

STUDIES IN GALATIANS

Study #5: Galatians 3:1-14

“You Were Running Well”

(Freedom vs. Legalism: The Truth Shall Set You Free)

You Were Running Well UNTIL: You Said, “I Do It Myself” –
Galatians 3:1-14

Key verse 5:7 —“You were running well; who cut in on you that you should not obey the truth?”

“You were running well; who cut in on you that you should not obey the truth?” That’s the key verse to the Book of Galatians Galatians 5:7. And we have built on that premise in this study. And today:

You Were Running Well: UNTIL: You Said, “I Do It Myself” –
Galatians 3:1-14

And our key verse today will be Galatians 3:3.

I think to a lot of people the Christian life is just a special experience of blessing and joy. We’ve got to understand from Paul’s perspective and from the Biblical perspective, the Christian life is a war.

Paul told Timothy: “Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. No man at war entangles himself

with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier.” (2 Tim. 2:3-4).

We know from our studies before, that we’ve got battles on three fronts when we become a Christian.

We’ve got the world around us that is not sympathetic with the relationship we have with Christ. We’ve got the devil himself, like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. And on top of that, we’ve got this old flesh that’s within us that still manifests itself through our pride and stubbornness.

We will notice that strongly today. The battle is, who’s going to take the controls? Who’s going to run the thing? What is it that God intended after we become Christians?

Listen to Tommy Franks in his book, *The American Soldier*. I admire him so much for the things that he stood for and the battles he fought and led for us.

I DIDN’T HAVE TIME TO PASS THROUGH TAMPA BEFORE HEADING BACK to CENTCOM Forward in Qatar. But I did speak to Cathy, Jacqy, and the grandkids on the phone.

“I’ll talk to you in a day or so, dear,” I told Cathy as the Pentagon sedan rolled up to Spar 06 on the ramp at Andrews.

My fingers went to the wedding ring Cathy had given me so long ago, and I felt a tear cross my face. I pulled a small Bible and a wrinkled American flag from my uniform pocket. The flag was one Jacqy had given me as I’d deployed to Desert

Shield in 1990. After that war I'd returned it to her as a souvenir; now she'd sent it to me again for luck. And the Bible was a gift from Cathy's grandfather, Jimmie Ellis, whom I had loved as the grandparent I'd never had, until his death in 1994.

I opened the Bible to my favorite scripture, Ephesians 6:11-17. "Put on the whole armor of God ... stand your ground ... putting on the sturdy belt of truth ... and the breastplate of God's righteousness ... use faith as your shield ... and take the sword of the spirit, which is the word of God." How many times had I turned to this page? And how many more times, in the days ahead, would I call on my faith as a source of strength? (p. 430)

I love that, when you see people in battle who are acknowledging God's sovereign purpose and control. That they are honoring God by honoring their country and being willing to lay down their lives if that is necessary.

John Ortberg kind of hits pretty hard on the whole business of living the Christian life and learning to lean upon the Lord.

I was traveling on obscure back roads in a part of the country I had never been to before. When I obtained a rental car, the man at the counter said to me, "Along with this car, if you want, you can also get a little box, a guidance system." Have you ever seen one of these? You plug it in and punch in your destination, and a voice will tell you how to get to wherever it is that you are going.

"Do you want to add this to the car?" he asked.

My immediate response was, “No. I’m not going to pay for that. I can find where I’m going without that.”

But when I went out to the parking lot, I could not find my car. I could not remember what stall it was in. I had to go back to the counter and tell the man I had gotten lost before I found my car.

I decided to get the box.

There was a voice coming out of the box. You don’t even have to look at a screen or follow a map. Someone talks to you. It is a British voice, because people who talk with a British accent always sound smarter. You’re just inclined to do what they say. And it was a woman’s voice, because ... same thing.

You can get the box. You can have the lady’s voice in the car, but that doesn’t mean you trust her. If you trust her, what do you do? You do what she says. You go where she tells you to go. If she says, “Turn left,” you turn left. If she says, “Turn left,” and your heart you think, *Oh, but I want to turn right*, you remember that verse, “There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death.”

