

THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST

SPREADING THE SOUL-SAVING MESSAGE OF JESUS

GALATIANS LESSON 2

Introduction by narrator accompanied by a cappella singing:

THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST. Spreading the soul-saving message of Jesus. And now, Timothy Sparks and Ben Bailey.

Ben Bailey:

“For I, through the law, died to the law that I might live to God” (Gal. 2:19).

Timothy Sparks:

We are so glad that you have tuned in to our broadcast today. As always, we would like to offer an invitation for a free copy of our lessons on DVD, VHS, or CDs. All of our lessons are available free of charge. All you need to do is let us know which ones you want. Visit us on our website at www.thegospelofchrist.com. E-mail us to let us know which lessons you would like, and we will be more than happy to send those to you. Also, we have streaming audio and video lessons on our website. You may download these and use them to assist you in your study of God’s Word. That’s what today’s lesson is all about—each of us coming to the Word of God to study it in order to learn what God wants us to do. We also would be glad to send you the first lesson of an eight-lesson Bible correspondence course. You will receive it by mail, and after you have completed lesson number one, you can return it to us for grading. We then will send you back that lesson (graded), along with the next lesson, and so on. At the end of the course, you will receive a “Certificate of Completion.” We believe this could prove very beneficial to you in your study of God’s Word.

In Galatians 2:19-20, Paul provides what might be called the “heart” of the book. He says: “For I, through the law, died to the law that I might live to God. I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.” Paul confesses that his “old self” is gone, and that the “new him” is living in Christ. In verse 21, he makes the point that if righteousness came by the Old Law, then Christ died for nothing, and would have died in vain. Thus, Jesus has replaced the Old Law. As Paul said in Colossians 2:14, Christ nailed the Old Law to the cross and took it out of the way. As a result, God’s way and will for our lives **today** is found only within the New Testament.

Ben Bailey

Some religionists continue to suggest that the Old Law is still in effect, yet the Old Law itself stated that it was not supposed to endure forever. In Jeremiah 31:31-32, the prophet said: “Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah—not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt.” What covenant did God make with His people when he led them out of the land of Egypt? It was the Law of Moses—the Old Law. God was quite clear that He would make a new covenant with His people—unlike the one He had made at Mt. Sinai. Thus, we can

see from the testimony of the Old Testament itself that it was a temporary law. The writer of the Book of Hebrews said: "What is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away" (8:13). In Matthew 5:17-18, Jesus said: "Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill. For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled." Jesus "completed" the Old Law. He fulfilled its prophecies about Him as the Messiah, and in so doing, nailed it to the cross, replacing it with the New Covenant of Jesus Christ. Hebrews 9 teaches us that in order for a new covenant to take effect, there must first be the death of the one who made the covenant or will. Hebrews 9:15-17 makes it clear that the will of Christ went into effect after the death of Christ. We today are not to follow the Old Law, because we will not be judged by that Law. We will not be judged by the Ten Commandments. Rather, as Jesus said in John 12:48: "The word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day." If we try to go by the Old Law today, that, then nullifies the New Law and places the Old Law in a place of more prominence and importance.

Timothy Sparks:

Christ was crucified for sins. And Paul says that he has been crucified with Christ. Thus, Paul is dead to the Old Law, and he is alive through Christ and His New Law. Have you been crucified with Christ? When you have, you are no longer living for yourself. Rather, you are living for Him Who died for you so that you can live to the glory of God. As Paul put it, "I no longer live, but Christ lives in me." Paul told the Christians in Colossae that Christ [is] in you, the hope of glory" (Col. 1:27). Is Christ in **you**? According to Romans 8:9, "if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His." Having the Spirit of Christ means that we go where Christ would go and do what Christ would do. Are you going where Christ would go? Are you doing what Christ would do. Paul had been crucified with Christ, and Christ was living in Him. Paul's motto in life was: "For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain" (Phil. 1:21). In the words of Jesus: "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me" (Lk. 9:23). Jesus also said: "No one, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God" (Lk. 9:62). So, we will put our hand to the plow, we will take hold of the kingdom of God, and we will keep pressing on. We will "press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 3:14). This concept of being crucified with Christ and being dead to the Old Law, allows us to serve Jesus better, and becomes a very powerful force in our lives today.

