

Galatians 3

Sustaining Freedom in an Enslaved World

In chapter one we talked about a child trapped in a house during a fire. We talked about how much her father would want to rescue her because he loves her so much. Her life was valuable and served a purpose. He wouldn't want to see her perish. We talked about how the father would possibly risk his own life to save that of his child. Wouldn't you? Now imagine that this child's father successfully got her out of the fire alive. Rescue mission complete. But as her father is carrying her away from the flames, she is looking over his shoulder at the house burning and begins screaming that she wants to go back in (think toddler here...2-4 years old). This just wouldn't make sense, would it?

1. What are some possible reasons the young girl might want to go back into the burning home?

2. What would happen if her father allowed her to go back?

3. What does the fire represent in this illustration?

Much like an earthly father would go to great lengths to rescue his child from danger, God, our heavenly Father, did something similar when He sent His son to rescue *His* children by laying down His life for ours.

4. How are we similar to the Galatians in the way we “go back into the fire” after being rescued? What does this look like in your life?

5. Does God allow us to go back into the fire? Why or why not?

When Jesus died and rose again three days later, He claimed victory over sin and death for all mankind. We were rescued once and for all. He defeated the devil and his army, and gave us the keys to eternal life through faith in him. However, we don't always live like that's true. And we have an enemy who knows he's been defeated and works relentlessly to make sure we forget the truth. Like the little girl who runs back to the burning house after she's been rescued to retrieve her beloved items that she thinks she can't live without, we do the same when we forget the freedom which has been purchased for us and we don't recognize the traps that our adversary has laid.

Neil T. Anderson, in his book, *Bondage Breaker*, says this about the battle between living as a new creation in Christ and succumbing to our old self:

“Furthermore, flesh patterns are still present. These learned habit patterns of thought and previously conditioned responses prompt you to focus on your own interests. However, you are no longer *in the flesh* as your old self was; you are now *in Christ*. But you can still choose to *live according to the flesh* (Romans 8:12-13), complying with those old urges that were conditioned to respond independently of God.” (pg. 60)

6. What are some old urges that you find yourself complying with? (these could be toxic thoughts, actions, habits, addictions, etc). List them here.

7. Think back to the garden...why would obeying these old urges be acting independently of God?

As a recap, the old urges that the Galatians would have been conditioned to were following the rules and regulations of the Jewish law in order to earn favor and acceptance from God. The issue of circumcision, and whether or not that requirement still existed after Jesus, plagued the churches of Galatia. The false notion that they could control their salvation based on works (circumcision), completely eliminated the need for Christ to die. Remember last week...if they could work their way into salvation, why would Jesus need to come at all? This “old urge” of justifying themselves with their own works was too much of a temptation to withstand. While our temptations may look a bit different from the early church, in the social and cultural context in which we are now living, we still fall victim to the same essential trap: Putting ourselves in the driver's seat of our lives. This is the point Paul will drive home in this chapter.

Paul speaks some hard truth (Galatians 3:1-5)

O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you that you should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed among you as crucified? (Galatians 3:1 NKJV).

8. What term does Paul use to describe the Galatians? Why do you think he uses this term?
9. Paul suggests that the Galatians had been “bewitched” because it was very clear to them, before, that Jesus Christ was crucified. They were acknowledging something contrary to what they knew in their heart. How would doing this make one foolish?
10. What question does Paul ask in v. 3 as to snap them out of the spell that had seemingly been cast on them? Write it here:
11. Providing scripture to back up your answer, why can’t we be made perfect in our flesh?
12. Why do you think it’s so hard for us to believe the simple truth that we don’t have to do anything to earn God’s grace and faith alone is all that’s required?

My husband once worked for an insurance agency in Houston. Every so often, this company would require their employees to keep updated on their profession by attending seminars, conferences, and training. He recalls one seminar, in particular, that was offered to his company for free. Every two weeks leading up to it, his agency would announce it to the employees. To their surprise, almost no one would sign up for it. It wasn’t as if this seminar was lacking anything different than the rest - people just wouldn’t sign up! A year or so later, this same seminar had a price attached to it of \$50. Within a week, the seminar was fully booked with a waitlist. The point of that story? You and I (and the rest of mankind) have been conditioned to believe there’s no value associated with something free. We believe we have to work for what we get, and output is determined by our input. In most all situations this concept stands valid - which is why God’s free gift of grace is a hard thing to wrap our heads around. Not to mention, we have an active enemy who is at work in our lives, and the world, doing his best to make sure we *never* wrap our heads around it.

13. How did you first hear the good news of Jesus Christ? Did you believe it when you heard it? What life experiences have shaped your faith and the realization of this free gift? Explain.