To live in the flow of the Spirit means doing what Jesus says. I will mess up a lot. I am going to need his power. I know that, but I form the intention. I say to him, “God, with your help, as best I can, I will do what you say. I will give you my life, my time, my obedience.” If that is not my settled intent, then it is best to be honest about it. (*The Me I Want to Be*, pp. 44-45)

There is something else you need to know. At one point when I was driving in the unfamiliar territory, I was quite sure the lady in the guidance system was wrong. She said to

go left, and I didn't go left. I went right because I knew she was wrong. Then, in a fascinating response, she said, "Recalculating route. When safe to do so, execute a U-turn." I knew she still was wrong ... so I unplugged her. That is the beauty of that little box—you can unplug her.

And—would you believe it?—I got lost as a goose, which my wife enjoyed immensely. So we plugged that lady back in, and you know what she said?

"I told you so, you little idiot. You think I'm going to help you now? You rejected me. There is no way. You just find your way home by yourself."

No, of course she didn't say those things. She said, "Recalculating route. When safe to do so, execute a U-turn." That is grace.

God will say to you, "Here is the way home. Execute a U-turn." As soon as you are ready to listen, as soon as you are ready to surrender, that is repentance.

He will say, "I will bring you home." That is grace.

Jesus is the only one with authoritative wisdom about how to live. He is the only one to bring about the possibility of forgiveness for your sin and mine. He is the only one to give any kind of realistic hope of conquering death. To all who approach him, he is the thirst-quencher, the life-giver, the Spirit-bringer. No matter how wrongly you have erred in the past, if you sincerely ready to listen to and obey God, *you do not have to worry about God being mad at you.*

He is not that kind of God. (*The Me I Want to Be*, pp. 45-46)

I love that account because it makes us understand that there

are some things that have got to happen in our lives in order to bring all of this about.

President George Bush lectured in Tyler, Texas and honored Tommy Franks, the American soldier. As Tommy left the military after 34 years, he got this letter as he walked off the platform:

Dear Tommy,
Congratulations on your retirement from the U.S. Army.
You served our nation with distinction and class.
Our nation has been tested over the past two years. We were attacked by ruthless killers who thought we would cower. They were wrong. We had a man named Franks in charge.

Sincerely,
George Bush

(American Soldier, p. 536)

And to pay a tribute to him in that way and signed George W. Bush.

Can you imagine the thrill that he had in fulfilling those 34 years in sacrificing his life and willing to do that? And to give so much for our country and then to hear from the Commander in Chief, "Well done."

You know, that's the longing of every one of our hearts when it comes to our relationship with the Lord. Can you just imagine what it will be like when you stand before the Lord and you've

been faithful?

You've not only come to know Christ by faith but you have walked with Him by the same faith and God has led you and directed you and borne fruit in your life.

“Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which the Lord hath prepared for them that love him.” (2 Cor. 2:9).

Well, in today's study, in order to make this meaningful, I think we probably ought to do a verse with Frank Sinatra, “I Did It My Way.” Because that is really where Paul is going to hit the Galatians hard in this study.

Now you know the story of Jacob. He was able to purchase the birthright. He was able to steal the blessing. And in the process, finally at Peniel 20 years later, he started singing “I did it His way.” And for the remaining years of his life, God richly blessed him.

Now you know the situation at the Galatians church. The Galatian church is actually churches. On the first missionary journey in southern Galatia Paul, Barnabas and John Mark were together and they established churches in Antioch of Pisidia, Lyrstra, Iconium and Derbe—those four cities.

So this is a circular letter and it goes to those four cities.

There are some Judaizing teachers. That is, people who've

come in to say that Paul is not credentialed as an apostle. They've criticized his message by saying that you need to be circumcised if you're men and there are certain parts of the Law you must keep in order to be saved.

They've basically ruined Paul's ministry in establishing that church. So we've seen him hit real hard and in the first two chapters, the first four studies we've had together have been all personal.

1. You were running well until: no runs, no hits and a big error.

And that big error was a different gospel. And Paul said "Whoever those teachers are, they're troubling your mind and they're twisting the true gospel." That was the very first encounter.

2. You were running well until: you forgot what God was doing in your life.

And Paul recounted his full testimony from the time that he was on the Damascus road and met the Christ, took us on a little itinerary all the way back to Tarsus, his home. And then from Tarsus, Barnabas came and got him and wanted him to help in the church at Antioch. They were there for a while then Antioch sent them out on that first missionary journey. And if you'll remember it was Paul, Barnabas, and John Mark that went on that journey and that was how the church was established.

Basically what we're saying in that second study is each one of us have got a responsibility to record what God has been doing in our lives. That becomes our testimony. That becomes our witness to others when they want to know why you are so radiant. When they want to know why you're so different and why you have such joy and such happiness and such peace in your life.

3. You were running well until: divine direction was not discerned.

If you will remember, in that particular study there was a great confrontation that took place. And it was the confrontation at the Jerusalem Council. The church at Antioch, when Paul and Barnabas and John Mark got back 14 years later after that first missionary trip. Here were the Judaizing teachers right there in Antioch trying to mess up that church.

So the leaders of the church said "We want you guys to go down to Jerusalem and settle this stuff with the big boys!"

So you'll remember in that study, Paul, Barnabas and Titus was the test case, went with them down to Jerusalem and what happened? We've got two men, preaching to two different audiences but they only have one message. And it's salvation by faith and by faith alone, plus nothing.

And it was so great because here they were singing "Blest be

the tie that binds” and they were all five holding hands together. They were all one in ministry. And then last week, what happened?

4. You were running well until: peer pressure postponed progress.

As you’ll remember, Peter got so concerned about what was going on up in Antioch because Paul and Barnabas gave such glowing reports while they were down there in Jerusalem.

So he makes the 360 mile trip north and he comes into this huge dining room where all these folks are eating and fellowshiping at the church—say 500 or 600 people. And Peter is sitting down and eating with the Gentiles. That’s wonderful! That’s exactly what you had said in Jerusalem!

But then some more guys from James came in, if you’ll remember. When those guys came in, Peter gradually left and went over to sit down at the Jewish table. Well, boy oh boy. That just blew Paul out of the water right away. He stood up right in the dining room, if you’ll remember, and he really torched Peter big time. By basically saying to him that he made the crucifixion of Christ unnecessary by what he’s doing. And secondly, he’s also ceased to appreciate Paul’s ministry to the Gentiles, if that’s going to be the way you’re going to live your life.

Well, out of that we realize that many times we let people call shots in our lives instead of the Lord himself.

We conform to the culture and the Lord delights in people who will stand with conviction for what they believe. They stand for the truth.

And we use the illustration of Daniel and several others who describe that for us.

Now, we come to study #5:

You were running well until: you said “I’d do it myself.”

Now you know where that statement came from, don’t you? When you’ve got 12 grandkids and 1 great-grandchild you’ve heard it 16 zillion times haven’t you? When you’ve tried to help them put their shoes on, their pants on, or whatever. “I do it myself! I can handle this! I know what I’m doing!”

And you know, that’s the way a lot of people approach the Christian life. After they become a Christian they feel like they’re on a performance basis with the Lord. And if they’re ever going to get spiritual, then they’ve got to have certain legalistic requirements that they go through every day, so they can all of a sudden become spiritual.

You’ll never become spiritual by what you do. You’ll only become spiritual by He who works within you to produce that quality of Christlikeness.

This is the big problem that we’re facing today. Now, we’re

moving from chapter 2 to chapter 3.

Remember what I told you? Chapter 1 and 2 is all personal. We've just finished that. Now we're going to chapter 3 and this is doctrinal. That means it's teaching. He's giving you—and what rich verses we have today for us.

Am I, as a Christian today, saying that the fruit in my Christian life is by my own efforts? Paul will call that fruit by the flesh. It's fruit by own nature rather than by what the Spirit of God is doing in my life.

It's living by the Law. It's progress comes by performance. Now, that's the whole issue.

When we're thinking about this, folks that have this kind of mentality kind of have a joint venture with God. They will say "Two thirds of my Christian experience is in the Lord's hands. I'm saved!" Two thirds. "But He expects me, after I become a Christian, to perform certain things. And if I'll perform those things then I'm going to progress in becoming Christlike or more spiritual." And this is where the Law has entered into the situation.

Now, let me make these statements right out of the box.

1. You have nothing to do with your eternal salvation. It was all done by Jesus Christ upon the cross and it's handed to you as a gift and by faith you take it. That's your salvation.

