

Wherefore Serveth the Law?
Galatians 3:19-29
August 15, 2012

INTRODUCTION

The theme of Galatians is “Justification by Faith.” Paul preached the gospel of faith to the Gentiles in Galatia. And they believed it. But then along came some Jewish teachers after Paul left and these teachers began to teach the Gentile converts that they must be circumcised to be saved.

This was their way of saying, “You must still keep the Jewish laws.”

This was the great controversy in the very early church. Is it salvation by faith in Christ alone, or is it Christ plus Judaism? And Paul says, “It is Christ alone.”

In fact, Paul calls down a curse on anyone who would add these Jewish requirements to salvation.

I marvel that you are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed.

Galatians 1:6-9

Note the following:

1. Paul’s gospel is characterized by the word *grace*.

I marvel that you are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ.

The gospel which Paul preached to them was pure grace. It was a free gift. They were to receive salvation freely and unconditionally.

2. But when the Jewish teachers came in, they were preaching another gospel. That is, they were preaching the opposite of grace. They were preaching works. “You must be circumcised.”

3. Notice that when the Gentiles embraced this works kind of teaching, they were removing themselves from God.

I marvel that you are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ.

So, it appears that when you add any requirement to the gospel you are making it a works kind of gospel, which is not really the gospel, and you are removing yourself from God.

4. Notice three things about this works gospel of the Judaizers.
- a. It is a different character of gospel altogether. It is so different in character as to be no gospel at all.

Things which can be added to the gospel.

- Circumcision
- Eating requirements
- Any of the other Jewish rituals
- Baptism
- Church membership
- Saying prayers
- Observing the mass
- Confessing to human, sinful priests
- Paying indulgences
- Walking an aisle

- b. It was a troubling thing to the church.
- c. It was a perversion.
- d. It is a cursed thing.

And so, the book of Galatians is Paul's defense of the true gospel.

Paul tells the Galatians first that he has already put up a successful defense of his gospel in Jerusalem. (Galatians 2:1-10)

The Defense at the Jerusalem Council

The first ten verses of Galatians chapter two are Paul's account of the Jerusalem Council. Paul took Titus with him to Jerusalem where he confronted Peter and other of the Jewish Christians and Paul proved that God was saving Gentiles by faith only.

At the end of the conference, all James and Peter and John could do was extend their right hands of fellowship and say, "Go get 'em Paul." Everyone had to admit that God was saving Gentiles without the Jewish requirements.

The Defense at Antioch (Galatians 2:11-21)

You would have thought that the matter was settled. And certainly, you would have thought that Peter would no longer be troubling to the gospel. But, darned if Peter didn't come to the church at Antioch and cause the gospel trouble again.

Peter came to the church and he joined right in and ate with the Gentiles. Peter knew that all things were lawful to eat under the gospel. The old Jewish eating regulations were no longer in effect. But when some of the prominent Jews came down from Jerusalem, Peter left the Gentile tables and the implication is that he (1) refused to eat with the Gentiles and (2) began to observe the Jewish law with regard to food.

Paul jumped in Peter's face in front of them all. (2:14) And Paul told Peter, "You know that even we (Jews) are not justified by the works of the law. Even we are justified by faith. (v.16) Paul told Peter that if he was going back to the Law then it was Peter that was sinning. (v.18)

The Reasoned Defense of the Gospel (Galatians 3-6)

- I. It is stupid to go back to the law. (3:1-5)
 - a. When the Galatians believed the gospel, God gave them the Holy Spirit. (v.2)
 - b. If justification is by the Spirit, is sanctification by the flesh?

- c. Once you have already suffered, it is foolish to then give in.
- d. The miracles that are being performed are being performed by the instrument of faith and not works.

II. Consider the example of Abraham.

- A. Abraham was personally saved by faith. (v.6)
- B. Abraham's children are those who believe. (v.7, 9)
- C. The message that was preached to Abraham was the gospel. (v.7) It was the gospel promise.

God did not preach the Law to Abraham. The Law came 430 years later. Abraham was circumcised after he believed and after righteousness was imputed to him.

- D. A contrast of the gospel Promise and Mosaic Law. (3:10-29)

The Promise

- 1. The Promise brings blessing (v.8, 9, 14)
- 2. The Promise brings redemption. (v.13)
- 3. The Promise brings the Spirit of God. (v.14)
- 4. The Promise brings an inheritance. (v.18)
- 5. The Promise was an unconditional kind of covenant. (v.20)

The Mosaic Law

- 1. The Law brings a curse. (v.10)
- 2. The Law cannot justify. (v.11)
- 3. The Law is a works kind of system. (v.10, 12)
- 4. The Law is a temporary addition. (3:19)
- 5. The Law does not annul the gospel Promise.
- 6. The Law was a conditional kind of covenant. (Gal.3:20)
- 7. The Law is not against the Promise. (v.21)

- a. The Promise is to bring us to Christ. (v.16)
- b. The Law tries to bring us to Christ. (v.24)