20 (ESV): _____

Is the law then contrary to the promises of God? Certainly not! For if a law had been given that could give life, then righteousness would indeed be by the law. But the Scripture imprisoned everything under sin, so that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe.

5 Word Summary of 3:21-22 (ESV): _____

Now before faith came, we were held captive under the law, imprisoned until the coming faith would be revealed. So then, the law was our guardian until Christ came, in order that we might be justified by faith. But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian,

5 Word Summary of 3:23-25 (ESV): _____

REVIEW

The Essence of the Argument

“The real purpose of the Law (all along) wasn’t to get you saved, but to make you see your need and drive you to Christ, so that you could become a son or a daughter.”

- *Paul, The 3 Time World Champion “Keeper O’ Laws”*

SUBTEXT

Some Rhetorical Questions (and Taunting)

O foolish Galatians! ... Are you so foolish? (Galatians 3:1,3)

I like the NEB translation here: “You stupid Galatians! ... Can it be that you are so stupid?”

It gets at the vehemence of Paul’s view of what has happened. The Galatians are not in

danger of making a minor theological error; they are in danger of believing an entirely different gospel.

Let me ask you only this: Did you receive the Spirit by works of the law or by hearing with faith? ... Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh? ... Does he who supplies the Spirit to you and works miracles among you do so by works of the law, or by hearing with faith- just as Abraham "believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness"? (Galatians 3:2-6)

Paul next launches into a series of rhetorical questions that are designed to personally drive home the truth of what he has just said about justification. The expected answers are obvious.

- Did the Holy Spirit come and live inside of you because you got so good at obeying the Law or because you believed what I told (and have just repeated again) about Christ dying for your sins)
Of course it was by placing our faith in Christ!
- Having started the process of being made like Christ through receiving the Holy Spirit, do you think that you are now going to finish it by “trying harder to do better”?
There’s no way that can happen! The Spirit started the process; he is obviously going to have to finish it.
- Did God the Father (the one who sent the Holy Spirit to live in you, the one who has done miracles in your lives), is he doing this because you finally cleaned up your act and started obeying him or is he doing it because you believed that he sent Jesus to pay for your sins and give you his righteousness? These aren’t “both/and” questions they are “either/or.”
Obviously it can’t be because of our obedience. Everyone stands condemned on those grounds.

Finishing Up

Know then that it is those of faith who are the sons of Abraham... receive the promised Spirit through faith. (Galatians 3:7ff)

3:7-14 really finishes up the theme Paul started back in 2:15, namely that we are justified by faith not the Law.

...it is those of faith who are the sons of Abraham. And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith....(Galatians 3:7ff)

Paul continues from the previous paragraph (the Galatians were saved as Abraham was, by hearing with faith, not by works of the Law), noting that everyone who is saved (both Jews and ***Gentiles***) is a spiritual child of Abraham.

Paul is probably anticipating another objection from the Judaizers here, “Listen to this nut Paul! Everyone knows that Abraham is the father of the Jews. How could a Gentile be saved the same way as Abraham? They come from entirely different families. It’s apples and oranges.” Paul’s response: “God’s plan was always justification by faith. Even before

Abraham this was the case. And not only that God always intended for the Gentiles to eventually be included (not excluded) in this.”

For all who rely on works of the law are under a curse; for it is written, "Cursed be everyone who does not abide by all things written in the Book of the Law, and do them." Now it is evident that no one is justified before God by the law, for "The righteous shall live by faith." But the law is not of faith, rather "The one who does them shall live by them." Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us- for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree"- so that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we might receive the promised Spirit through faith. (Galatians 3:10-14)

You can almost hear the Judiazers, trying to interrupt at this point—they’d be going crazy right about now. But Paul presses home his point that justification is by faith and that it is no different for Jew or Gentiles. His argument:

- “Obedience” to the Law will only ever get someone damned before God not justified. Why? Because the Law curses everyone who doesn’t 100% obey it.
- No one is justified by the Law (only condemned), but only by faith.
- The Gentiles are included in this because Christ took on the damnation that the Law heaped upon all of us (Jew and Gentile) specifically so that God’s plan of salvation could happen (justification by faith to all people, through Abraham).
- The proof is this: Only people justified by faith receive the Holy Spirit. The Gentiles have the Holy Spirit. Therefore the Gentiles are included in God’s plan of justification by faith.

