

Title: How the gospel changes you
Text: Galatians 3.1- 4.31
Theme: Sanctification is gospel-driven (justification applied)
Series: Galatians summer 2019 #3
Prop Stmtnt: Sanctification has to be gospel-driven because our works are not good enough (quality) nor effective enough (quantity).

Read Text: Galatians 3.1-6

The church up in Antioch of Syria is flourishing. God uses this church as a launching pad for a church-planting trip by Paul and Barnabas who go to Cyprus and then to Galatia (modern day Turkey) where they go into the cities of Antioch, Lystra, Iconium and Derbe. Their method was the same. They would show up in a synagogue and would take advantage of the fact that they were Jews and would tell their fellow Jews about the Messiah, Jesus. They would prove his Messiahship from the OT and would show how Christ came not just for the Jews, but also for the Gentiles. The result of their ministry often produced a group of believers whom they would organize into a church. It appears that this group was initially formed by Jews who had come to faith in Christ, but would quickly begin attracting Gentiles until the Gentiles were a larger factor in the church than the Jews. However, certain men, from Jerusalem were coming in behind Paul and Barnabas and were teaching a different gospel. They were telling the Jews that they had to keep on obeying the Law, and were telling the Gentiles, that if they wanted to follow the Jewish Messiah that they had to follow the Jewish law.

Word of this gets back to Paul who upon his return to Antioch of Syria finds that this same issue is infecting the church there. Paul then writes this letter to the churches in Galatia and then along with Barnabas and a few others heads south to Jerusalem for the first Together for the Gospel meeting where the leaders of the church in view of the congregation at Jerusalem work through these issues. Acts 15.7 says that there was a lot of debate and I have no doubt that what we have in chapters 3 and 4 of this letter is what Paul contributed to the debate.

Read a summary and overview of the text:

Who has deceived you?! Did you receive the Spirit because you worked hard for him, or by faith? Be logical now. If you began by faith in Christ and not by keeping the law, will you continue and finish by keeping the law? Don't forget about Abraham. He believed God and it (his faith) was counted to him as righteousness. This was the message in the OT. Abraham was justified by faith. This is true for everyone. No one can rely upon their works and be justified. Since we are only justified by faith, we can only be sanctified by faith. The law came after Abraham was given the promise and the law never did away with Abraham's promise. In fact, the law was given through Moses so that we could see the need that Christ came to address. The law never made anyone better. The law never helped anyone be free from sin. That only comes through faith in Jesus. The purpose of the law was to lead us to Jesus. Anyone, regardless of who you are, who believe in Christ are adopted into the family of God. Now, since you are no longer bound by the law, why are you turning back to it? It couldn't free you from sin before, do you think it will free you from sin now? You used to value me and what I taught you and now you have allowed yourselves to be led away by men who want to abuse you and crush you. What

happened? Listen, if you want to talk law, go back to Abraham again. Abraham had a son born as a picture of the law and a son who was born by promise. You belong in the line of promise, not in the line of law. You are free, not slave. And just like back then, the child of promise was persecuted by the child of slavery, you are being persecuted by these legalists who want to abuse you and put you under bondage to the law. Throw them out!

Galatians reminds me of Paul's second letter to the Corinthians in that he is so personally invested in them and like a dad who is desperate to protect his daughter from an abusive boyfriend, you get the sense that he is about to show up and take the bad boy out. The big idea of chapters 3 and 4 is laid out right at the beginning of chapter 3 and the issue that they faced then is the same issue that we all face now. Look at verse 3. "Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh?" No!!!

I. **The Gospel changes your relationship to God.** (3.1-9)

How does the gospel change your relationship to God? Your relationship goes from fear to faith.

Your relationship to God is established on the basis of grace. The entire issue is framed by verses 2 and 3. Let's unpack this. "Did you receive the Spirit by works of the law or by hearing with faith?" The obvious answer is: by hearing with faith. Being baptized by the Spirit into the body of Christ, being united by the Spirit into Christ, being indwelt by the Spirit are all ministries of the Spirit that every believer receives at the moment of conversion. Paul is asking about their conversion. Did you earn the Spirit through your efforts or did you receive the Spirit because you heard the gospel and you believed it? Your conversion is based on God's grace who by means of the Spirit opened your eyes to the truth of Jesus. The Spirit did this. The Spirit gave you the faith to believe (regeneration) and when you believed, the Spirit gave you himself. You cannot take any credit for your salvation. You did not do anything to earn it because Jesus did that. And you can't even take credit for having the good sense to believe it when you heard it because the Spirit gave you that.

