

Wednesday Night BIBLE STUDY

Wednesday, February 14, 2018 – First Baptist Church Buda
Midweek Prayer Meeting & Bible Study

freedom
THE GRACE OF CHRIST IN GALATIANS

A STUDY OF THE BOOK OF GALATIANS Three Men and a Promise *Galatians 3:15-29*

OPENING EXERCISE: Grab a hymn book and turn to hymn #332. This is an unusual hymn written by the famous hymn writer Philip P. Bliss in 1871, inspired by a Christmas gift given him by his wife. The gift, a collection of Biblical writing called “Things New and Old” about the place of the Law in leading us to Jesus. Bliss and His wife were killed in a tragic train accident in Ashtabula, Ohio a short time later. Let’s look together at Bliss’ words and think through what His hymn is teaching by answering a few thought provoking questions... remember that hymns were originally written as a “teaching devise” for the church, not just as beautiful artistic expressions of worship, but also as a proclamation of God’s Word and truth...

VERSE 1: *Free from the law, O happy condition, Jesus has bled and there is remission,
Cursed by the law and bruised by the fall, grace hath redeemed us once for all.*

- (1) **What do you think Bliss means by “free from the law”, and what does this not mean?** It means that though I have sinned and fallen short of God’s law/standard, through Jesus I can be forgiven. It does not mean that I can go out a live anyway I want to without regard for sin and disobedience to God’s Word.
- (2) **Why does he call this a “happy condition” do you think, and how do the words “Jesus has bled and there is remission” play into this?** I think it is a “happy condition” because there is not condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus (Roman 8:1-4, “There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus,¹ who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit. ² For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death. ³ For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh, ⁴ that the righteous

requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.”)

- (3) How have we (mankind) been “*cursed by the law*” and “*bruised by the fall*”?
- (4) A key word in the first verse is the word “*grace*.” Define grace using the language of Bliss in this first verse. Grace is the free and happy condition that I find myself in based on what Jesus has done for me.
- (5) What do you think is meant by the words “*once of all*” at the end of verse 1, and does this say anything about the eternal security of the believer?

VERSE 2: *Now we are free, there’s no condemnation, Jesus provides a perfect salvation. “Come unto Me,” O hear His sweet call, Come, and He saves us once for all.*

- (1) What are we “*free from*”?
- (2) What does it mean to you that “*there’s no condemnation*” of you personally as a Christian? How might this humble you?
- (3) How was the salvation that Jesus provided for us “*perfect*”?
- (4) Who does the saving and how does Bliss make that clear in verse 2? What words clarify that here? He calls us to “*Come unto Me*” indicating that He is the one who does the saving and initiates the saving part, and the words “*Jesus provides a perfect salvation.*”
- (5) Does verse indicate a “*choice*” on our part? How? With what words? “*O hear His sweet call, Come, and He saves...*”

VERSE 3: *“Children of God,” O glorious calling, surely His grace will keep us from falling; Passing from death to life at His call; blessed salvation once for all.*

1. What does Bliss call “*a glorious calling*” and why is it so... “*a glorious calling*”?
2. What is he telling us/teaching when He says “*His grace will keep us from falling*”? Can you support this with a Scriptural reference?
3. Notice that Bliss ends every verse and the chorus with the same phrase? What is that phrase and why is the significance of Him using it to end every line of his song? What do you think He is trying to drive home to us? How might his relate to what He is telling us about the Law?

CHORUS: Once for all, O sinner, receive it, once for all, O brother, believe it; Cling to the cross, the burden will fall, Christ hath redeemed us once for all.

REVIEW: Just for review and to get back into our study of the book of Galatians, let’s briefly remind ourselves of some of the background material to the book. These are important background facts to keep in mind as we navigate this important and strategic book in the Bible.

4 Important Background Facts on the Book of Galatians:

(1) Written by the **Apostle Paul** – Paul wrote a large portion of the New Testament. This particular book/letter may have been his first letter. Also interesting to note is that some scholars believe that Paul

have penned this letter himself, with his own hand (all of his other letters/writings were done through/with a personal amanuensis [scribe, secretary, recorder]).

(2) **Written as a circular letter** – Most of Paul’s letter that we have in the New Testament were written to individual churches (i.e. Ephesians, Philippians) or to individuals (i.e. Timothy, Titus). This letter is different because it was written to a number of churches, and was meant to be passed/shared or “circulated” to each of these churches.

(3) **Written to churches in the region of Galatia** -Galatians is written to a number of different churches that Paul established during his first missionary journey in the region of Galatia in Asia Minor, which would be located in present day Turkey. This area was particularly important in the advance of the gospel and the New Testament church because it represented the movement of the good news/gospel further toward the west and to the rest of world, something Jesus had commanded from the very beginning of the New Testament church in Acts 1:8, *“8 But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”*

(4) **Written to oppose and expose false teaching of the Judaizers** – After Paul had left the region of Galatia, following his first missionary journey and the establishment of these new churches, false teachers came in and began to expose these churches and new believers/Christians to false teaching. These false teachers were known as “Judaizers” and they taught a “work-righteousness” system of salvation. Their teaching essentially said that in order to become a Christians you must first be circumcised and become a Jew, by obeying and following Jewish laws and customs. This was in direct contradiction to the good news/gospel Paul preached, which was salvation by grace, not by works.