Even though we will continually struggle between right and wrong, if we've placed our faith in Christ, we get a Helper to guide us through this fallen, enslaved world. Last chapter, we learned that there is power walking by the Spirit. We will learn more about this in later chapters.

14. Without referencing scripture, record what you know about the Holy Spirit below:

15. According to Galatians 3:5, on what basis does God supply the Spirit to us?

16. Can you think of anything else in your life that you've heard without seeing, but believed? Was there any evidence of what you'd heard that helped your belief? Explain.

The Bible tells us that the moment we place our faith in Jesus Christ, God gives us His Spirit (John 7:38-39). It is by His Spirit that we live out our faith. It is by the Spirit's power that we resist the flesh and its desires. This is the evidence of believing what we've heard. The same Spirit that raised Christ from the dead is literally the same Spirit at work in us (Romans 8:11). What authority we've been given!

Read Romans 8:5-15.

17. According to these passages of scripture, the mind set on the flesh is _____, but the mind set on the Spirit is _____ and peace. Based on what you've learned so far, why do you think this is?

18. Is Paul speaking to the Romans about literal death or spiritual death in Romans 8:13?

19. What does “putting to death the deeds of the body” (Romans 8:13) look like in your own life?

1 Corinthians 12 and John 16:5-15 speak more about the Holy Spirit and the role He plays in the life of a born again believer. Scan these passages of scripture to learn more about the power of the Holy Spirit.

The Righteous Shall Live by Faith (Galatians 3:6-12)

Paul will spend the rest of this chapter defending the message of the gospel by referencing Abraham’s faith. For more information on the story of Abraham, read Genesis (chapters 12 - 22). The promise God made to Abraham, because of his faith, was that all the nations of the earth would be blessed through his seed. *All the nations*. This is commonly referred to as the Abrahamic covenant. This promise happened close to the beginning of time as we know it, and included me and you. God had this rescue plan in mind the whole time. Think about that for a second.

Read Genesis 15:5-6.

20. What did God show and tell Abraham previous to Abraham’s belief?

21. Have you ever been told something so crazy and so out there, but for some reason - you believed it? What caused you to believe it?

22. Why do you think Abraham believed what God had told him? Read Acts 7:2 for more insight.

23. Now think back to Paul's conversion on the road to Damascus. Explain the similarities between what Paul experienced and what Abraham experienced. Are there any differences?

These two men experienced the glory of God - the same God on different sides of the cross. How amazing is that! Seeing the glory of God *should* cause a man to believe, right? Maybe you're reading this and you're frustrated because you can't recollect a time where you witnessed the glory of God. Perhaps there's a twinge of envy rising in your heart and you long to experience what Abraham and Paul did. Be encouraged! The Bible tells us, in Romans 8:20, that through creation, man can see the invisible attributes of God - His eternal power and divine nature. So, if you feel like you're missing out on experiencing God, quit the scrolling, turn off the tv, and go outside, my friend! In an age where nature has been largely replaced by 4 inch screens, I'd like to suggest that we gaze into the night sky and marvel at the same stars God showed Abraham; be filled with wonder at the glory that's available for all of us.

24. Paul notes in Galatians 3:6 that *because* Abraham believed, he was counted righteous. Write the definition of righteous below:

Read Job 15:14.

25. Based on your previous knowledge and this question that Eliphaz the Temanite poses to Job, what can we infer about the condition man is born in? Are we righteous from birth? Why or why not?

Abraham, a man born into sin like everyone else, was counted righteous by God - not because of what he *did*, but by what he *believed*. Paul goes on to tell the Galatians that anyone who is of faith - who believes also - gets the same blessing Abraham got. So whether Jew or Gentile, those that share the faith of Abraham become his sons and daughters (Galatians 3:7-9).

26. What is the blessing Abraham received?

It's important to note that up until Jesus, the Jews were God's chosen people. He set them apart as His holy nation (Deuteronomy 7:6-8). Out of their rejection of Him, and God's great love for mankind, came the Messiah to save *all* people groups (Romans 11:15; John 3:16). So if you were

a recently converted Jewish Christian reading this letter at the time, you've either accepted or you're finding out real fast that you just got a whole bunch of adopted brothers and sisters! The Gentiles - the very people that Jews used to separate themselves from (refer back to Paul and Peter debacle in chapter two) - were now, through Jesus' blood, grafted into the family! (Romans 11:19).

27. What do you think Paul is implying by Galatians 3:11-12?
28. Look back at what you wrote for your answer on question number 20. Did this belief affect your behavior in any way? Did it affect any other aspect of your life? If so, explain.
29. Should a belief that God raised Jesus from the dead and being a born again believer set on living a life that honors God, by the power of His Holy Spirit, affect one's behavior? Why?