There are a number of different terms that the Bible uses to describe conversion. Conversion means to change. When you travel to another country, you have to convert your currency. When the Bible uses the word conversion it means to change your mind, change your affections and change your direction. Conversion involves repentance and faith. Both repentance and faith are gifts to us from God. Another word is justification. Justification is the work of God whereby He declares the sinner to be righteous. Look at v.6. Paul goes all the way back to Abraham who lived 430 years before the law. What was Abraham's hope? Abraham believed God and it was counted to him as righteousness. That is justification. God counted him to be righteous because he believed in the promises of God. He believed God. That is true for us. When we believe what God has done for us in Christ (he promised and delivered on that promise) we are justified because God credits Jesus with our sin (who died for us) and God credits us with the righteousness of Christ (who lived for us). Now I could go on and describe adoption, baptism of the Spirit, union with Christ, but the point is this: God does the saving. Our salvation is not based on our works, but on the finished work of Christ. Jesus did it. That is why we proclaim the good news (gospel). It is good news because it has been done for us. Since our salvation is all based on the grace of God that is received by us through faith, that means that our justification is not based

on our efforts. Yes, we believe. We believe because of what God has done. Now, here is the point of this entire section and really the entire book of Galatians.

Since your justification is based on the grace of God received through faith, what does that mean for your sanctification? What does that mean for how you grow and mature as a believer? Justification informs and drives your sanctification. Justification and sanctification are different but related. That is the point Paul is making. Your justification is based completely upon God's grace that you received by faith, therefore, your sanctification is based completely upon God's grace that you accept by faith. You did not earn the favor of God by your efforts to be forgiven of your sin and you cannot earn the favor of God by your efforts to grow as a Christian.

There is an old song we used sing in church when I was a kid that went, "I was sinking deep in sin, far from the peaceful shore..." That's not as accurate as it could be. I wasn't sinking, I was sunk. I wasn't drowning in my sin, I was drowned. I was dead in my trespasses and sins. It was God who made me alive and put me in the gospel boat captained by Christ. The salvation that Christ effected displays his incredible love and grace and gloriously reveals it for all to see. If, after I get into the boat, I try to pay him for him for my salvation, or try to work real hard to pay off what I owe him, then I'm trying to take some credit for it. I'm trying to prove to him that I was a good deal. I was worth rescuing because I can make him look good. I can now do my part so that he gets a little return on his investment. I can earn his approval after causing him such a major inconvenience in rescuing me. That is what these false teachers were teaching the believers in Galatia. You need to now obey the law so that you can really be rescued. No! We are not rescued because we obey the law. We are rescued because we believe in Christ. Our justification is based on faith, therefore our sanctification is based on faith.

So, what does a faith-driven sanctification look like? A faith-driven (therefore Spirit-dependent) sanctification is going to produce fruit that is consistent with the Spirit. That is why Paul talks about the fruit of the Spirit in chapter 5. Good works are not irrelevant, it's just that good works are not the basis of our justification or sanctification. Faith is. And just as the work of the Spirit in regeneration produces genuine faith in Christ, so too the work of the Spirit in sanctification produces authentic love for, trust in and obedience to Christ. The gospel changes my relationship with God from fear to faith. I do not have to prove myself. But I believe in God because I love God. And because I love God and believe in God I want to please God and God, by means of his Spirit is working in me to help me look more and more like Jesus, which means that I am growing in my love and trust in God.