CLAIMS THAT MUST BE MADE IF WORKS-RIGHTEOUSNESS SALVATION

3 Claims for A Salvation by Works-Righteousness: For those who may attached some type of works-righteousness for salvation, be that the Law, good works, morality, religious duty, etc., there must by necessity be some claims that must be made... if one is to be saved by “works” in any way.

1. **Salvation must be conditional** – That is, our salvation must be based on something that we do or have done. It makes... even must make... salvation conditional. Conditional on what you do or do not do... i.e. keeping the law, obeying customs and standards, being good enough, doing enough religious duty, not breaking certain codes or laws,
2. **One must maintain he or her own salvation** – If salvation is a matter of what we do (i.e. law keeping, rule following, adherence to a moral code of good) the onus (responsibility, burden, obligation, duty) fall us to keep ourselves saved and in good standing with God by adhering to the standard. Further, it may indicate that since God has saved us, we will maintain our salvation as we continue to match up with God’s required standard.
3. **Salvation must by implication become losable (capable of being lost)** – If it is conditional and up to us to maintain it, the implication must be that if we don’t live up to the condition and fail to maintain it we will no longer possess it. Therefore, a works-righteousness system of salvation automatically make salvation a losable proposition, at least possibly.

A Rebuttal of the 3 Claims for a Salvation by Works-Righteousness:

Claim 1: Salvation must be conditional –

Rebuttal: Scripture teaches that salvation is “unconditional” in nature and indeed doesn’t depend on anything that we do or have done.

Scripture:

- (1) **Ephesians 2:8-9** - “⁸ For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—⁹ not by works, so that no one can boast.”
- (2) **John 3:16** - “¹⁶ For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.”
- (3) **Romans 6:23** - “²³ For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

Claim 2: One must maintain his or her own salvation -

Rebuttal: Man could never match up or be good enough to match up to God’s Holy standard according to Scripture.

Scripture:

- (1) **Isaiah 64:6** – “⁶ All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags; we all shrivel up like a leaf, and like the wind our sins sweep us away.”
- (2) **Romans 3:10, 23** – “¹⁰ As it is written: ‘There is no one righteous, not even one’... ²³ for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”
- (3) **Matthew 7:21-23** - ²¹ “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. ²² Many will say to me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name and in your name drive out demons and in your name perform many miracles?’ ²³ Then I will tell them plainly, ‘I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!’”

Claim 3: Salvation must by implication become losable (capable of being lost)

Rebuttal: This claim would be in direct violation of Scripture. Scripture clearly teaches that once saved it is forever and cannot be lost in the doctrine of “the eternal security of the believer.”

Scripture:

- (1) **John 10:27-30** - “²⁷ My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. ²⁸ And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand. ²⁹ My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of My Father’s hand. ³⁰ I and My Father are one.”
- (2) **Titus 3:5-7** – “⁵ He saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, ⁶ whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior, ⁷ so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life.”
- (3) **1 Peter 1:3-4** – “³ Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, ⁴ to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, ⁵ who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.”
- (4) **Jude 24-25** – “²⁴ Now all glory to God, who is able to keep you from falling away and will bring you with great joy into his glorious presence without a single fault. ²⁵ All glory to him who alone is God, our Savior through Jesus Christ our Lord. All glory, majesty, power, and authority are his before all time, and in the present, and beyond all time! Amen.” (NLT)

(5) **John 3:16** – *“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.”*

Paul was still hammering home God’s plan... “the truth of the Gospel!”... namely, that salvation is a free gift of God, received through faith in His Son, Jesus Christ. No human effort... no works of the Law... no additional anything. By grace, through faith, it is apart from works. The Judaizers gagged on such teaching! So Paul meticulously dug back into their Old Testament Scripture and built his case from that vantage point. Masterful stroke! In doing so, he showed that before the Law of Moses, God had given Abraham a promise (Gen. 12:1-2). The Law demanded repeatedly, “Thou shalt not...” But God’s promise offered, “I will...” The Law set forth man’s duty... his responsibility. On the other hand, the promise had only to be believed. This point is obvious, and landed with a telling blow on the salvation-by-works message then – just as it does today.

HISTORY BEHIND THE ARGUMENT

Within the text of Galatians 3:15-22, three significant personalities who span a 2,000 year period are featured:

3 Significant Biblical Personalities in Galathians 3:15-22:

1. Abraham
2. Moses
3. Christ

These individuals related to two different plans that have affected all of our lives. Those plans are often confused with one another. The objective of this study is to clear up that confusion. Let’s keep one principle thought in mind the entire time we look at this passage...