The True Nature of the Law: Preceded by Promise

To give a human example, brothers: even with a man-made covenant, no one annuls it or adds to it once it has been ratified. ... This is what I mean: the law, which came 430 years afterward, does not annul a covenant previously ratified by God, so as to make the promise void. For if the inheritance comes by the law, it no longer comes by promise; but God gave it to Abraham by a promise. (Galatians 3:15, 17-18)

Paul points out that even in purely human covenants (the legal binding standard of the age), once it is made it can’t be changed. When it comes to God this is even more true, and God made his covenant with Abraham (Genesis 12ff) 430 years before he even mentioned the Law. This covenant made promises of an inheritance to Abraham which were unconditional (i.e. God promised them to Abraham based on his own desire to bless Abraham and not Abraham’s past, present or future obedience. Cf. Genesis 15 where only God ratifies the covenant with Abraham entirely on his own—only God passes through the cut sacrifices; normally both parties would do this). God gave Abraham promises (including the land of Israel, the production of a future nation and the present reality of a living, breathing relationship with Himself) and Abraham accepted these by faith.

Now the promises were made to Abraham and to his offspring. It does not say, "And to offsprings," referring to many, but referring to one, "And to your offspring," who is Christ. (Galatians 3:16)

In this intermediate section, Paul clarifies what exactly the “promise” is that was made. He points out that the promise didn’t just refer to the physical realities of land and people (though he included these), but also to deeper spiritual realities—“In you all the nations shall be blessed.” Why would you say that Paul? “Well it’s clear; the promise was made to Abraham and to one other person (notice the singular). That person was Christ (and those included in Christ). Obviously the “blessing to all” isn’t just the land if this is the case, but rather the benefit of Christ’s work given to all people and not just the Jews.

The True Function of the Law: Necessary to Demonstrate Our Need

Why then the law? It was added because of transgressions, until the offspring should come to whom the promise had been made, and it was put in place through angels by an intermediary. Now an intermediary implies more than one, but God is one. (Galatians 3:19-20)

The Judiazers must have been apoplectic by now: “Paul you are one nasty piece of work! You’ve equated Abraham with Jesus now so much that there is no room at all for Moses and the Law, the very heart of God’s religious system for humans.”

In fact Paul was saying nothing of the sort. Clearly he saw the Law as far from unnecessary; it had a vital part to play in God’s plan of salvation. *However, its part was not to bestow salvation (as the Jews mistakenly thought) but to convince us of our need for it!* Andrew Jukes wryly notes that, “Satan would have us to prove ourselves holy by the law, which God gave to prove us sinners.”

Here, as in Romans 3:20, 4:15, and 7:17, Paul notes that by making God’s standards explicit, we also see that our breach of them is explicit.

Bishop Stephen Neill aptly interprets the last sentence for us, “The promise came to Abraham first-hand from God; and the law comes to the people *third-hand*—God—the angels—Moses the mediator—the people.”

The True Function of the Law: Necessary to Demonstrate God’s Solution

Is the law then contrary to the promises of God? Certainly not! For if a law had been given that could give life, then righteousness would indeed be by the law. But the Scripture imprisoned everything under sin, so that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe. (Galatians 3:21-22)

This second question seems now to be one posed by Paul to the Judiazers instead of *vice versa*. They were making the Law contrary to the promises of God with regard to the Gospel by saying that “If one will obey the law, one will be saved.” Paul says that the real life situation will not allow this—nobody keeps the Law, we break it every day. The Bible is extremely forceful (including the OT, cf. Romans 3:9-20 for an e.g.) in describing the universality of sin. It is only in light of this “bondage to sin” that the promises of having our

sins paid by Christ and being set free make any sense at all. The Law (as a means of conviction, not salvation) doesn't contradict the promises of the Gospel, it shows us how much they are needed.

Luther comments, "The principal point...of the Law...is to make men not better but worse; that is to say, it shows them their sin clearly, so that by this knowledge they may be humbled, terrified, bruised and broken and by this means may be driven to seek grace, and so come to that blessed Seed (i.e. Christ)."

The True Result of the Law: Being Driven to Christ

Now before faith came, we were held captive under the law, imprisoned until the coming faith would be revealed. So then, the law was our guardian until Christ came, in order that we might be justified by faith. But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian, (Galatians 3:23-25)

Paul uses two distinct images to describe God's intended use for the law:

The Law as a Prison—Paul uses two words to describe the "enclosing" nature of the law. ***held captive under the law*** makes use of the Greek word *phroureo* (φρουρεω in the imperfect passive) which is used to mean "confined" or to "protect by military guards." When applied to a city it referred to keeping the enemy out and the inhabitants in to prevent them from fleeing or deserting.

imprisoned until the coming faith would be revealed makes use of a similar word *sugkleio* (συγκλειω present active participle) meaning to be "kept in restraint," to "hem in" or to "coop up" usually with reference to livestock

The Law as a Tutor—Paul uses the very distinct word *paidagogos* (παιδαγωγος) in the phrase ***the law was our guardian***. A *paidagogos* was usually a male slave of the household who was given charge over younger boys (6-16) to watch their outward behavior and conduct the youth to and from school etc. He was in essence a disciplinarian who stood in for the father, when the boy was not under direct family supervision.