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2. Now here's the next thing. You can do absolutely nothing about making yourself Godly. It is all by faith and the sanctifying power of the Spirit under the direction of the Lord Jesus Christ. That's the whole issue we're going to look at. And these verses are going to hit hard on that.

3. You have absolutely nothing to do about glorification. "Soon you shall be like him for you shall see him as he is." And the moment you walk into His presence you are transformed. The old nature, the flesh is gone. The old body is gone. You've got a brand new body and a brand new start in heaven. And you're going to be singing to God "To God be the glory! Great things He hath done!"

My Salvation.

My Sanctification.

My Glorification.

That's the bottom line doctrinally and that's what we're going to see in these verses. The conception of my spiritual experience, the continuation of my spiritual experience, and the consummation of my spiritual experience. It's all wrapped up in the total adequacy of the person, the Lord Jesus.

Now, do you remember how we ended last week? That personal part? How did Paul take it?

"I have been crucified with Christ: nevertheless I'm living; yet

not I but Christ is living in me: and the life that I am now living in the flesh I'm living by the faith by the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." (Gal. 2:20)

So he is the best advertisement for everything he's getting ready to tell us here in this third chapter.

Well I couldn't do a study without quoting Max Lucado once in a while:

With urgency and intensity, the apostle Paul admonishes the believers in Galatia to remember the fundamental truth of Christianity: Just as we came to Christ by faith alone, so now we also walk with him by faith alone. Religious works, no matter how great, do not merit greater approval from God. (*Life Lessons: Galatians*, p. 32)

He cuts to the chase and hits it, doesn't he?

You Were Running Well: UNTIL: You Said, "I Do It Myself" —
Galatians 3:1-14

Are you ready to get into the text? We're going to get after it. Here we go!

v. 1 O foolish Galatians who fascinated (bewitched) you before whose eyes Jesus Christ was portrayed having been crucified.

"O foolish Galatians who fascinated (bewitched) you before

whose eyes Jesus Christ was portrayed [as] having been crucified.”

Now remember, in that first study he got pretty strong. Well now again he’s calling them foolish. He says: “O foolish Galatians who fascinated (bewitched) you.”

I like to use parallel translations sometimes when I’m working on the Greek text.

And the NET translates it this way:

“You foolish Galatians! Who has cast a spell on you?”

Eugene Peterson with *The Message* is just a paraphrase but he says it so well:

“You crazy Galatians! Did someone put a hex on you? Have you taken leave of your senses?”

Actually people in these countries and at this particular time, actually believed that it is possible to have the evil eye upon you. To be hexed or to be cursed. And many of the letters that have been found from this time have this little statement at the bottom of it:

“Above all, I pray that you may be in health, unharmed by the evil eye, and faring prosperously.”

And so what he’s saying is this is the only way I can explain

the dramatic change in you. When we walked through your city so many of you came to know Christ personally and we were singing joyfully the great hymns of glory and now I've been gone, I've gone to the Jerusalem Council, and I'm getting word that many of you are going back to Judaism. And you're adding things that were never intended to be added to your salvation for the whole sake of hoping that you can make it.

Now when he says about the crucifixion: "whose eyes Jesus Christ was portrayed having been crucified"—every message he preached, he preached the crucifixion of Christ.

He said: "I determined to know nothing among you save Jesus Christ, and that One having been crucified" (1 Cor. 2:2)—when he talked of the Corinthian assembly.

And so the gospel of Jesus Christ was encompassed in the crucifixion of Christ. That's what it means in verse 1.

He's just so amazed that they have been reversed in their thinking and gone in a totally different direction.

You know, I looked at that and I thought to myself, how can you believe that salvation by grace, appropriated to us through faith, that you could ever add anything to it? And why would you want to?

Just think about the thief on the cross. In the morning he just says, as he's hanging next to Christ: "Remember me when you come into Your kingdom."

And what did Christ say? “Today you’ll be with me in the paradise.” And that night he’s in paradise.

No human works, effort, performance, ordinances, anything. Just simple trust in a Christ who’s dying on the cross for him. And as a result, he entered into the joy of salvation.

That’s the message that needs to be preached to this group of churches in Galatia.

Look at verse 2.

v. 2 This only I am desiring to learn from you. Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law or by the message of faith?