An important principles to keep in mind in Galatians 3: *“In a nutshell, the whole message of this Galatians letter is salvation by grace through faith apart from works.”*

2 Plans that Affect our Lives:

1. **PLAN A: The Promise** - Traveling back 2,000 years in time, Paul returns to the promise God spoke to Abraham (Gen.12,15,17): “You are going to have a family and that family will bless the world. Those who bless your family... I will take care of; those who curse your family... I will judge.” The family was the Hebrew race, and Abraham its father. All that Abraham had to go on in his day was this promise made to him and his seed (notice: not seeds, Gal 3:16). This term was an ultimate reference to Christ.
2. **PLAN B: The Law** – Four hundred thirty years later (after Abraham’s time), Moses was brought on the scene as God’s answer to the dilemma of the Jews living in Egyptian bondage. He led them from their enslavement, through the Red Sea, to the foot of Mt. Sinai. There the Jews received, through the hand of Moses, God’s Law – which was the Torah, a guideline for the Jewish race to observe. This Law of God we also know as the Mosaic Law.

Explanation: In Paul’s day, Judaizers were saying, “In order for a person to please God, he must keep the Law; after all, God gave His Law through Moses... therefore it should be

observed.” However, Paul said in response, “We must go back before Moses to Abraham when as yet there was no Law. You are mixing the Law with the promise, and by doing so are confusing the whole plan.” The Law was to be viewed as running concurrently with the promise, not replacing it. It was principally as instructor intended to teach man of sin and convince him that he was indeed unrighteous.

ANALYSIS OF THE PASSAGE (Galatians 3:15-22)

What the Law Does and Doesn't Do?:

1. **The Law does not annul the promise (vv.15-18)** – Paul writes in Galatians 3:15-18, *“¹⁵ Brethren, I speak in the manner of men: Though it is only a man’s covenant, yet if it is confirmed, no one annuls or adds to it. ¹⁶ Now to Abraham and his Seed were the promises made. He does not say, “And to seeds,” as of many, but as of one, “And to your Seed,” who is Christ. ¹⁷ And this I say, that the law, which was four hundred and thirty years later, cannot annul the covenant that was confirmed before by God in Christ, that it should make the promise of no effect. ¹⁸ For if the inheritance is of the law, it is no longer of promise; but God gave it to Abraham by promise.”* Realizing he was dealing with abstracts, Paul started this leg of discussion using an everyday illustration to show that the promise was not affected by the Law. *“¹⁵ Brethren, I speak in the manner of men: Though it is only a man’s covenant, yet if it is confirmed, no one annuls or adds to it.”* The illustration regarding an “unconditional will or testament” was employed to underscore the significance of this historical promise which had present-day meaning. Paul stressed historical verification that God had given to Abraham the promise related to his seed... which was Christ Himself (v.16). ***Observation:*** *Just as a human “last will and testament” stands regardless of what happens, so did God’s made to Abraham (vv.17-18).*
2. **The Law does make the promise essential (vv.19-22)** – Notice Paul’s words in verses 19-22, *“¹⁹ What purpose then does the law serve? It was added because of transgressions, till the Seed should come to whom the promise was made; and it was appointed through angels by the hand of a mediator. ²⁰ Now a mediator does not mediate for one only, but God is one. ²¹ Is the law then against the promises of God? Certainly not! For if there had been a law given which could have given life, truly righteousness would have been by the law. ²² But the Scripture has confined all under sin, that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe.”* Two questions are now raised and answered:

2 Questions Raised by Galatians 3:19-22:

- (1) **Why even have the Law? (v.19)** – It was added for the sake of defining transgressions (The Lockman Foundation, New American Standard Bible. La Habra, CA: Foundation Press Publications, 1971, marginal note – Gal. 3:19). Up until the Law, man relied entirely upon his conscience to know right and wrong (see Romans 3:19-20). The Law defined transgressions so as to establish order. Until the Law came, wrong actions were offenses before God. But when the Law was given, those wrong actions took on transgression status. Until the advent of Jesus Christ, the Law gave man understanding of what pleased God. The Law declared the awesome holiness of God and demonstrated the depravity of man. Thus we can say that the Law fits perfectly into the gospel message, because it helps man to realize his real and desperate need for a Savior.

(2) **Is the Law contrary to the promise? (vv.21-22)** - Paul's answer is succinct, "*Certainly not!*" (v.21) Note his added comments, "*... For if there had been a law given which could have given life, truly righteousness would have been by the law. ²² But the Scripture (the delivery of the Law) has confined all under sin, that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe.*" There is not competition between the two. The Law complements the promise. ***Definition:*** *The term "confined" (some translations say "shut up") (v.22) has the idea of being locked up as a prisoner behind a cold, solid steel door in a cell of solitary confinement. By way of final comment, the Law had declared the truth of Gospel. If one is to spend eternity in heaven, he must first respect the sobering truth of the Law, namely, that he needs Divine assistance.*

SIGNIFIANCE OF THESE TRUTH

2 Significant Insights from the Truths of Galatians 3:

- 1. The protection of grace is not altered by the demands of the Law -**
- 2. The greater the means of condemnation, the sweeter the promise of salvation -**