For example, let's say that your finances are really tight. In fact, you have a house payment due and you know that if you are late that it will mess up your credit and you've already borrowed from your family and you don't want to ask again, and you've maxed out your credit cards, and you are the treasurer of your kids' soccer club. What do you do? Walking by faith means that I believe in God's Word. Even though I am tempted to "borrow" (steal) from the soccer club account, living by faith means that I believe that God's word and his command to not steal holds greater weight than my fear of my financial mess. My life in Christ means that the Spirit is speaking to me. He is reminding me to trust him. Trust him by doing the right the thing. Living by faith means that I don't steal because I believe God. I love God. My faith in Christ for salvation produces a life of faithfulness and faith in his Word even when it is hard. The gospel

changes my relationship to God. I do not fear his condemnation. I believe his grace and I bank my life on it.

II. The gospel changes your relationship with the law. (3.10 – 4.7)

How does the gospel change your relationship with the law? Your relationship goes from fear to finished.

Just as Abraham was declared righteous by faith, so anyone (applies to Gentiles too) who believes God is declared righteous and is a true child of Abraham. Being righteous in the eyes of God was based on faith before the law came and is still based on faith. The purpose of the law was to make it undeniably clear that you could not save yourself. Paul goes into great detail to show how the law could not rescue anyone. The law curses us but does not rescue us. So, why would anyone say that now you have to prove yourself to God by living under the law that could only condemn you?

All that the law could do is say, “you don’t measure up, you don’t measure up, you don’t measure up.” I remember going to Cedar Point as a child and being so fearful that I was not tall enough to ride the rides. The ruler outside of each ride said how tall I had to be. It could not help me grow. It could tell me that I needed to grow. Now, here is the difference. The OT law revealed God’s requirement of righteousness and no one measured up. No one, that is but Christ.

Look at 3.11-14.

The law makes me aware of how much I need Christ. Not only does the law reveal how I have failed God, the law reveals that I cannot do anything to make it up to him because I cannot keep the law. So, what is my hope? It is Christ who came and kept the law for me. Christ not only kept the law, but in keeping the law he fulfilled the law. He finished the job that I couldn’t do. He satisfied the righteous demands of the law. He is tall enough. When I came to faith in Christ, I get credit for his life, which means that I do not fear the law anymore. I do not fear being too short and being disqualified. I am in Christ and he fulfilled it and finished it. I rest in Christ. I accept his standing as my own. I do not fear the wrath of God’s judgement poured out on those who fail to meet his standard because I am in Christ who was “born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law so that we might receive adoption as sons.” (Galatians 4.4-5)

Who is the “we”? It is everyone who trusts in Christ. Male and female. We are all treated as sons, and yes, that applies to the girls as well and that is a very important point. All of us, male and female are adopted as sons. Sons get the inheritance. This means that we all share in the inheritance of Christ and Christ gets the kingdom.

Keep reading – Galatians 4.6-7

I am no longer a slave who fears his master. I am a son who is loved by his Father and promised an inheritance that can never be taken away. Look at that reality. Let that truth wash over you and motivate you to love your Father in return and honor him and enjoy him. The law can make

you fear, but your adoption makes you love. The gospel changes your relationship to the law from fear to finished.

III. **The gospel changes your relationship with others.** (4.8-20)

How does the gospel change your relationship with others? Your relationship goes from fear to freedom.

The gospel frees me to love you and frees you to love one another. I do not fear that you might be better than me. I am in Christ. I do not fear that I do not measure up to what you expect of me. I am in Christ. That is the kind of relationship that Paul initially enjoyed with these believers. Their love for one another was beautiful. But, then came these other teachers along who were telling these people that they weren't good enough. They needed to try to obey the OT law. These teachers were putting these people back into bondage and back into fear and making it clear to them that they were not as good as those teachers. The teachers were acting like they were the insiders who were now imposing additional rules that these believers were expected to live up to. What does Paul say? Don't let them do that! Throw them out!

Look at 4.17. Look at the manipulation that is going on. They make much of you, but they have ulterior motives. They make much of you because they want to earn the opportunity to make you feel like you have to measure up to where they are and you have to please them. But, you can't please them. You cannot make them happy and it will drive you crazy if you make it your goal to please them. Beloved, rest in Christ! Do not let teachers go back to the OT and tell you that you have eat a certain diet, you have to be circumcised, you have to observe certain OT rituals. Those teachers have no authority over you. You are in Christ.