Ben Bailey:

In Galatians 3:1, Paul chastised the Christians in Galatia when he said: "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?" Paul wanted to know who had deceived the Christians into thinking that the cross of Christ was of less importance than the Old Law? Paul wanted to know who had tricked these people into not obeying the truth. When someone convinces us to revert back to trying to live under the Old Law, then they have deceived us into believing something that the New Testament does not teach. The Old Law is no longer our guide or pattern. Today, we live under the New Law. The Old Law was a preparatory law, as Hebrews 8:6-8 makes clear: "Now He [Christ] has obtained a more excellent ministry, inasmuch as He is also Mediator of a better covenant, which was established on better promises. For if that first covenant had been faultless, then no place would have been sought for a second." God had always planned to bring Christ into the world. The Old Law "paved the way" for that to occur. The numerous Old Testament prophets pointed toward the Messiah, and toward the events of Acts 2 when the church began.

In Galatians 3:2, Paul asked: “Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?” When we receive the promise of eternal life and other such spiritual gifts, do we receive them as a result of works of the law, or as a result of the hearing of faith? That phrase “hearing of faith” is important. In Jude 3, we learn that we are to “contend earnestly for the faith.” In Acts 6:7, we learn that many of the priests were “obedient to the faith.” The phrase “the faith” represents a system of faith. In Romans 1:17, we read how “the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith.” It’s the idea of the New Testament plan of salvation. Paul wants to know: “Did you receive the Spirit by works of the flesh, or by hearing God’s Word? It wasn’t by works of the flesh or the works of the law. They could offer sacrifices night and day, but could those sacrifices take away their sins? Not according to Hebrews 10:3-4. The blood of bulls and goats could not take away sin. All the Sabbaths they observed, all the rituals they performed, and all the festivals in which they participated—did those things give them the gift of salvation? No. The only way those people could be saved was through the promise of Jesus Christ (Heb. 9:15-17). This is why Jesus Himself said: “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me” (Jn. 14:6). It’s the Gospel of Christ, not the Old Law, by which we are saved.

Timothy Sparks:

Paul stresses this phrase (“hearing of faith”) twice—in Galatians 3:2 and 3:5. This is the same concept stressed in Romans 10:17 (“faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God”). Paul makes it clear that we must “hear” in order to have faith. Today, we “hear” the Gospel by our reading of the New Testament—the Word of God. Paul uses Abraham as an illustration of one whose faith came by hearing. Abraham was one who was counted as righteous because he believed God (Gal. 3:6). This doesn’t mean that Abraham “just” heard what God said but didn’t act upon it. Rather, the word “believe” is a comprehensive word that is used throughout the New Testament. It means that we have what might be called a “trusting obedience” in God, or a “complete compliance.” In James 2:23, we see that Abraham was called “the friend of God” because he believed in and obeyed God. We, too, will be the friends of God when we do exactly what He has commanded us to do. We, therefore, must be what James called “doers of the Word” (1:22), and not just hearers. Abraham—whom the Jews revered as their father—provides a great example of faithfulness.

Ben Bailey:

Those people who suggest that faithfulness today can be found through our obedience to the Old Law fail to understand what Paul said in Galatians 3:10 when he wrote: “Cursed is everyone who does not continue in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them.” His statement is a quote from Deuteronomy 27:26. Think about this: Did everyone who lived under the Old Law live perfectly under that law? Not at all! In Acts 15, Peter and the other brethren admitted that they could not live under the Old Law perfectly. And the problem was that if you didn’t keep the Law perfectly, then you fell under a divine curse. Paul said in Galatians 3:11: “That no one is justified by the law in the sight of God is evident.” Then he quoted Habakkuk 2:4: “The just shall live by faith.” Even under the Old Law, you weren’t “made right” by keeping the Law. It was not the case that “the more works you did, the better you were,” even though many of the Jews **felt** that way. Habakkuk pointed out that the just, the righteous, actually “live by faith.” It was this faith that provided their stamina and that kept them going. The Law insisted that its precepts be obeyed. Paul went to the book of Leviticus, and said that people who lived under the Old Law had to be sure that they did **everything** the law commanded. Anyone today who says that we must obey the Old Law really is placing a curse upon himself. “Cursed is everyone who does not continue in all things which are written in the book of the law.”

