



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of Dan Duncan

Galatians 3: 1-14

“Bewitched”

Galatians 3

TRANSCRIPT

[Message] Howard mentioned that we have visitors this morning, and we are glad to have you, but if you are visiting or you've been away for a while, we are going through the book of Galatians. And as Howard mentioned, that's our policy, generally speaking, to take a book of the Bible and go through it, verse by verse, chapter by chapter. And this morning we are in the third chapter of Galatians. We're beginning that chapter. We have a rather lengthy text, chapter 3 verses 1 through 14. Paul has been defending the gospel and he has defended it in the first two chapters by defending his apostleship, to say in effect, the gospel I preach is authentic because my apostleship is authentic. It had been called into question evidently by some false teachers that had come into these Galatian churches, and he defended that.

And now in chapter 3, he begins to defend the gospel itself. The book of Galatians has been described as a fighting epistle and you see that in the beginning of chapter 3: "You foolish Galatians, who has bewitched you, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified? This is the only thing I want to find out from you: 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? So then, does He who provides you with the Spirit and works miracles among you, do it by the works of the Law, or by hearing with faith? Even so Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness."

I'm going to suggest that a different way to translate that in a way I'll argue for in the exposition of the text is Abraham believed God and it was reckoned to him,

unto or for righteousness, making faith the means of obtaining righteousness in Christ. Verse 7: "Therefore, be sure that it is those who are of faith who are sons of Abraham. The Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, 'All the nations will be blessed in you.' So then those who are of faith are blessed with Abraham, the believer. For as many as are of the works of the Law are under a curse; for it is written, 'Cursed is everyone who does not abide by all things written in the book of the law, to perform them.'

Now, that no one is justified by the Law before God is evident; for, 'The righteous man shall live by faith.' However, the Law is not of faith; on the contrary, 'He who practices them shall live by them.' Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us - for it is written, cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree – in order that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we would receive the promise of the Spirit through faith." May the Lord bless this reading of His Word.

It is sometimes said that life imitates art. That may be true. I'm sure it is sometimes true that life in the church imitates bad art. For example, the novel *Trilby* was a best seller in the late 19th century. It is the story about a beautiful girl who is transformed into a talented singer by Svengali, a mad hypnotist. His powers over the girl were so great that with just the look of his eyes, he could bring her under his spell to make her sing and enriched himself off her performances. It's a fiction, but it is a fact that there are people who enter churches and are able to mesmerize Christians with their teaching and bring them under the spell of false doctrine. It happened in Galatia.

A Svengali had entered churches and bewitched them, Paul says. They had been become so fascinated with the law of Moses that they had lost confidence in God's grace. Now, that's not unusual. Human nature is naturally inclined toward works of merit. It boosts men's pride and so men are prone to wander away from the gospel of grace. So they continually need to be taught grace. You and I continually need to hear about the sovereign grace of God. Well, that's what Paul does in the book of Galatians, first, by defending his apostleship to show to the Galatians that the message he had preached to them was not some abhorrent message, but it is the message of the gospel. It's the truth of the gospel.

In fact, as he demonstrates, it is identical to the gospel that Peter preached, that all of the apostles preached. So he defends his apostleship in order to defend the integrity of preaching and the gospel that he preached, and then he defends the message itself. He begins to do here in our text, Galatians 3:1-14, and does it in two ways. He does it, first, from the Galatians' own experience – how it was that they entered into salvation – and then he does it from Scripture. He reminds the Galatians how they first experienced salvation, that it was apart from the law.

And then he proves from Scripture that salvation is a gift received through faith. His method is one of inquiry. He prods their thinking. He asks them or challenges them with a series of five or six questions. His first question hits hard: "You foolish Galatians, who has bewitched you?" The King James version is closer to the Greek text with "O foolish Galatians," and the emotion of that rebuke is expressed in that little word "O." J.B. Phillips who paraphrased the New Testament with a popular translation some 40 years ago translated this: "Oh, you dear idiots of Galatia. Surely, you can't be so idiotic."