So what is Paul driving at by describing the Law with such unique vocabulary? He is conveying that for a time (notice the temporal elements in the verse), the Law was supposed to function as our disciplinarian. To quote Stott, "The law expresses the will of God for His people, telling us what to do and what not to do, and warns us of the penalties of disobedience. Since we have all disobeyed we have fallen under its just condemnation (Stott, 97)." The purpose was not to provide permanent punishment for us but to make the promise more desirable.

Stott again is insightful,

Only Christ can deliver us from the prison to which the curse of the law has brought us, because He was made a curse for us. Only Christ can deliver us from the law's harsh discipline, because he makes us sons and daughters who obey from love for

their Father and are no longer naughty children needing tutors to punish them (Stott, p. 98).

TELL ME AGAIN WHY WE CARE ABOUT THIS?!

I have taken all of the main points for this section from Dave Desforge's superb talk in the Sonship material. (Lesson 4—The Law Drives You to Christ for Power)

Misuses of the Law: The Law as a Means of Self-Rightness

We often “keep the Law unlawfully” because we have mistaken expectations of what the Law is actually supposed to do (see above). Desforge identifies this as “functional legalism” which is *not* a passion and zeal for the Law *but rather* using the Law in order to prove our goodness by making us:

- Righteous in our own eyes, and/or
- Righteous in the eyes of other people, and/or
- “Righteous” in the eyes of God.

Functional legalism refers to the instinct we have to use rules to prove our own goodness.

Example: Have you ever showed up to a social event completely inappropriately dressed? Did this bother you? Why? You didn't want to look bad; to look like you didn't know what the rules were?

So what are the signs that we are relating to God and others based on functional legalism (which is clearly active righteousness—we are making the “rightness” our rule keeping the basis for relating to others instead of Christ's work on the Cross).

Telltale Sign Number One: Looking for Credit for Your Good Deeds

In order to prove our goodness to others, it must be acknowledged by them. Functional legalism demands that we get credit for our good deeds.

Do you often find it “necessary” to point out to others when you have done something good or “above and beyond” what was expected?

What is your response to others when you do something good or sacrificial and your efforts are overlooked or minimized? Examples?

Telltale Sign Number Two: Defensiveness

In order to prove our goodness to others, it is essential that we defend our record of rule keeping so that they know just exactly how good we are.

Do you often find yourself bristling when someone implies, suspects or states that something that is important to you (your spiritual life, your morals, your family) doesn't measure up? Examples?

Do you find it almost impossible to accept “criticism” from anyone who you perceive as “worse” than you?

Are you prone to going ballistic if someone falsely attributes or accuses you of negative attitudes or actions? Why is this?

Telltale Sign Number Three: Comparing Yourself With Others

In order to prove our goodness to others, and feel better about ourselves we tend to compare ourselves with them instead of the ultimate standard, God's perfection.

Do you blunt the conviction that the Law brings by comparing your life with others? (I know I'm not perfect but take a look at so and so...)

Do you tend to feel smug or good about how some parts of your life are better than "some people" ("who I could mention, but will not because not mentioning them just goes to show how much better I am than them anyway.")?

Telltale Sign Number Four: Reputation Fixation

In order to prove our goodness to others, it is essential that our performance (at work, at home, in church) be acknowledged as being good.

Does doing the right things for the right reasons mean very little to you if it still causes others to think poorly of you or treat you badly?

When we misuse the Law in the above ways, we are essentially saying, "Law, come rescue me. Save me from my sin. Make me 'non-condemnable.' Make me worthy. Make me good. Make me lovable. Make others see and value me." The Gospel is what does all of these things, not the Law. The Gospel is what makes me righteous, not the Law.

It is only when we understand this that we can begin to have a proper passion for the Law because it reflects the righteousness of God. Instead of trying to use the Law to create some "rightness" of our own, we are now free to have a passion for God because he has already made us totally right, and are free to pursue things that reflect his rightness.

Misuses of the Law: The Law as Means of Transformation

Because we are sinners we also misuse the Law by attempting to use it as a means of transforming our spiritual lives.

We can misuse the Law as a means of spiritual transformation when we:

- Give the Law power it was never meant to have, namely the power to change us.
The Law has no power to enable us to do what it commands; yet we treat it as if it does. We think if we simply know more about it, find the right technique or really buckle down we'll be able to accomplish its standards. The Law is like a map—it tells us where we need to go, but it cannot take us there. Only the Holy Spirit can do that.
- Use it as a way of exercising power and control over others or our own lives.
We often use the law as a means to power and control: when we are involved successfully in spiritual self-management we begin to feel and think that we are on top of things. Ultimately we want the credit for being more disciplined, for working harder than others. When we begin to think that spiritual change equals better law keeping (we manage our sins better by committing them outwardly less and less), we have replaced the role of the Holy Spirit in our lives. God doesn't want us to use our power better; he wants us to quit using it all together and start using his.
- Forget that God's real target in spiritual transformation is our heart/whole person.
What God wants is all of us, not just our actions: He wants our emotions, our desires, our passions, and our attitudes. The Law cannot touch these things. Spiritual transformation is having these things brought more and more in line with what God wants. Only the Holy Spirit can work this change. ***If you don't think that this is true, just try it—pick out your favorite signature sin and just quit wanting to do it. Don't just force yourself to be controlled outwardly, but just decide that it no longer matters and leave it behind.***
- We become fixated on the consequences of “getting caught” rather than the sinfulness of our actions.
We cannot overcome our flesh through the Law (if we could, don't you think God would have insisted that we do this instead of sending Jesus to die on the cross?). If we live our lives trying to be better “rule followers” so that we can maintain our functional legalism, we will give to the Law a power it never had, and deny the Law its chief purpose—to drive us to Christ, his work done on behalf of us, his passive righteousness. The Law was meant to have the power to drive us to Christ and rely on the Holy Spirit to make us more like Christ.

At heart we can see this tendency in the fact that we are almost always more concerned with other people finding out about our sin than we are about the sin itself. The thing the Law is supposed to do (convict us of violating a holy God) is often lost because we become more concerned with the fact that other people will find out that we are not as good “sin managers” as we need to be to keep our good reputation in their eyes. Our lives become organized around keeping things looking good for others rather than around living in daily dependence on God to use and heal our brokenness

DISCUSSION: “YOU ALWAYS HAVE TO BE RIGHT!”

Last Week We Made this Assignment

Over the next week, whenever you catch yourself relating to others, to God or thinking about yourself, consciously bring to mind the fact that you in God you are “completely right.” Christ himself has given you his very “rightness” eternally and regularly bringing this to mind is one of the ways that we can check to see if we are relating to God and others based on what Christ has done (passive righteousness) or based on our own ability to “be good Christians” (active righteousness).

Based on this last week, would you say that you normally related to God and others based on your “active righteousness” or Christ’s “passive righteousness”? Give an example of the one you most normally used.

How did consciously bringing to mind the fact that you are completely “right” in God’s eyes change the way you:

- Related to God?
- Related to Others?
- Thought about Yourself?

If you were able to regularly put into practice the principles of this exercise, which relationship with another person would be impacted the most? How would it change?

The Salvation Shell Game

Which of these statements is theologically accurate?

I have been saved.

I am being saved.

I will be saved.

All three are. We see the need for passive righteousness in past and future ones. We can’t earn our way into heaven, and we won’t be able to become perfect by simply trying really hard.

However, in this center stage, the stage we are living in right now, we really do try to relate God based on our active righteousness. Part of that is because in the “I am being saved” stage *we are involved*. However, our sinful tendency will be to respond from duty (what I do directly affects what God thinks about me) instead of from gratitude and love (God has already done everything needed so that I am right now as loved, accepted and cherished as I ever will be, and nothing that I do or fail to do changes that).

This is *exactly* where the Galatians were getting into trouble. Paul’s rhetorical questions point out that in the category of “I have been saved” they understood passive righteousness. But in the category of “I am being saved,” due to the influence of the false teachers, they were trying to relate to God based on their active righteousness. Hence Paul’s stark question in 4:15, “Where has your joy gone?” Developing our relationship with God based on our active righteousness is just as disastrous as trying to begin our relationship or complete it based on our own (active) righteousness.

Are You a Functional Legalist?

(shock, gasp, horror!)

Do you often find it “necessary” to point out to others when you have done something good or “above and beyond” what was expected?

A recent example would be...

Never Sometimes Regularly Always

Do you often find yourself bristling when someone implies, suspects or states that something which is important to you (your spiritual life, your morals, your family) doesn’t measure up?

A recent example would be...

Never Sometimes Regularly Always

Do you find it almost impossible to accept “criticism” from anyone who you perceive as “worse” than you?

A recent example would be...

Never Sometimes Regularly Always

Do you blunt the conviction that the Law brings by comparing your life with others? (“I know I’m not perfect but take a look at so and so...”)

A recent example would be...

Never Sometimes Regularly Always

Do you tend to feel smug or good about how some parts of your life are better than “some people” (“who I could mention, but will not because not mentioning them just goes to show how much better I am than them anyway.”)?

A recent example would be...

Never Sometimes Regularly Always

Do you try to overcome your “signature sins” by resolving/vowing to “never do that again” and think that as long as you don’t actually do the action you’ve improved spiritually?

A recent example would be...

Never Sometimes Regularly Always

Are you more concerned/upset about getting “caught” sinning than about the fact that you have offended the infinite, holy God of the universe?

A recent example would be...

Never Sometimes Regularly Always