Timothy Sparks:

In Galatians 3:13, we learn that “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’).” Paul’s point is that not only are we no longer under the Old Law, but, in fact, Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law. In this verse, we learn of the reverse of the curse! Christ reversed the curse of the cross, and turned it into a blessing for us. As Paul put it in Galatians 3:14: “that the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles in Christ Jesus, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.” Jesus took upon Himself the curse of the Old Law so that you and I might be redeemed. Our redemption cost God His most precious and prized possession—His Son. The word “redeemed” means “to buy back.” God “bought us back” from sin when He redeemed us through the blood of His Son, Jesus Christ. We should be so grateful that we no longer would **want** to live under the Old Law, since we now have an opportunity to live in the “sunlight age of Christianity.” As the writer of the Book of Hebrews put it: “How shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation?” (Heb. 2:3). However, our redemption has to be secured via our obedience to the Gospel of Christ. This blessing has been extended to you and to me, because we certainly would fall into the category of the Gentiles. It boils down to the fact that either **we** pay for our sins, or we allow **Christ** to pay for them. If we pay for our sins, we will do so eternally in torment. But if we allow Christ to pay for our sins, then we can live with God forever in Heaven. This is one of the reasons why it is so important for us to understand that we no longer live under the Old Covenant, but under the New.

Ben Bailey:

Now Paul moves on to discuss the promise made to Abraham in Genesis 12:2-3. “I will make you a great nation; I will bless you and make your name great; and you shall be a blessing. 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.” Through Abraham, a blessing was going to come upon all people. But Paul goes on to say:

“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. 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” (Gal. 3:16-17).

The language here is very purposeful as Paul tries to make a point. Was the Law in effect at the time the promise was made to Abraham in Genesis 3? No, it came 430 years **after** that promise. Now, **you** are suggesting that the promise was predicated on a law that came 430 years later? Paul says that is **not** the case, and that anyone who suggests that it is, is using the wrong terminology. The Jews apparently thought it said, “in your **seeds** [plural] I will bless all nations.” No, said Paul, that’s incorrect. It is “in your **seed** [singular] I will bless all nations.” The Jews thought that because they were of Abraham’s lineage, and because they were the “children of promise,” then they would receive this blessing automatically. Paul corrected them by reminding them that the word “Seed” refers to Christ, and that Jesus was promised to **all** people—long before their precious Law was given. Paul asks: “How can you say that the Old Law—which was not even in effect when the promise was given—must be obeyed to reap the benefit of the promise?” Christ, Paul is saying, was promised to **all people** (both Jews and Gentiles alike)—not just the Jews. The promises related to Jesus are not predicated on the Old Law. They are predicated on our faithfulness to God and our obedience to His will.

Timothy Sparks:

We learn from Galatians 3:19-21 that the purpose of the Old Law was to keep sin in check until Christ could come. The Old Law served as a type of “guardian” to lead us to Christ, as we learn from Galatians 3:24. Once Christ arrived, He would remove the Old Law, because it no longer was needed to guide people to Him (since He fulfilled its prophecies about the Messiah, and was already here). In Hebrews 8-10, we learn that Christ removed the Old Law so that He might establish the New Covenant. In Romans 7:12, Paul wrote: “Therefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy and just and good.” In other words, it accomplished its purpose. It wasn’t faulty. Rather, the fault was with the people (Heb. 8:6-8). The Old Law was never intended to provide an escape from sin. Christ was needed to accomplish that.

Ben Bailey:

This, then, takes us back to Galatians 2:21: “If righteousness comes through the law, then Christ died in vain.” Paul’s point in this section of Galatians is that the Jewish Christians who were binding portions of the Old Law (like circumcision) upon Gentiles who wanted to become Christians had missed two important points. First, by returning the Old Law, you give up your freedom in Christ and place upon yourselves the curse of the Old Law. Second, you’ve misunderstood the promise made to Abraham, as well as the purpose of the Old Law. The purpose of the Old Law was to keep sin in check. How would people have known what sin was if the Old Law hadn’t made that clear? God’s purpose in the Old Law was to show people their sin, not to make them righteous (since the Savior had not yet come). The New Law, conversely, doesn’t give us just a way to recognize sin, but instead provides the full plan of salvation by which we can be saved and made righteous in God’s sight. The Old Law was one of promise and prophecy—to tell us about the coming Messiah. That was the purpose of passages like Genesis 12:3—and the promise of how all nations would be blessed through Abraham’s seed. In the New Testament, we find the fulfillment of those wonderful promises. It doesn’t tell us, “they’re coming.” It tells us “they’re here.” Jesus preached that the kingdom of heaven was “at hand.” Salvation was being preached as a “present thing,” not as a “future promise.” When the Jews asked in Acts 2:37, “Men and brethren, what must we do?,” they were provided with an immediate answer: “Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit” (Acts 2:38). Salvation, as used in the New Testament, is **present** terminology, not future. This, of course, means that people today can receive that same salvation.

