

THE PROOF OF WHAT FAITH DOES FOR US

GALATIANS 03:23–29

Introduction

Some in the churches of Galatia were spreading a false teaching. They were saying that a person is justified by works and law; that is, that a person becomes acceptable to God by subjecting himself to Christ, but he must also subject himself to the law and do the very best he can. Christ is important, yes, but a commitment to live by the law — a commitment to do the very best one can — is also essential in order to be saved and acceptable to God.

The false teaching sounds good, for a person not only should, but he must, do the best he can. Actually a person should not only do the best he can in seeking God, but in everything he undertakes. However, Scripture is very clear: man is not justified by being good and doing good. Man just cannot be good enough nor do enough good to become perfect. God is perfect; therefore, man must become perfect if he is to live with God.

How then can a person become acceptable to God? By faith in Jesus Christ. When a person believes in Jesus Christ, he honours God's Son, and God honours the person who honours His Son. God honours the person by doing the very thing the person believes. Therefore, when a person honours God's Son by believing in Him, God honours the person by doing the very thing for which the person trusted Christ. God counts the person righteous, credits his faith as righteousness. Note, however: belief does not mean *mental assent*, just believing in one's thoughts and mind that Jesus Christ is the Saviour. True belief is *spiritual commitment*, the commitment of one's heart and life — all that one is and all that one has to Christ.

How do we know that we are justified by faith, and not by the law and doing the best we can? Because of what faith does for us.

- I. Faith in Christ frees us from supervision of the law (vv. 23-25).
- II. Faith makes us children of God (vv. 26-27).
- III. Faith in Christ makes us one: eliminates all distinctions and prejudices (v. 28).
- IV. Faith in Christ makes us heirs of the promise (v. 29).

I. *Galatians 03:23–25 Faith Frees Man from the Supervision of Law*

Faith in Christ frees us from supervision of the law. There are three pictures that clearly illustrate this point.

1. The law was a prison for man. Before faith came, that is, before Christ died, “men were held prisoners by the law.” The word for *held* (ephrouroumetha) means to be guarded, kept in custody, imprisoned. Very simply, the law locks man up under sin; it imprisons and holds man in bondage to sin. How?
-

- a. The law shows man exactly where he fails — exactly where he comes short. There is no question about it: the law said to do this, but the man did that. He did not do this. The failure is clearly spelled out, just as clearly as a speed limit sign spells out the violation of the speeder.
- b. The law accuses and condemns man. As soon as a person violates the law, the law charges him. The law is in black and white, written down, so there is no question about it having been broken. Therefore, it preys upon his mind, cuts and convicts his heart. Guilt and conviction take over and the man is troubled and vexed to varying degrees, all dependent on the seriousness of the violation.
- c. The law has no life and no power to deliver man from the punishment due him for his violation. This is the whole point: the law reveals the violation and condemns man; it imprisons him. The law does not deliver man: it condemns man to bondage. It continues and continues to point out man's sins and failures. And the case of the law is endless: its finger of accusation points out the man's failure every time he violates it. The bondage to the law is perpetual.

The only hope for man is for someone to appear on the scene with the power to release him. That someone has appeared: Jesus Christ has come to set us free. But note: as prisoners we have to accept His deliverance. The choice is ours. We can believe and trust His power to deliver us or not.

2. The law was a *guardian* or *teacher* (*paidagogos*) for man. The NIV Study Bible says that the law was put in charge of man to lead him to Christ. Simply stated, the law was man's guardian to lead him to see his need for Christ. The *paidagogos* was usually a trusted slave who was in charge of a child's moral welfare, but he had one particular duty to which Paul was referring. Every day the guardian took the child to school and delivered him to the teacher. And then at the end of the day, he returned for the child and brought him safely back home. This was what the law was to do. The law was to lead man to Christ, the true Teacher. The law does this by showing man that he is utterly unable to secure righteousness by himself. He must look to Christ, the real Teacher, for righteousness and acceptance by God, that is, for justification by faith.
3. The law kept man in bondage to the law. But once Christ (faith in Him) came, there was no need for the law nor for any other guardian, for Jesus Christ brings us face-to-face with God. Thus it is the power of faith in Christ that truly frees man from the bondage of the law.

