

The Gospel In Galatians: Lesson 5  
**Old Testament Faith**

**Memory Text:** “Christ has 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.’)” (Galatians 3:13)

**Setting The Stage:** I assume you’re familiar with the word “dispensation”? Our evangelical friends use this term to describe two different periods in time, one that existed before the cross of Christ, and the one that followed Jesus’ death on the cross. In these two dispensations people were saved differently. It is said that those who lived before the cross were saved by keeping the law, and those who live after the cross are saved by grace. So two dispensations, two methods of salvation. 4,000 years of being saved by law keeping, 2,000 years of being saved by grace through faith.

I believe that Seventh-day Adventists believe in 3x more grace than our dispensationalist friends. You know we often get accused of being “legalists” – pushing the law as if it were the way to salvation. So to suggest that Seventh-day Adventist believe in 3x more grace than some of our evangelical friends causes some people to do a double-take. We believe that the only possible way a person could ever hope to be saved would be by grace alone.

**Titus 2:1:** “For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men.”

**Revelation 13:8:** “All who dwell on the earth will worship him, whose names have not been written in the Book of Life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.”

**Ephesians 1:4:** “Just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love.”

### **Sunday – The Foolish Galatians**

Galatians 3:1-5; Proverbs 1:7; 3:35; John 6:28, 29; Matthew 7:21-23

**Galatians 3:1-5.** Paul has just shared the gospel that he delivered to the Galatians (2:16-21) when he ministered among them; the same gospel he warned them not to exchange or give up for another (or let them be accursed). That gospel he shared was the message of justification by faith, which leads to a life of trust and faith in Christ. This gospel stands in opposition to what the Galatians were being allured toward believing – justification by works.

You remember, Paul didn’t require that the Gentile converts be circumcised or keep the ceremonial feasts. This caused great consternation among the Jewish Christian’s

who believed it would alienate the Jews by not requiring them to keep the laws of Moses. Unfortunately, some in the church in Galatia had become “bewitched” by the false teachings of the Judaizers who were pushing for circumcision.

*“Foolish”* - How would you like it if someone called you foolish in the middle of a letter they had sent you? No one wants to be considered foolish (or mindless). Although by the way some people behave, it does make you wonder. (A little cartoon of a mother dog giving her child dog some advice. Talking of their owners she said, “They give you a lot of treats while training you, so play dumb for as long as you can.”) There are no benefits to playing or being dumb in real life or in your walk with God.

**Proverbs 1:7:** “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and instruction.”

**Proverbs 3:35:** “The wise shall inherit glory, but shame shall be the legacy of fools.”

The entire book of Proverbs is dedicated to encouraging the reader to live a life of wisdom. Genuine wisdom is biblical knowledge applied. OT wisdom is equivalent to NT righteousness. Because the only Bible the Christians possessed at the time of the writing of Galatians was the OT, you can be pretty sure they knew about and were familiar with the book of Proverbs and knew the equivalence of wisdom to righteousness. When Paul wrote that the Galatians were foolish, do you think he was letting them know that even they thought they were in right standing with God, they really weren't? Do you think they would have understood it that way?

Jesus likened those who heard and obeyed His teachings to a wise man building his spiritual house on rock, while those who don't apply Jesus' teachings were like a foolish man building his house on the sand (Matt. 7:24-27). In the parable of the ten bridesmaids, five were wise, five were foolish (Matt.25:1-2). What made the difference? It was the Holy Spirit in the life that made the difference between life and death. Don't we need the application of the Word of God to our lives by the Holy Spirit today more than anything else?

How is a person saved, through faith or works? What is Paul's contention in v. 1? The Galatians had not obeyed the truth. So, are we saved by faith or works?

**John 6:28, 29:** “Then they said to Him, ‘What shall we do, that we may work the works of God’ Jesus answered and said to them, ‘This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He sent.’ ”

What had the Galatians not obeyed? They had not obeyed the truth regarding the way in which a person is justified. They did not adhere to the gospel way of justification wherein they had been taught, and which they had professed to embrace. Note; it's not enough to believe the truth, and say we believe it, but we must obey it too; we must wholeheartedly submit to it and steadfastly abide by it.

Several things proved the folly of these Christians: 1) Jesus had been set forth (portrayed openly, painted, or placarded) before them as crucified, or had been represented among them as crucified (v. 1). 2) Their acceptance of salvation by faith was evidenced in them by their receiving the Holy Spirit (v. 2-4). 3) Paul's spirit-filled ministry (v. 5).