Timothy Sparks:

Some religious people misuse Paul’s comment in Galatians 3:27: “For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus.” There are those who suggest that this passage teaches that all a person must do is “have faith,” and that alone will make him a “son of God.”

Ben Bailey:

The word “believe,” or the concept of “having faith,” means more than just “mental assent.” In Hebrews 11, we are told that people in the Old Testament overcame “by faith.” Did those people “just believe,” or was there more to it than that? When the Israelites conquered the city of Jericho in Joshua 6, they didn’t “just believe.” Rather, they acted on their faith by doing the things God commanded them to do. Some suggest that faith precludes **any** type of work on the part of people who have faith. But John 6:29 says just the opposite. Jesus Himself said: “This is the **work** of God, that you **believe** in Him whom He sent.” Faith is something we **do**. It is not mere “mental assent.”

Timothy Sparks:

James said that “faith without works is dead” (Jas. 2:17). In Galatians 3:26-27, Paul says this: “For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.” Thus, those who have been immersed into Christ have put on Christ. True faithfulness in Christ will result in our obedience. It’s not just that we have “faith alone.” In fact, the only time that “faith alone” is discussed is in James 2: 24, and there **it is condemned**. We see examples in the New Testament of how even demons believed that Jesus is the Son of God. But were those demons saved, just because they **believed** that Jesus was the Son of God? Absolutely not! It’s not just to believe in Jesus or to confess that He is the Christ. Instead, the New Testament teaches that people who want to become Christians must believe, repent of their sins, confess that Jesus is the Son of God, and then be baptized into Christ for the forgiveness of their sins.

Ben Bailey:

Paul closes the third chapter of Galatians with these comments: “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you are Christ’s, then you are Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise” (vss. 28-29). Fortunately, we do not have to be a Jew to be saved. For those of us who are Gentiles, that is especially important. Today, all people, if they are willing to obey the Gospel plan of salvation, can become children of God.

We want to extend to you a heartfelt and personal invitation to attend the church of Christ. The churches of Christ are concerned about your salvation. We strive to follow the Bible in all that we do. If there is anything we can do to help you, please call on us. We will be happy to provide you with a DVD, VHS, or CD of any of these broadcasts, free of charge. Or, you can download streaming audios or videos of our broadcasts from our website: www.thegospelofchrist.com. God has given us a plan of salvation in the New Testament. You can read it for yourself. Jesus said, “This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He sent” (Jn. 6:29). We come to believe that Jesus is the Christ. Then we repent—we change our minds, change our hearts, and change our lives. We must be willing to conform our will to God’s will. We make the great confession, that we believe that Jesus Christ is indeed the Son of the living God. Then we are baptized, to have our sins washed away by the blood of Jesus (1 Pet. 3: 21). After that, we must live faithfully, that we might receive a crown of life. We hope you will continue to study with us as we strive to uncover more of “the unsearchable riches of Christ.”

Narrator accompanied by a cappella singing:

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STUDY QUESTIONS FOR GALATIANS LESSON 2

1. What passage in the Book of Galatians might be referred to as “the heart of the book”?
2. What is the relationship between Jeremiah 31:32-32 and Colossians 2:14
3. What did Jesus mean when He said in Matthew 5:17-18 that He had not come to “destroy” the Law, but rather to “fulfill” the Law?
4. List two undesirable effects that result when a person suggests that the Old Law still remains in effect today.
5. In Galatians 3:1, Paul wrote: “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?” What point was the apostle trying to get across?
6. What does the phrase “hearing of faith” mean in Galatians 3:2? Incorporate into your response Romans 10:17.
7. Explain the importance of Hebrews 8:6-8 in regard to the Old Law not still being in effect.
8. Why was Abraham called the “friend of God” (Jas. 2:23)?
9. What is the importance of James’ statement (Jas. 1:22) that we must be “doers of the word, not hearers only”?
10. According to Galatians 3:13, what did Christ do for us through His death on the cross?
11. What was the promise God made to Abraham in Genesis 12:2-3?
12. Explain the point Paul was trying to get the Jewish Christians in Galatia to understand in his comments in Galatians 3:16-17.
13. When the Scriptures say, “Now to Abraham and his Seed were the promises made,” does the word “seed” indicate the Jews? If not, to whom does it refer?
14. What was one of the purposes of the Old Law, according to Galatians 3:19-21?
15. Paul said that if righteousness did, in fact, come through the Old Law, then that would have an ill effect on Christ’s death. What was that effect?