II. *Galatians 03:26-27 Faith Makes Us Children of God*

How do we know that we are justified by faith and not by observing the law and by doing the best we can? Because faith makes us children of God. As stated in the previous point, Jesus Christ bring us face to face with God. He stirs God to adopt us as children of God.

How? by faith. Note two crucial points.

1. Faith causes us to focus upon God's Son, Jesus Christ. Man can rest upon one thing: God will accept anyone who *focuses* upon His Son Jesus Christ, for God loves His Son to the ultimate degree. God is no less than any normal father who loves his son. In fact, God is much more than man; He is perfect. Therefore, God loves His Son, Jesus Christ, with a perfect love. This simply means that God will honour any person who honours His Son by believing and trusting Him. If a person believes in Jesus Christ for righteousness, then God will honour that man by counting him righteous.

The point is this: the person who tries to become acceptable to God by the law and by doing the best he can — the man who focuses upon the law and good works — that man keeps his mind upon the law and struggles to be good. God is not the centre and focus of his thoughts and life; the law and works are.

But the person who has *faith in Jesus Christ* focuses upon Christ. He honours God's Son: therefore, God accepts his faith, the focus of his life, as righteousness. The person becomes acceptable to God. God actually accepts the person as a child of His. How is this possible? The answer is the subject of the following point.

2. Faith clothes us with Christ, with His righteousness and Sonship. This is a most wonderful truth, for it tells us that we can actually “put on” Christ. We can actually clothe ourselves with Christ's — a glorious revelation! The phrase put on or clothe is the picture of putting on clothes, of covering oneself. All that Christ is can cover us. Christ is two things that hold great significance for us.
 - a. Christ is the very embodiment of righteousness. He is the Son of God who came to earth to secure righteousness for us. He lived a sinless and perfect life; He always obeyed God, never violating the law or will of God — not even once. Therefore, He was the Perfect, Ideal Man; He was the Pattern of what every man should be. As the Ideal and Perfect pattern. He could represent all men; and this is exactly what happened. Jesus Christ is our righteousness. When we believe in Him, God clothes us with Christ, with His righteousness. And, because we are clothed with the righteousness of Jesus Christ, God sees us in His Son and accepts us.

Picture this illustration. If my left hand wraps itself around the index finger of my right hand, what is seen? My left hand, not my index finger, for my left hand covers my index finger. Now, let my left hand represent Christ, and my index finger me. When Christ covers me, who is seen? Christ, of course, not me; for Christ covers me. So it is with faith. When I believe in Jesus Christ, my faith covers me with Jesus Christ and His righteousness.

2 Cor 5:21 God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

Phil 3:9 *And be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ — the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith.*

Heb 4:15-16 *For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are — yet was without sin. Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.*

Heb 7:25-26 *Therefore he is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them. Such a high priest meets our need — one who is holy, blameless, pure, set apart from sinners, exalted above the heavens.*

1 Pet 1:18-19 *For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect.*

Acts 13:39 *Through him everyone who believes is justified from everything you could not be justified from by the law of Moses.*

Rom 5:1 *Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.*

- b. Christ is the Son of God; therefore, to be clothed with Christ means that we are covered with His Sonship. When God looks at the believer, He sees His Son Jesus Christ covering him; therefore, He counts the believer as a son of His. This is the way we become children of God: by faith in Jesus Christ, God's Son. When we believe that Jesus Christ is God's Son, God takes our faith and places us in Christ, and to be in Christ is to be in the Sonship of Christ. God actually sees us in Jesus Christ, in His Son. Therefore, he accepts us as children of His — all because our faith has covered us with Christ. (See *Adoption*, Gal. 4:5-6.)

John 1:12 *Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.*

Rom 13:14 *Rather, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the sinful nature.*

Gal 3:27 *For all of you who were baptised into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.*

Eph 4:24 *And to put on the new self [Christ], created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.*

Col 3:10 *And have put on the new self [Christ], which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator.*

1 John 1:3 *We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ.*

1 John 3:1 *How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are! The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him.*

GALATIANS 03:27 BAPTISM

For all of you who were baptised into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. Galatians 03:27

Note the reference to baptism instead of belief.

Why did Paul switch from using the word believe to the word baptism? Why did he not say:

For all of you who have believed in Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ?

Is Paul saying that a person is *saved by* baptism? Any thinking and honest person knows that there are thousands and thousands of people who have been baptised and yet they live like the devil himself. Therefore, Paul could not mean that it is baptism that causes God to clothe a person with Christ.

Similarly, any honest and thinking person knows that there are thousands and thousands of people who *profess faith* and yet live like the devil himself. Therefore, Paul could not mean what the general public means by faith.

What Paul is saying is what Scripture declares: a true believer fulfils all the righteousness of Christ which includes baptism. The believer lives for Christ and living for Christ includes the ordinance that pictures his faith. Baptism (and repentance) is the *first and immediate* evidence of faith; therefore, faith and baptism are closely linked, so closely that Paul can speak of baptism as faith. (See *Baptism*, Rom. 6:3-5; *Baptism*, Acts 2:38.) □

III. **Galatians 03:28 Faith Makes Us One in Christ**

How do we know that we are justified by faith and not by the law and by doing the best we can? Because faith in Christ makes us one, eliminating all distinctions and prejudices.

There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus (v. 28).

This is a startling truth: Jesus Christ is the answer to all the prejudice, bitterness, hatred, oppression and inequalities of earth. How can He solve the divisions among men? Note the phenomenal statement: “You are all one in Christ.” What is there about Jesus Christ that makes us one?

1. Every believer stands on an equal footing before Jesus Christ: the footing of faith. No person is accepted for any other reason than faith. All persons who come to Jesus Christ come...

- because they are ever so short of Christ.
- because they are ever so different from Christ.
- because they are ever so imperfect.

Yet, Jesus Christ accepts them. Jesus Christ reaches out and embraces all believers despite their being so much less and so different from Him. Therefore, when we look at another believer and he differs from us, we do just what Jesus Christ did for us. We love, accept and embrace him; differences do not matter. All that matters is love, acceptance and brotherhood in Christ.

2. Every true believer loves and stands *in Jesus Christ*. Therefore, when we look at another believer we see him *in Christ*. We do not see the believer, but we see Christ covering the believer. We pay no attention to his colour, nationality, sex, social status or any other differences. Differences just do not matter. All that matters is that we all grow into the image of Christ — love, accept and become more and more the brothers and sisters of God.

Rom 10:12 *For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile — the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him.*

Rom 12:5 *So in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others.*

Gal 3:28 *There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.*

Eph 4:13 *Until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.*

James 2:5 *Listen, my dear brothers: Has not God chosen those who are poor in the eyes of the world to be rich in faith and to inherit the kingdom he promised those who love him?*

1 John 1:7 *But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin.*

Psa 119:63 *I am a friend to all who fear you, to all who follow; your precepts.*

Prov 22:2 *Rich and poor have this in common: The Lord is the Maker of them all.*

IV. Galatians 03:29 Faith and Inheritance

How do we know that we are justified by faith and not by the law and by doing the best we can? Because faith in Christ makes us heirs of the promise.

⇒ Remember the promise made to Abraham: the promise of God's blessing, of God's presence and leadership, of being accepted by God and given the privilege of living forever in the land of Canaan (the type and symbol of heaven, of the new heavens and earth). (See Gal. 3:15-18.)

The point is this: Jesus Christ is the heir of Abraham; therefore, if a person is *in Christ*, then he inherits the promise made to Abraham. He inherits the promise of God's acceptance, of righteousness, and of living forever in the new heavens and earth as a son of God.

John 14:1-2 *“Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me. In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you.”*

Rom 8:15-17 *For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear; but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, “Abba, Father.” The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children. Now if we are children, then we are heirs — heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.*

Gal 3:29 *If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.*

Gal 4:7 *So you are no longer a slave, but a son; and since you are a son, God has made you also an heir.*

Titus 3:7 *So that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life.*

Heb 6:17 *Because God wanted to make the unchanging nature of his purpose very clear to the heirs of what was promised, he confirmed it with an oath.*

1 Pet 1:3-4 *Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade - kept in heaven for you. ■*