That was the Galatians, but what about us? Can we fall into a similar trap? If so, how?

**Matthew 7:21-23:** "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?' And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!'"

The Galatians had begun their Christian journey in the Spirit, but had taken a detour thinking that their efforts in completing the journey were meritorious. In other words, what Jesus had done for them wasn't good enough for their salvation. They felt there was something more to be done. Ever fallen into that trap?

The sacrificial system ended at the cross (Col. 2:14-17). So we're not in danger of falling into reliance upon old ceremonial laws (although there are some who have). The law of God still remains in tact (Matt. 5:17, 18). Is there a danger we could think that we might be saving ourselves by our efforts to keep the law? Certainly. We keep the commandments not to be saved, but because we are. We couldn't properly keep the law unless Christ is living in us.

Paul's warning to the Galatians also applies to anyone who thinks they can reach a higher level of righteousness before God by meticulous adherence to man-made regulations regarding standards of Christian living, such as dress and diet. Sadly there are some who have more assurance in their ability in not eating certain things for their salvation than they do in Jesus. They often talk more about how to eat right than they do about Jesus. Often, their standard becomes the standard they believe everyone should live by, and if you don't meet that standard then you aren't truly following Jesus. (80% raw to 20% cooked, etc.)

Now a person who loves God and who has been renewed by the Holy Spirit is not going to be careless about how they treat their bodies and what they put into them. There's no virtue in that (although they're not going to get hung up on little things either). Neither is there any virtue in diminishing the importance of healthy living in relation to maintaining a healthy mind for the Spirit of God to work on. (Listened to a pastor cut the health message off at the knees in an attempt to make his point - cheese)

This whole legalism thing works both ways, doesn't it? Isn't there just as much danger in saying, "Hey God, I believe in justification by faith, and I'm going to prove that by fudging on your law and by not really paying attention to Bible counsel," as

in saying, “Hey God, I believe in justification by faith, and I’m going to prove that by keeping your law and doing everything you tell me to do”? Keeping the law cannot save us, but willingly disregarding it won’t save us either. How are we saved? We are saved by grace through faith in Jesus Christ unto good works (Eph. 2:8-10).

## **Monday – Grounded In Scripture**

Galatians 3:8; 2 Timothy 3:16

How has Paul defended his gospel of justification by faith up to this point in Galatians? He’s appealed to the agreement reached with the apostles in Jerusalem. He’s also appealed to the experience of the Galatians themselves. Now Paul does what we would expect him to do – appeal to scripture. In fact, from Gal. 3:6 to the end of chapter 4 Paul uses progressive arguments rooted in the Bible.

**Galatians 3:8.** What scripture did Paul have in his day? When Paul wrote his letter to the Galatians, there was no NT. Paul was the earliest NT writer. The Gospel of Mark is likely the earliest of the four gospels, but that was not written till around A.D. 65, around the time of Paul’s death; that is, 15 years after Paul’s letter to the Galatians.

This is fascinating for two reasons: (1) Paul had confidence in what we call the OT today. He believed it to be the inspired word of God. There was no question about it. (2) While most of today’s Christians pride themselves on being NT Christians and only appeal to the NT to validate the gospel message, Paul appealed entirely to the OT to validate the gospel. Do you think we would be missing out on something if we skipped over the OT?

**2 Timothy 3:16:** “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.”

You have churches and pastors telling their flock not to worry about “that OT.” (Baptist pastor – very interested in “Adventist’s emphasis on the OT” – why? OT & NT complimentary) We can’t treat the Bible like we would a buffet. It’s an all or nothing proposition.

## **Tuesday – Reckoned As Righteous**

Galatians 3:6-9; Romans 4:9-11, 19-25

**Galatians 3:6-9.** Why do you think Paul first appeals to Abraham as he looks to the scriptures to validate his gospel? It was commonly held that Abraham was declared righteous because of his obedience. After all, hadn’t he left homeland and family, accepted circumcision, and was willing to offer up his son for a sacrifice? Paul’s opponents certainly believed that. But Paul shows that Abraham wasn’t declared righteous because of his obedience, but because of His belief. Nine times Paul refers to Abraham in Galatians as an example of faith, not law-keeping.

What does it mean when it says that Abraham's faith was "counted...to him for righteousness?" Justification is a term taken from the legal system. "Counted" or "reckoned" is a term taken from the business world. It means "to credit" or "to place something to one's account".

It doesn't mean that faith is equivalent to righteousness or that righteousness is something we merit by trusting God. We are not counted righteous based on faith; rather, we are accounted righteous by or through faith. Faith alone is the instrument that we exercise to lay hold of the ground upon which the Lord's verdict of righteousness is pronounced; faith is not the basis or ground upon which God makes His declaration. He makes His declaration based on grace.

Having a good credit rating is a worthy goal. God promises to credit His righteousness to all who believe. It's not based on works, but is offered through faith. To be counted righteous contemplates our restored fellowship with God. We are not only forgiven for past sins, but are treated as if we had never sinned.

**Romans 4:9-11:** "Does this blessedness then come upon the circumcised only, or upon the uncircumcised also? For we say that faith was accounted to Abraham for righteousness. How then was it accounted? While he was circumcised, or uncircumcised? Not while circumcised, but while uncircumcised. And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had while still uncircumcised, that he might be the father of all those who believe, though they are uncircumcised, that righteousness might be imputed to them also."

Abraham was counted righteous while uncircumcised. Therefore justification came to him apart from the works of the law. Therefore, there is nothing you and I can do to earn Christ's imputed righteousness. It is impossible anyway. Think about it: I need Christ's imputed righteousness because I have sinned. The wages of sin is death. Plus the law of God demands perfect obedience which I cannot give. In order to be counted righteous therefore, I would need to die for my sins, be raised back to life (by myself) in order to live righteous life to meet the demands of the law. That's akin to picking yourself up by your bootstraps. Impossible.

Think about it another way: If I sinned against you. Let's say I gossiped behind your back; said mean things about you. Could my good deeds toward another person ever atone for what I have done to you? What do I need? I need your forgiveness. It's the same with God. All the "good" I hope to do for others can never atone for the sin I've committed against Him. I need His forgiveness. I need to go to Him to let Him forgive me and count be righteous.

**Romans 4:19-25:** "And not being weak in faith, he did not consider his own body, already dead (since he was about a hundred years old), and the deadness of Sarah's womb. He did not waver at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strengthened in faith, giving glory to God, and being fully convinced that what He

had promised He was also able to perform. And therefore ‘it was accounted to him for righteousness.’ Now it was not written for his sake alone that it was imputed to him, but also for us. It shall be imputed to us who believe in Him who raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead, who was delivered up because of our offenses, and was raised because of our justification.”

### Wednesday – The Gospel In The Old Testament

Genesis 12:3; Galatians 3:16; Romans 8:4; Hebrews 10:16

**Galatians 3:8.** The gospel in the OT? I thought the gospel could only be found in the NT! Apparently not. Abraham had it preached to him. And who preached it to him? It came to him from God. So would there be anything wrong with this gospel? Absolutely not! When did God preach the gospel to Abraham. He did so in relation to the covenant He made with Abraham.

**Genesis 12:3:** “I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse him who curses you; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.”

**Galatians 3:16:** “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.” (cf. Gen. 12:7; see also Isa. 53; Ps. 31:1-5; Zech. 3:1-4, etc.)

It’s important to realize that this covenant is centered on God’s promises to Abraham. While it required Abraham’s cooperation, God was the one who put Himself on the line to fulfill the promise. He said, “I will” four times in Gen. 12:1-3. If only he had remembered that when he was tempted to figure it out on His own. If only Israel has learned that lesson, but instead they said, “All that the Lord has said we will do.”

**Romans 8:4:** “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.”

**Hebrews 10:16:** “This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, says the Lord: I will put My laws into their hearts, and in their minds I will write them,”

### Thursday – Redeemed From A Curse

Galatians 3:9-14; 2 Corinthians 5:21

**Galatians 3:9-14.** Paul’s argument is based on the blessings and curses outlined in Deut. 27 & 28. They were pretty straightforward; you obey you’re blessed, you disobey, you’re cursed. That means if a person wants to rely on obedience to the law for acceptance with God then the whole law needs to be kept. We don’t have the liberty to pick and choose what we want. God cannot overlook a few mistakes here and there. It’s all or nothing.

Good news or bad news? For Paul's legalistic opponents, the Gentiles, and anyone outside of Christ, it is bad news. For all have sinned and the wages of sin is death (Rom. 3:23; 6:23).

How did Christ redeem us from the curse of the law?

**Galatians 3:13:** "Christ has 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')."

**2 Corinthians 5:21:** "For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him."

Praise God for the wonderful provisions He has made for our salvation!