

GALATIANS 3

We finished last week with St Paul's tour de force in the last paragraph of chapter 2, his statement **that a man is not justified by works of the Law but through faith in Jesus Christ.**

Paul now goes on to rationalize this doctrine, explaining the logic of it and expanding on it. The order in which he puts his arguments is a bit confusing, so experimentally I've moved it round a bit, putting verses 10 – 14 between verses 23 and 24. This gives a better flow and a more logical argument.

We now follow this order (see the new attachment for Galatians 3 NASB):

1. **Verses 1 – 5 Holy Spirit Given by Faith, Not by works**
2. **Verses 6 – 9 Abraham Was Justified by Faith, Not by Works**
3. **Verses 15 – 18 Abrahamic Covenant Is Not Voided by the Law**
4. **Verses 19 – 22 Law Given to Drive Us to Faith**
5. **Verses 10 – 14 Christ Redeems Us from the Curse of the Law**
6. **Verses 23 – 29 Believers Are Free from the Law**

Verses 1 – 5

Verse 2 is a rhetorical question. Paul was there with them on his first visit to Galatia when they "received the Spirit" so there's no real question about the answer.

- **So, what is the implied answer to Paul's question?**
- **Paul uses the term "receiving the Spirit" to describe the conversion process. What does he mean by this? How do WE receive the Spirit? Have we indeed received the Spirit?**
- **In the light of verse 2, what is the point that Paul is making in verse 3?**

Verses 6 – 9

This is Paul's key argument for the correctness of his doctrine of justification by faith. It comes from the reading of Genesis chapter 15 (attached).

(Read Genesis chapter 15 at this point)

In Genesis 15 we find Abraham, arrived in Canaan with his wife, and neither of them young any more. God gives him a promise, one which on account of his age seemed rather unlikely—that he would have a son, who would go on to father a great nation.

Abraham decides to believe God. Then we come to the **key verse in Genesis 15, which is verse 6.**

- **What do we make of this verse?**

In understanding this and other passages, it's useful to know that the Greek word translated "righteousness" *dikaioσύνη* is from the same root as the Greek verb translated as "to justify" *dikaion*. We are hampered by the fact that in English there is no verb for "to righteousify".

Reading the rest of Genesis 15 we find God and Abraham engaging in an archaic form of covenant-making which involved the two parties taking animals, cutting them in half, putting pieces to left and to right, and then passing down the channel between them to formalize the covenant.

- **What is the significance of this happening at the same time, effectively, as Abraham choosing to believe the promise?**

Verses 15 – 18

The time line. Abraham lived round about 2000 BC. Moses was round about 1500 BC, a gap of around 500 years (Paul gives it as 430 years.).

- **What is the key point that Paul is making in verses 14 to 18 about this incident, in relation to the Old Testament time line?**

Verses 19 – 22

For the people who were given the Law back in 1500 BC, the Law was there, obviously, to be obeyed. That's what God told them to do, and that's what, clearly, they were supposed to do. However Paul sees in the giving of the Law a deeper underlying purpose in the Law.

- **What, for Paul, was the true purpose of the Law in the long-term view of God's purposes?**

Verses 10 – 14

The argument here is based on four Old Testament quotes. It's a bit convoluted but makes sense, just. The four quotes are from:

- Deuteronomy 27.26
- Habakkuk 2.4
- Leviticus 18.5
- Deuteronomy 21.22-23

The argument runs as follows:

- **Deuteronomy** –if you fail on one point, you're guilty
- **Habakkuk and Leviticus together**—Paul seems to argue here that there is an innate contradiction in the Law that makes it impossible to fulfil: if you obey all the provisions of the law to a tee, you find yourself then failing on the instruction to live by faith. So, he argues, we're all guilty, under the curse.
- **Deuteronomy**—but Christ has taken this curse on himself, thus setting us free. (The actual Law in Deuteronomy seems to refer to judicial execution, by hanging; so to extrapolate from TREE to CROSS is not unreasonable—just two slightly different forms of execution of criminals.

Verses 23 – 29

Here Paul sums up his argument about the Law, with an important addition:

- **What is the important addition made by Paul in verse 25?**

Paul ends the chapter with one final point, or question, which is:
In the light of all this, what is the significance of being Jewish, or of not being Jewish, in terms of God's long-term purposes. This has actually become a hugely contentious question over the last 50 years or so, with major implications for world politics and world peace. But on the basis of what Paul says in this passage,

- **Does being Jewish or not being Jewish, according to Paul, make any difference to God's attitude to a person, or to God's intentions for that person?**