I don't think that that's too strong a paraphrase. Their fascination with the law was completely irrational. That's the sense of the word "foolish." The law had never been given as a way of salvation. It was given for the purpose of exposing sin and showing people their need of salvation and pointing them to the Savior. A lost function has been compared to a mirror. You probably heard the illustration, but a mirror helps us see reality, helps us see us ourselves as we are, to see good, and to see the bad, to see the flaws, but that's all it does. If there's dirt on our face, the mirror doesn't clean it.

It only exposes the problem so that we can then go to the water and the soap and cleanse ourselves. Well, that's what the law does. The law exposes sin. It doesn't remove it. It exposes sin so that we can see the problem and go to the one who does remove it, go to the Savior for cleansing. Trying to save oneself by keeping the law is like a person who looks in a mirror, sees dirt, and then tries to remove by rubbing the mirror on his face. If we saw a person doing that, we would think that he was or she was foolish or idiotic.

Whatever the word or description is, it would be irrational for that to take place, and that's how Paul saw the Galatians who were trying to cleanse themselves with the law. It was foolish. It's irrational. The only explanation that he could give

for their strange behavior was that they had been bewitched. Originally, that word "bewitched" meant to cast a spell on someone by giving them the evil eye. And it's been translated, "Who has hypnotized you?" Now, Paul was being facetious. He didn't believe in the evil eye, but the Galatians' conduct was so preposterous, so irrational that it was as though the only explanation for this was that a band of sorcerers had entered the churches and cast a spell on everyone.

C.S. Lewis illustrated the power of error and the power of false teachers to bring the naive under the spell of error in his book, *The lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*. Many of you have probably read that first book in the series of *The Narnia Chronicles*, but in that book, the witch is able to lure a child, a young boy, into her slave. And she does that by offering him some exotic candy called Turkish delight. He loves this kind of candy and she offers it to him and, with that, brings him under her spell and makes him her captain. Legalistic systems have that allure to people, whether it is the law of Moses, as it was falsely taken, used as a means of salvation; whether it's that or some legalistic system that is similar to it that uses the law as a means of justification that teaches that by doing works of the law, we can be saved, something like Mormonism or some system like that.

It's all of the same nature. It is candy to some people. It plays upon people's sense of merit and desire to have something that would commend them and people who take pride in their actions, who take their pride in themselves. And, of course, there's a sense in which we can take pride in the things we do and that we can be pleased with things that are done. They're done skillfully, but pride itself, arrogance, that's something else. That's man. That's the nature of man. We long to have something of merit within ourselves.

And so as I say, this kind of system, the legalistic systems, whether the law of Moses, taken as a means of salvation, appeals to people and has an allure. It did to these Galatians, and so Paul asked, "Who has bewitched you?" Before whose eyes Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified. Paul had taught the Galatians well. He explained the death of Christ to them so clearly that it was as if Christ had been publicly portrayed before them as though it had been put on a billboard in front of it in large letters. It was unmistakable what he had presented to them.

The gospel had been clearly presented to them. They had learned the meaning of the cross. That was the centerpiece of Paul's message. That was the heart of the

gospel of the apostles, the cross of Christ. In fact, when Paul went to Corinth, he said he resolved to know nothing except Jesus Christ in him crucified, because that is the essence of the good news of salvation. If there's no cross, there's no salvation. So Paul didn't obscure the gospel with nonessentials. He stayed with the essence of the message in Corinth in Galatia wherever he went. He made the message clear, which is the work of salvation is finished.

Christ finished it on the cross so there is nothing left for us to do, but simply receive it. That's indicated here in the word "crucified." Grammatically, the verb "crucified" is in the perfect tense, which means that it is a past action, an action that occurred in the past but has results that continue into the present. In the past at the cross, Christ died for our sins and satisfied God's just demands toward the sinner once and for all completely. And the benefits of His sacrifice continue into the present. They hold firm for the believer now and forever. And they are available to all who believe. They occurred 2,000 years ago. Christ was crucified then in a particular place on Calvary outside Jerusalem, but it is as relevant today as it was then.

The results continue now and are available to all who believe. So there's nothing that we can add to the work of Christ. It's finished and its results are well established even today. Trying to do that, trying to add to the work of Christ is like going into one of the great museums of Europe to improve on a masterpiece. Imagine entering the Louvre at Paris to chisel a little on Venus de Milo or add a little paint to Mona Lisa, broaden her smile, make it less cryptic, you know just a little paint, just a little chiseling. Just a little is a crazy idea. No one but a fool or a madman would try it, but that is what the Galatians were trying to do with Christ's work.

They were trying to improve on God's masterpiece of the cross. The work of salvation is finished. Nothing can be added to it. So to break the hypnotic spell the legalizers had over the Galatians, Paul asks another question in verse 2. If they answer correctly, it would prove his point. This is the only thing I want to find out from you: Did you receive the spirit by the works of the law or by hearing with faith? He asks essentially the same question again in verse 5, "So then, does He who provides you with the Spirit and works miracles among you, do it by the works of the Law, or by hearing with faith?"

In other words, he's saying Galatians, look back on your life, look back on your experience when you first entered into salvation, and how did that all of that

happen? Consider your experience. What works of the law did you do to receive the Holy Spirit? You received him. What works of the law did you perform? Name me one work He's saying. And of course, they can't name one work because there were no works at all that were involved in them receiving the blessings that they did. In fact, at the time they probably didn't even know about the law of Moses.

These people were saved out of the darkness of paganism, but even if they did know, they probably knew very little. And they certainly weren't asked to practice the law in order to be saved when Paul preached to them. And yet, without the law and without the circumcision or baptism or any other ceremony, they were saved and sealed with the Holy Spirit long before the Judaizers showed up. Just like Cornelius and his house full of gentiles in Acts chapter 10, they were saved, those gentiles, apart from the law, through faith in Christ.

Do you remember the story? Paul, rather Peter, under the instruction of the Lord, went up to Caesarea, there on the Mediterranean Coast, entered the house of Cornelius, a Roman centurion. Not only was Cornelius there, gentiles filled the house. He began to preach, and as he preached, the spirit of God fell upon these gentiles. They had believed the things that he had said. They heard the gospel. They believed and they were saved. Now that happened to an uncircumcised gentile. Cornelius didn't need to be circumcised. He didn't need to observe the law in order to receive the Holy Spirit, and he wasn't baptized until after he had received the Holy Spirit.

So baptism added nothing to his salvation. At the moment of faith, Cornelius had the Holy Spirit. The gentiles in that house had the Holy Spirit. They were all justified. They had everything at that moment, so did these Galatians. In fact, their reception of the Holy Spirit, Paul tells us, in verse 5 was confirmed with miracles. What greater proof did they need that salvation is through faith alone and not by the works of the law? They had the proof of their own experience. And so having begun with the Holy Spirit through faith, Paul asked them in verse 3 how they could imagine that perfection could be gained by the flesh, by the works of the law. "Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, you're now being perfected by the flesh?" "Being perfected" here does not refer to sanctification.

It's not referring to the process by which the Holy Spirit actually changes us, renews our inner man after the image of Christ, and enables us to live a holy life.

Paul is speaking here of justification. He's speaking about the believer's legal standing before God and his or her position as being righteous, being perfect in God's sight. Now, that is the basis for the sanctification that takes place. At the moment of faith, we are justified, and the Spirit begins changing us, conforming us in our conduct, in our thought, in our life to the declaration that has been made that we are just and acceptable to God.

So it's based on that righteous standing, based upon that legal position we have with God that we are acceptable to Him, that we are perfect in His sight, that the spirit of God does begin to make us perfect, begins to change us, and that will be concluded in the day of glorification. The one who began the good work will perfect it in that day. But until then, we're not perfect now. We still have, as Larry mentioned in his opening prayer, we still have that same principle within us. And we'll never be perfect in this life, but we will be considered as perfect by God because we have a righteous standing.

We are legally considered by Him perfect. We are legally considered as in full conformity to the law as standing in perfection and having full acceptance with God. So Paul was asking the Galatians how they can improve on that, how they were going to perfect to complete what God had already completed. How were they going to give themselves a better standing than the one God had already given to them? The Judaizers had come along and taught the Galatians that there are really two steps to salvation. Faith is the first step and that's important. They didn't deny that, but it wasn't enough.

The second step is crucial if you're to be a child of God, to be a Son of Abraham, to be in line with all those promises, and that is works, circumcision specifically, but then the whole law. So it's faith plus works. That's their gospel and Paul answers how foolish to think that we can add anything to the work of God. It is one step. It is faith alone which is really receiving God's work of salvation. It is, as we explained, I think, last week, faith is simply an outstretched open and empty hand. It receives. "Nothing in my hand I bring simply to thy cross I cling." That's faith. And we have everything we need at the moment of faith.

Nothing needs to be added to the work that God has done in our lives. Warren Wiersbe, who was for years the minister at the Moody Church in Chicago, illustrates the point from the experience of natural birth. He says when a normal child is born,

he or she has all that he needs for life. Nothing else need be added. When the child of God is born into God's family, he has all that he needs spiritually. Nothing need be added. All that's necessary is that the child have food and exercise and clothing and cleansing that he or she might grow to maturity. It would be strange, he wrote, if the parent had to take the child to the doctor at one month to receive ears; at two months, to receive toes, and so on.

The child is complete at birth. And we are complete spiritually at our spiritual birth. We have everything we need. We are in a state of great immaturity. We need to grow. We need to be fed. We need to be nourished. We need to be protected. We need to be cleansed, all of that to grow into maturity. But we have everything we need. We're fully equipped. We are sons of God at birth, full family members. Just as a child is a son or a daughter of his or her parents at the moment of physical birth, so, too, at the new birth, we are God's spiritual children, his sons and his daughters.

We don't have to wait for some process to be completed before we are fully accepted into God's family anymore than a natural child has to do that. We are complete in every way at the moment we are born again. We can't improve on God's work of salvation. We can't do better than His grace. We can only receive it. That's what the gospel requires – faith alone, no additions. The Galatians had originally believed that confidently. In fact, they had suffered for it, Paul tell us, in verse 4. And in verse 5, he adds that they saw that truth confirmed, the truth that they had believed, reaffirmed in their experience by miracles.

So he asks here in verse 4, "Was that all in vain? Did you suffer for nothing?" Were they going to lose the fruit they had gained from suffering by turning away from the truth of the gospel? God wants his people to profit from their experiences. And we passed through many experiences, a wide variety of experiences – some pleasant, some not so pleasant. We go through hardships as well as blessings, and all of that for a purpose. Now, we might wonder why we're experiencing this particular hardship, why this is happening in our life, whether it be a loss of health or a loss of employment.

It may seem to us at the time meaningless and random. But nothing is random in God's universe and certainly nothing random in His family. Everything has a purpose and it is to teach us so that we might learn and grow. Paul didn't want these Galatians to lose all that they had gained. He didn't want it to be in vane and he didn't

believe that it would be. He adds, "if indeed it was in vane," suggesting that it wasn't. He had confidence in these people. He wanted to warn them of the consequences of the error they were falling into, but also, encourage them to repentance by showing his confidence in them.

Now, Paul could have effectively ended the argument there. Their own experience demonstrated how salvation occurs, but he didn't do that. He makes an even stronger argument from Scripture. Experience is important. It confirms the truth, but Scripture is the truth. It is our authority. It is the source of doctrine. It's the source of our understanding what really is, what truth is. It settles the issue. An experience really doesn't do that. Scripture is what interprets an experience. And so now, he turns to that. And he does that in the next verses by considering Abraham, Abraham's experience and what is said about Abraham in the book of Genesis to prove that the Scriptures teach justification by faith and not by works.

His appeal to Abraham has been called a master stroke because the Judaizers had appealed to Moses and the law as their authority. Well, they recognized that the Scripture is authority and they appealed to Moses and the law that he had given, but Paul goes back before the law to prove his point. Now, of course, God had commanded Abraham to be circumcised and to circumcise every male in his family. Circumcision was a sign of the covenant that God made with Abraham. But that is recorded in Genesis 17. Paul goes back to Genesis 15 to a time before circumcision was instituted to an incident in which there's no mention of works or ceremonies.

The only thing Abraham did was believe God's promise. And just as the Galatians received the Holy Spirit through faith, Abraham was justified by faith. Paul begins verse 6, "Even so," meaning, even as you were blessed by faith, "Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness." In other words, it happened in the same way. It happened one night when Abraham was a very old man. He had no children even though his name means "exalted father." His original name, Abram, and then he gets the name Abraham, which means "father of a multitude." And yet at this time, he has no children in his life, and the possibility of having any at all seemed remote at best.

But one clear night, God called Abraham out of his tent, told him to look up at the sky, which was clear, and he said, "Count the stars." Well, no one can do that. The stars, at least for us, are enumerable. "Nevertheless," God says, "so shall your

descendants be." That was God's promise. It seemed impossible for this old man to have one child, but to have a multitude by the stars of the heaven. That's what God said, though. And Abraham believed it. He cast himself on the promise of God and that was all that God required. The moment Abraham believed, God justified him, Genesis 15:6: "Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness."

What that means is God reckoned or regarded Abraham's faith as the means for obtaining righteousness so that because of his faith, God imputed righteousness to him, put that to his account. Now, this statement from Genesis 15:6 is sometimes interpreted in a different way as meaning Abraham believed God and God counted his faith as being righteousness. Since it is impossible for man to be perfect by the law, God accepts faith in place of obedience to the law so that when a person believes, his faith is considered to be the full righteousness of the law of Moses. So he substitutes faith, that one act of faith, for a lifetime of legal obedience. In other words, faith is equal to righteousness.

The other interpretation is faith is unto righteousness. It is the means of obtaining an external righteousness, God's righteousness. So Genesis 15:6 and Galatians 3:6 mean either the believer gives himself righteousness by his faith, or the believer receives God's righteousness through faith. Now, I think it's the second. The idea is not that faith is our righteousness, but that because of faith, by means of faith, we are united to Christ, who is our righteousness. We are united to Christ in whom we have the righteousness of God. So the preposition translated here as in "it was reckoned to him as righteousness, his faith was reckoned as righteousness" should be taken in the sense of "for" or "unto" righteousness.

That, in fact, is the usual meaning of the preposition. Abraham believed God, and his faith was considered by God to be unto righteousness, the means of obtaining it. And there are a number of examples that I can give from the New Testament that show that to be the meaning of the preposition, but the clear proof of what I'm saying, the meaning of what I'm teaching here, what suggesting is the meaning is found in Philippians 3:8-9, where Paul gives some biographical information on himself. He dismisses there his previous life as a Pharisee and the works that he had performed under the law as rubbish.

"Cast it all aside," he says, "so that I may gain Christ." Then he says, "And maybe found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law,

but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith." Now, he really emphasizes one way and another the fact that our righteousness is through faith. It's not by the works of the law, but it is through faith. It's based on faith. The idea is not faith is our righteousness, but that because of faith, we are united to Christ in whom we have a righteousness from God.

Now, Paul makes that same point in Romans 4:6. Having said earlier in that chapter that quoting the same text that Abraham's faith was reckoned as unto righteousness, he then states that "God credits righteousness" or "God imputes righteousness apart from works," – in other words, through the law. That's how we obtain it. And that's Paul's meaning here in Galatians 3:6. Abraham believed God's promise. And God reckoned his faith for righteousness, considered it, regarded it to be the means of obtaining righteousness.

The righteousness obtained through faith is the righteousness of Christ. God clothes us in His righteousness, so to speak, and on that basis, accepts us as completely righteous in His sight. Nothing needs to be added to that. Abraham became right with God through faith alone. He was justified as an uncircumcised man apart from the law. Now, if Abraham, the father of the Jewish people, didn't need to be circumcised in order to be identified, then gentiles don't need to be circumcised in order to be justified. If he was saved through faith alone, then all men are saved through faith alone.