The point, I believe, Paul is trying to make here - is that living life trying to obey a set of rules (the law), without a heart change (faith), produces nothing. Remember, it's by believing in our *heart* that God raised Jesus from the dead and the confession that Jesus is Lord (Romans 10:9) that we are saved. However, if we live life out of a sincere heart (faith) - letting the Holy Spirit lead - we will find ourselves automatically obeying the works of the law without really even thinking about it. I believe Paul is suggesting that *this* is the mode in which we are to operate. James adds to this by declaring that faith without works is dead (James 2:17). So, both faith and works endeavor together, but one produces the other - our faith produces our works.

30. Think of a time when someone in your life exhibited good works because of their faith. Describe what it looked like and the good it did.

Redemption through Christ and one heck of a smoking gun (Galatians 3:13-26)

In this section of scriptures, we'll see how Paul makes an argument against the Judaizers by using Abraham as an example. Since early Jews would have been well acquainted with the

writings of Moses and old covenant traditions, using Abraham as an example would have struck a chord. Because they were claiming the law was a means to salvation, Paul made it clear that Abraham was counted righteous by his faith 430 years *before* the law existed - making their point completely invalid. Scripture also tells us (Gen. 17:24) that Abraham was justified by his faith prior to his circumcision. The circumcision (works) only resulted as a result of his faith. This would have been a big blow, specifically to the Judaizers in Galatia, because this was one of the false teachings they were claiming: Faith + works saves. Like a prosecutor with a smoking gun, Paul systematically dismantled the Judaizers case and reminded the churches of Galatia with some hard evidence that - just like Abraham only had to believe - they could do the same.

31. What did Christ become in order for us to be redeemed according to Galatians 3:13?

32. So what/who was the promise that God gave to Abraham?

33. How does this promise that God made to Abraham, over 4,000 years ago, affect us today (look at Galatians 3:13-16 for help) *if we choose it?*

34. Does this change your view of God in any way? Explain.

35. Why do you think God gave the law to His people to live by if He knew that He would be sending His son to rescue us eventually?

36. Paul says in Galatians 3:23 that we were “kept under guard by the law, kept for the faith which would afterward be revealed”. What would they need to be kept under guard from? What is the faith Paul is talking about?

37. In your own words, explain how you comprehend Paul’s analogy of the law being like a tutor for God’s people before Christ came.

43. How does the reality that Christ came for *all* of us affect how you might look at people who may be different than you?

Reflection and Action - “Do not fear for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, You are mine!” - Isaiah 43:1

Now imagine a house on fire that is full of children. What lengths would a father go in order to save all of his children from the fire? Would he just save one and be content, or would he keep going back in for all of them? The Bible tells us that our Heavenly Father wishes for none to perish (2 Peter 3:9)! Like a shepherd who loses a sheep, He'll leave the rest of the ninety-nine to find the one (Matthew 18:12-14). But just as children who have been rescued by their father keep wanting to go back in the fire, we struggle - just like the Galatians did - with going back. Although our struggles (today in a western culture) may look a bit different than those of our Christian ancestors, we can be assured of one thing: Sin affects us all. We all *forget* to a certain extent or another the grace in which we've been given and the lengths our Savior went to rescue us. Somewhere along the line, we started listening to the voices around us instead of the voice within us - voices from a culture obsessed with self. The voices of the Judaizers haven't varied much from then to today. The same voices that told the Galatians that Jesus' work wasn't enough beckon us to do the same. They deceive us to look away from what's been done for us to take notice of what we can do for ourselves instead. And in a 21st century world that praises this mentality, we forget.

But, do you think a rescuer ever forgets who he rescues? Your heavenly Father has not forgotten you. In fact, He is in relentless pursuit of you! He stands with His hand extended. Choosing Him or choosing the world - this is the daily battle we face. God wants us to believe in the FREEDOM that His son purchased for us (Eph 1:7). It's time to let go of the chains that are keeping you from taking flight, and remember you are clothed with Jesus (Galatians 3:27). When God looks at you, He sees His son who went to battle on your behalf - *and won*. My sister, victory is yours because of what our good, good Father accomplished on the cross. Whatever is bogging you down, give it to God in prayer. Crank up the worship music. Sing praises to your Creator, Redeemer, and Friend. Then do whatever you need to do to remember:

You are not forgotten.

You are loved.

You are chosen.

You are redeemed.

You are set apart.

You are holy.
You are blameless.
You are forgiven.
You are His.
And you are FREE.

So, sister in Christ, daughter of the Most High King, and beloved of God - what truths can you begin remembering *today* to start claiming your adoption right? To start walking with your head a little higher like the flames can't touch you because you've got the God of the Universe calling you *His*? List them here: