

THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST

SPREADING THE SOUL-SAVING MESSAGE OF JESUS

GALATIANS LESSON 3

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.

Timothy Sparks:

“If you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise” (Gal. 3:29).

Ben Bailey:

And I'm Ben Bailey. Welcome to our study of the Book of Galatians. We are happy that you have tuned in to our broadcast today. This lesson is brought to you by individuals and congregations of the churches of Christ. We hope that you will visit the churches of Christ in your area and let them know how much you appreciate their support of this broadcast. If you have a Bible question or a spiritual concern, they would be more than happy to help you with it. If you would like a Bible study, they also would be glad to help you with that. We, too, would like to be of service in any way that we can. You may visit us on our website at www.thegospelofchrist.com, where you can download streaming audio and video lessons for use in your study of God's Word. And, as always, we will be happy to send you a free copy of this broadcast, or any of our other lessons, on DVD, VHS, or CDs. All of our lessons are available free of charge. We will even pay the postage. E-mail us to let us know which lessons you would like, and we will be happy to send those to you. We also would be glad to send you a Bible correspondence course. This is a course that you can take in your spare time. You receive it by mail, and when you complete one lesson, you can return it to us for grading. We then will send you 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.

From the Book of Galatians, we learn an important lesson about obeying God's will. Paul wrote: “If you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise” (Gal. 3:29). That promise is recorded in Genesis 22:18: “In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice.” The way to obtain blessings in Christ is to do the same thing Abraham did—**obey God's will**. We simply cannot say that it's not important to obey the will of God. The Bible says exactly the opposite. Jesus asked in Luke 6:46: “Why do you call Me 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do the things which I say?” We cannot claim Jesus as our Lord and Savior, and then refuse to obey His will. In Matthew 7:21, Jesus said: “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.” The writer of the Book of Hebrews wrote: “He is the author of eternal salvation to all those who **obey Him**” (Heb. 5:9). True, obedience by itself is not enough, because we have to have the right attitude exhibited in our obedience. But obedience on our part **is** necessary in order for us to be saved. Whenever someone suggests that “faith alone” (without obedience) is sufficient unto salvation, that represents a direct contradiction to the Word and will of God.

In fact, the only time the phrase “faith only” is mentioned is in James 2:24, and there it is condemned. “Belief” by itself will not save us. In fact, John 6:29 teaches us that belief itself is a type of work. The simple fact is that while we must believe, we also must obey God’s will.

Timothy Sparks:

This is the point made in Galatians 4:1-5, where Paul wrote:

“Now I say that the heir, as long as he is a child, does not differ at all from a slave, though he is master of all, but is under guardians and stewards until the time appointed by the father. Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world. But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons.”

If we belong to Christ, then we are truly Abraham’s descendants, and heirs according to the promise. That promise reached its fulfillment in Jesus Christ, Who was born of a woman, born under the law. He came to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. If we have obeyed the Gospel plan of salvation, then **we** are children of God. Isn’t that an endearing term that Paul uses: “the adoption as sons”?

Ben Bailey:

There are so many children today who do not have a father or mother (or both). Children’s homes are full of children who have lost their parents, or whose parents abandoned them. Think of how much these children long to have a mother and father, and how near and dear to their hearts that concept is. Now let’s think about our relationship with God. Sin severs the father/child relationship that we want to have with God, and that God wants to have with us. Isaiah made that clear when he wrote: “Behold, the Lord’s hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; nor His ear heavy, that it cannot hear. But your iniquities have separated you from your God; and your sins have hidden His face from you, so that He will not hear” (Isa. 59:1-2). Our sins have separated us from God. But through Jesus Christ, we can be come adopted sons and daughters of the heavenly Father because God loves us and cares for us, and now we are His children. Consider the words of the apostle John: “Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God!” (1 Jn. 3:1). We are children of a Father Who loves us, and Who has promised that if we seek His will and His kingdom, all else will be provided for us (Mt. 6:33). This does not mean that there won’t be times of discipline. Hebrews 12:9ff. makes it clear that a father sometimes must discipline his children. God, too, then, will discipline us on occasion. But everything that happens works toward our ultimate good. It is a wonderful blessing to know that we have God as our Father, and that we are our children. And the greatest blessing of all is that we are heirs of the divine promise that was given to Abraham. We have been promised a home in heaven with God. We’re heirs of the promise that Jesus Christ made to His disciples (and to us as well). If we live faithfully, we can live with Him in Heaven for all eternity. According to 2 Peter 1:3-4, we possess within God’s Word “all things that pertain unto life and godliness.” This is the message Paul is trying to stress. You cannot obtain these things through the Old Law; they come only through the New Law.

Timothy Sparks:

But all of this requires **obedience to God**. In Galatians 4:6-7, Paul wrote: “Because you **are** sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying out, ‘Abba, Father!’” “Abba” is terminology that represents a more child-like cry, whereas “Father” is the

terminology representing the appeal of a more mature person to God. God is the One Who sends His spirit into our hearts. We learn from Romans 8:9 that “those who are in the flesh cannot please God. But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His.” If we do not have the Spirit of God within our hearts, then we are not His children. God sends His spirit into our hearts when we obey His will. Peter wrote that we are able to “cast all our cares upon Him because He cares for us” (1 Pet. 5:7). But these blessings are available only to those who have obeyed Jesus and who have received His Spirit in their lives. When we have “the Spirit of Christ,” we will go where Christ goes, and we will do what Christ does. In John 6:63, Christ said: “It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing. The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life.” As long as we are hearing and obeying Christ’s words, then we will have the spiritual sustenance we need to live the Christian life. From Galatians 4, we learn how grateful and how thankful we should be that we are sons of God. If you have not obeyed the Gospel, we urge you to do so. You do not have to go to a religious leader or preacher to have him explain to you what you need to do. You can understand the will of God yourself. God has given us a message that is understandable. We can come to the New Testament, read and understand the message for ourselves, and then obey it. Yes, we have to be discerning, and we must be careful not to fall prey to false teachings so that we know what God’s message for us actually is. Exactly how, then, do we become children of God?

Ben Bailey:

In 2 Timothy 1:11-12, we learn that salvation is “in Christ.” There are passages, such as Galatians 3:27, which explain to us how we get “into Christ.” Paul wrote in that text: “For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.” But first we must hear the Word of God. Romans 10:17 teaches that “faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God.” We also must repent. Jesus taught in Luke 1:3: “Unless you repent, you shall all likewise perish.” We must confess Jesus before men. “For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation” (Rom. 10:10). Baptism plays an important part, too. In Acts 22:16, Saul was told: “Now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord.” If sin separates us from God (Isa. 59:1-2), and if our sins are washed away at baptism (Acts 22:16), then it is plainly obvious that we must be baptized to be saved. This is not to say that we somehow “merit” our salvation, for we must never suggest such a thing. But we also must not say that baptism is unimportant in salvation, since we are told in 1 Peter 3:21 that baptism saves us. Baptism therefore is essential. Paul explains in Galatians 4: 9-11 that he is concerned about some of the Christians. He writes: “But now after you have known God, or rather are known by God, how is it that you turn again to the weak and beggarly elements, to which you desire again to be in bondage? You observe days and months and seasons and years. I am afraid for you, lest I have labored for you in vain.” Paul observed that by doing these things, they were reverting to the Old Law. Perhaps they were observing the Day of Atonement. Or, perhaps they were still observing the Feast of Booths. Whatever they were doing in regard to reverting to the Old Law, Paul warned them **not** to do. Religious holidays that they used to observe, they no longer needed to observe.

Timothy Sparks:

Paul couldn’t understand why Christians would **want** to return to the bondage that they had previously experienced under the Old Law (or, as he put it, the “beggarly elements”—Gal. 4:9). Judaizing teachers were trying to take first-century Christians back to the curse

of the Old Law. Paul wanted them to know that if they “went backwards,” they were erring. Today, it’s no different. There are people who advocate, for example, that we must worship on Saturday (the Sabbath). But worship on the Sabbath was abolished when the Old Law was nailed to the cross of Christ. Paul made that clear in Galatians 3:13-14 when he wrote: “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’), that the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles in Christ Jesus, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith” (Gal. 3:13-14). Today, we shouldn’t be trying to “go backwards.” Rather, since we are under the New Covenant, we should be moving forward.

Ben Bailey:

Today, people observe holidays that they believe to be religious in nature. One good example is Christmas. We do not know when Christ was born. It most likely was during the spring, not during the month of December. We really don’t know for sure. Yet some people insist that we must celebrate Christ’s birth on December 25th. How is that any different, in principle from the first-century Christians going back to celebrate special days from the Old Law? The practical application for us is that we should not worship in any way, or on any day, that God has not commanded. The concept of Easter is yet another example. The word “Easter,” which appears in Acts 12 in the King James Version of the Bible, means “Passover,” and was inserted into the text at King James’ insistence because he had both pagan and religious roots, and he wanted Easter inserted into the biblical text. But Easter is not a holiday, or day of worship, ordained by God. There is now only one day of worship—Sunday, the first day of the week, the Lord’s Day (Acts 20:7). That is when we are called to worship God. We should not imitate the Christians in Galatia who wanted to bring in special days, feast days, or holidays, and make them something God didn’t intend for them to be under the New Covenant. In Galatians 4:13-14, Paul urged the Christians not to imitate the Judaizing teachers, but instead to imitate him as he imitated Christ. This is good advice for us as well. We should not follow the example of those in the world, but of Jesus. Consider the scene of Revelation 14 where there are a large number of people on Mt. Zion. Who are these people? The answer is: “These are the ones who follow the Lamb wherever He goes” (Rev. 14:4). We need to be like those people—and “follow the Lamb wherever He goes.”

Timothy Sparks:

Toward the end of Galatians 4, apparently Paul is dealing with some of the Christians who felt that he was chastising them without even considering the actual truth of the matter. And so, Paul makes this statement: “Have I therefore become your enemy because I tell you the truth?” (Gal. 4:16). A true friend will tell you the truth. Paul was not in the people-pleasing business. In fact, that’s how he began this epistle, by asking: “Do I now persuade men, or God? Or do I seek to please men? For if I still pleased men, I would not be a bond-servant of Christ (1:10). There’s an old saying that applies here: “Truth becomes offense only to those who never intend to obey it.” The Christians at Galatia had obeyed the truth, of course. But they were now headed back toward Judaism. They failed to realize that it was the truth of the Gospel that could set them free (Jn. 8:32). Paul’s question—“Have I therefore become your enemy because I tell you the truth?”—was intended to get across to those people that he **was** their friend because he wanted to get them out of error and back to the truth.

Ben Bailey:

Paul offers an illustration about the promise to Abraham that he had discussed earlier. He mentions Hagar's son Ishmael, and Sarah's son Isaac. Each is representative of a promise and of a law. Ishmael was more of a bondservant, since his mother was a handmaiden to Sarah. Isaac, on the other hand, was free, because he was born of the lawful wife of Abraham. Paul uses this comparison to show that Christians, too, are free. The promise of freedom was given to Abraham, and since we are children of that promise, then we are free. In Galatians 5:1, Paul says: "Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage." Just as Sarah and Isaac were free, you are children of Abraham's through Christ, and thus you are free. Freedom is a wonderful thing. We live in a country where we are free, and where we can live without many of the restraints that have existed in past centuries. But freedom in Christ is even **more** valuable. This freedom that we experience does not mean, of course, that we live without any restraints whatsoever, or that we are free to simply do and say whatever we please. Freedom in Christ is, I think, best described as the freedom to do whatever God asks us to do. We have the ability to choose, and if we are thinking biblically, we will freely choose to do what is right. I am not forced to obey God. I'm not predestined to live a certain way. I can choose. Joshua told the people of Israel: "Choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord" (Josh. 24:15). Each of us has a choice to make. What will **your** choice be? You, today, can choose to become a Christian, and know that you are doing God's will. But **you** have to make that choice. No one else can make it for you. Neighbors can't make it for you. Friends can't make it for you. Parents can't make it for you. Rather, **you** must choose, this day, to go to Heaven to live with God for all eternity, but you have to stand up and make that choice for yourself. Jesus asked in Mark 8:36-37: "For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?" The most important thing we possess is our soul. It will be **somewhere**—in either Heaven or Hell—for all of eternity. But we alone can make that choice. If a person is entangled in the shackles of sin, what can a person do to be free of that sin?

Timothy Sparks:

In Matthew 11:28-30, Jesus offers what has been called "the great invitation." He says: "Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light." In comparison to the overwhelming burden of sin, the yoke of Christ is light. Jesus invites us to believe in Him as the Son of God, and to repent of our past sins so that we can change our former evil ways and confess Him as Christ before men. Then, we can be immersed in water to access His cleansing blood so we can be released from the shackles of sin, and rise to walk in newness of life (Rom. 6:3-4) to live a faithful life. Christianity has been called "the land of beginning again." We can press on toward the goal of Heaven, all the while having the help of God and Christ, and access to the sword of the Spirit that will allow us to take a valiant stand for Jesus. In Revelation 3:20-21, Christ says: "Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me. To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne." For the alien sinner, the Gospel of Christ is the answer. And if a Christian has fallen away from Christ because his faith and zeal have waned, he can return and be restored to the Gospel of Christ, repenting of his past sins

and being welcomed back into the fold. Have **you** obeyed the Gospel? **If not, why not?** **Today** is the day of salvation. It can never be **too soon** to obey, and tomorrow may be **too late**. The New Testament explains God's will for you. You can be like the Bereans who are mentioned in Acts 17, and "search the Scriptures daily," to see if the things we say are true.

Today, it is our hope and prayer that you will continue in your study of the Word of God. Do not take our word on any of this, but search the Bible. And if the things we are saying are true, they are true because God said them, not because we said them. If you would like to have a copy of this broadcast, we will be happy to send it to you completely free of charge. You can log onto our website at www.thegospelofchrist.com and send us an e-mail, and we will be happy to send you a DVD, VHS, or CD of this lesson or any others. Also, on our website, you can view these lessons, or listen to them, via streaming video and/or audio. We also make available a Bible correspondence course at no charge. It is our prayer that you will continue to study with us as we endeavor to uncover more of "the unsearchable riches of Christ."

Narrator accompanied by a cappella singing:

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STUDY QUESTIONS FOR GALATIANS LESSON 3

1. In Genesis 22:18, God made a promise to Abraham. What was that promise?
2. What did Abraham have to do in order to receive the fulfillment of God's promise, and what must we today do to receive the fulfillment of God's promises to us?
3. Does the Bible have anything to say about "faith only"? If so, where? And what is said about it?
4. According to Isaiah 59:1-2, there is something that can "separate us" from God. What is that "something"?
5. John wrote: "Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God!" (1 Jn. 3:1). What must one do to become a child of God?
6. According to Romans 8:9, Christians must have something within their hearts in order to be considered children of God. What is that "something"?
7. We learn from 2 Timothy 1:11-12 that salvation is found "in Christ." How, according to the Book of Galatians, does a person get "in Christ"? Give a specific passage to support your answer.
8. In Acts 22:16, Ananias told Saul how to get rid of his sins. What did he tell Saul to do?
9. From the Book of Galatians, we learn that Judaizing teachers were affecting adversely certain Christians by teaching them a false doctrine. What was that doctrine?
10. What is the message for us today from Revelation 14:4?
11. Peter stated in 2 Peter 1:3-4 that within God's Word we have access to something we need. What is that "something"?
12. Paul compared people who lived under the Old Law to Hagar's son, Ishmael. What was his point in that comparison?
13. Paul compared people who live under the New Law to Sarah's son, Isaac. What was his point in that comparison?
14. In Matthew 11:28-30, Jesus said: "Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light." Christ was comparing two "yokes." What were the two?
15. Explain what "freedom in Christ" does **not** mean, and what it **does** mean.