And so in verse 7, Paul concludes that "believers, those who are of faith, are sons of Abraham." They are the true heirs of the promise given to Abraham even if they're gentiles. In fact, gentile salvation was promised to Abraham at the very beginning in Genesis 12:2, and Paul quotes that in verse 8 to prove his point, "All the nations shall be blessed in you." From the beginning, gentiles have been in God's plan of salvation. And they would be saved in the same way Abraham was saved, through faith. So Paul draws that conclusion in verse 9 that "those who are of faith, believers, are blessed with Abraham, the believer." They are justified with Him.

That is the teaching of Scripture which gives the positive proof for Paul's gospel being the true message of salvation, but Paul is not finished. He now, strengthens his position further in verses 10 through 14 by showing the impossibility of being saved by the law. This is the negative side of his argument. Positively Scripture teaches that we are saved through faith. Negatively, Scripture teaches that

the law cannot save. Just the opposite, it brings a curse. Verse 10: "For as many as are of the works of the Law are under a curse; for it is written, 'Cursed is everyone who does not abide by all things written in the book of the law, to perform them.'"

That's a quote from the law itself.

It's a quote from Deuteronomy 27:26, which states that the law requires that a person live by all things written in it. If a person chooses to find salvation, to find eternal life by law keeping, then what the law requires is perfect obedience for that blessing. There's no room for failure. Live by all things written in it, in our thought life, in the deeds that we do, one failure is a failure of the whole system. We break one law, we break all. We break one law and we are cursed and no one can escape that. No one can live a perfect life.

So no one can be saved by law keeping, not because the law is bad. The law is not bad, but because of man who is incapable of keeping the law. That, Paul says, in verse 11, is evident. It's evident from personal experience. Who would look at their life? Who would give a careful examination? Even a careless examination, and come up with the idea that he or she has lived a perfect life, that we've never failed in one way at all. Well, it's evident from our own self-examination, it's evident from experience that we are not saved by the law.

We're all law breakers, but it's also evident from the Scriptures because the Scriptures teach that a person is justified through faith and that the law brings a curse. They teach that very clearly. Now, that's not only taught in Genesis 15:6, but Habakkuk 2:4 also teaches the same principle of salvation through faith because there, the prophet writes, "The righteous man shall live by faith." It is by faith that a person stands in a right relationship with God. So from the law and the prophets, we have both of these statements from Genesis and Habakkuk, salvation is through faith.

Now, that is very different from law keeping. Paul again shows that in verse 12 by again quoting the law, this time, Leviticus 18:5, "He who practices them shall live by them." The condition that the law lays down for obtaining eternal life is keeping its regulations and keeping all of them perfectly. That's very different from resting in the Lord by faith. That's very different from the empty hand that simply receives as a free gift the blessings of God. The two principles of law and grace of faith and works are incompatible. As Paul says, "The law is not of faith." The two cannot be mixed.

That's what the Judaizers were doing. They were mixing faith and law, but they can't be mixed. Trying to mix them in order to gain salvation is like trying to mix salt and water to slake a thirst. It won't work. The water is worthless. The salt destroys it. The purpose of the law is to create a desire for righteousness, just as salt creates a thirst within a person. It is faith that satisfies, just like water satisfies the thirst. And faith is the means of obtaining the righteousness that the law causes us to desire. So if a person chooses the principle of law keeping to gain life, he will only fail and be condemned.

Salvation is through faith, and faith is in Christ. He is the Savior and Paul states that in verse 13. Here's the object of our faith and the reason he is the object of our faith "Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law." That's how he saved the lost and the condemned. He redeemed us. Now, this is a very descriptive phrase. To "redeem" means to buy or to purchase. In fact, this particular word that Paul uses is an intensive form of that and it means to buy out of, to purchase out of. And here the idea is he delivered us from the curse of the law or delivered us out of or out from the curse of the law by paying a price, by buying us out of it. And the price that was paid is the price of his own blood.

He became a curse for us, Paul says. He took upon Himself our sin and bore the penalty of the broken law on the cross in our place when He was crucified as our substitute. Paul finds proof of that again in the law in Deuteronomy 21:23, which states cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree. And that passage was about hanging criminals on a stake or a tree to publicly expose their shame. Most people are seen to be cursed who hang on a tree. Christ hung on a tree. Christ, though, was innocent. But He died as one who was guilty. He died as a criminal for us.

He took our place in a criminal's death by dying on a tree, dying on a cross, which made public display of the shame for which he suffered. It wasn't his own shame. He was innocent. But it became his in the sense that he bore our sin. It was imputed to him. God considered it to be his when he punished him. He bore the curse of the law in our place, and in that way, he redeemed us from that curse. And the reason he did is given in verse 14: "that in Christ Gentiles might have the blessing of Abraham and we would receive the promise of the Spirit through faith." That really summarizes Paul's thought in this text.

The blessings of Abraham, which is justification, a right standing with God, acceptance with God, and the gift of the Holy Spirit, which enables us to then live obediently to God, live a holy life, live up to that legal declaration. All of that is, he says, through faith. It's all a gift of grace. Now, Paul has demonstrated that in this text, first, from the Galatians' experience. They received the Holy Spirit initially through faith apart from works. Their experience proved salvation is by grace. Secondly, he proved that fact from the Bible Genesis 15:6 and Habakkuk 2:4. Both teach that faith is essential for salvation. The law teaches that attempting justification by works brings a curse.

Christ has redeemed everyone who believes in Him from the curse of the law. He took that curse in our place by dying for us. That is where salvation is found. It is found in Christ. It is not found in the law. Paul said that is evident. It wasn't evident to the Galatians, but they had been bewitched by the mesmerizing idea of personal merit, of the thought that they themselves by their works could achieve acceptance with God, or maybe even by the fear that they must do this in order to achieve acceptance with God, live by the law, put themselves under that yoke.

Well, man, as I say, are naturally drawn to this idea of the law as a power over people. It's like candy to naive children. But it's a deception. The Bible is clear. The just shall live by faith. Abraham was justified by faith. Habakkuk was justified by faith. That is the only way to life. The only way to life is through faith. It is the only way to freedom, freedom from the law's curse. It's the only way to obtain assurance of acceptance with God. It's the only way to have that acceptance with God – faith in Jesus Christ. And what a blessing that is. Salvation is free to the believer.

We can't improve on God's work and we shouldn't try. It is complete and we are completely acceptable to Him at the moment of faith. I think I pointed out last week, I think it should be pointed out frequently the great practical blessings of understanding justification by faith, the freedom that it gives to us, to realize we are fully accepted by God at the moment of faith. We can't do anything to be more accepted. We don't need to be anxious about our salvation and all we strive to impress God and to gain his approval.

That's a terrible motive and an improper motive for obedience to seek to gain the approval of God, which we already have, or to rest in that and not worry that we might lose what we have if we don't work hard enough, or the only way to gain it is

by further work. We have everything in Christ at the moment of faith, everything through a gift. So may God help us to understand that and appreciate His grace and live in light of that grace, live joyous confident lives because of what He's done for us. Well, I say you, as a Christian, need not be anxious, but rest and be confident in Christ.

But if you've not believed in Christ, you have every reason to be anxious because you're not acceptable to God. You are in your sin still and under condemnation. But there is a way of escape, and it's through Christ, the redeemer, one who redeems the sinner from the curse of the law, and that's by faith in him. If you've not trusted in Christ, look to Him, believe in Him. Receive with faith, with the empty and open outstretched hand of faith, receive the gift of God of Jesus Christ, and then rejoice in all that you have in Him. May God help you to do that and help all of us to live lives of joy and peace in Christ. Let's pray.

[Prayer] Father, we do thank You for Your goodness to us and with the great truths that Paul has set forth in this text. Salvation is apart from the law. The law is used in that work of salvation to show us our need and to point us to the Savior, but only Christ can save, and we can only be saved through faith in Him. Thank You for that. We could not achieve salvation in our own strength. But He's achieved it for us. And we receive it. That's a work of grace. We praise You for that and thank You for Him and it's in His name we pray. Amen.