Now, what he’s going to do, by the way, he’s going to ask six questions. He already asked the first one: “Who bewitched you? Who cast a spell on you.” Now there’s two questions in verse 2 of the 6. And these two are multiple choice so you can make your choice.

“This only I am desiring to learn from you.”

1. “Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law or”
2. “by the message of faith?”

First of all it’s the question of WHO? Who’s the guy that’s

creating the havoc and confusion among you?

And number two, just tell me how is it that “you receive the Spirit of God?” Two possible answers:

1. “by the works of the law or”
2. “by the message of faith?”

Now you and I know the answer to that.

Romans 8:14: “For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.”

At the very moment of salvation, the Spirit of God takes us out of Adam and puts us into Christ.

The Spirit of God baptizes us by the Spirit into Jesus Christ. He comes to permanently indwell us.

Jesus said in the upper room when He came, He was going to guide us into all truth. He’s our teacher. We also know that He is our regenerator. He is functioned in the giving of life and our eternal salvation.

So he’s asking a loaded question isn’t he?

How did you receive the Spirit of God?

1. “by the works of the law or”

2. “by the message of faith?”

You can see as he’s tracking here the argument.

Verse 3 is our key verse for the study today.

v. 3 Are you so foolish, having begun in the Spirit now are you being brought to maturity in the flesh?

“Are you so foolish, having begun in the Spirit now are you being brought to maturity in the flesh?”

Wow! You see, there we are! If we think that salvation is a terminal experience and that we’re on our own for the rest of it and we’ve got the 10 commandments and the golden rule and the sermon on the mount, and these are things we’re going to do in order to gain greater likeness to Christ, then you’d be wrong wouldn’t you.

Question #3: “Are you so foolish?”

Question #4: “Although you began with the Spirit, are you now trying to finish in human effort?” (NET Bible)

Peterson paraphrases this:

Are you going to continue this craziness? For only crazy people would think they could complete by their own efforts what

was begun by God. If you weren't smart enough or strong enough to begin it, how do you suppose you could perfect it?

Woah! He hits it pretty hard!

The who in verse 1.

The how with multiple choice in question 2.

And now the orientation in questions 3 and 4.

The Galatians felt that by themselves in the observance of the Law, they could be brought to spiritual maturity.

Now, I want to just give you the rest of the story with Paul Harvey. Remember last week we left off with Peter and Paul ... in that battle. And you never did hear the outcome.

Now there's two things about Peter that makes me love him so much more.

Peter, not only realized that when he denied the Lord he really blew it big time, but as you'll remember, I told you last week, this is just as big. When he's telling a bunch of Christians that they've got to keep the Law right in the presence of Gentile believers...

He went out and wept bitterly I think this same way. But I want to give you the rest of the story. He was crucified upside down for the cause of Christ so he gave his life.

But 1 Peter 5. Are you ready for this? This is so good. I can't stand it. I'm getting excited.

1 Peter 5:7 (now listen to what Peter said): [actually 1 Peter 5:10]

“But the God of all grace”—isn't that cool? Oh man!—“who has called you to His eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, shall himself make you complete, shall establish you, shall make you strong, shall ground you as on a foundation.” (DAV)

It's everything that he thought, last week, he was trying to perform for himself and now he's giving glory to God and it's all in Jesus Christ.

Everything that concerns us is covered there.

“After you have suffered a little while” He shall “make you complete”—more mature. “He shall establish you, [he] shall make you strong, [he] shall ground you as on a foundation.”

Well Peter and Paul can join hands again and back to the good message.

Philippians 1:6: “Being confident of this very thing that he who began a good work in you will continue to perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.”

Now it's hard, isn't it? Because we like to have people think well of us. We like to have people say "Boy! You're really making progress in your spiritual life!" And we want to give them the secrets of the fact that we do this and we do that and all these things.

The Lord says, "Just back off. Give Me the controls and let Me live out My life through you."

And there's the whole secret in unlocking this particular study and seeing it from this perspective.

John 6:63: "It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing; the words that I have spoken to you are spirit and are life."

God expects nothing from our flesh.

He has no delusions about what we are apart from what He is.

Captain Reginald Wallace said:

Far too many people have shared in the "Old Adam Improvement Society." We so often adopt the attitude of, "Well, if I try a little harder, I know I will be what the Lord wants me to be." (source unknown)

And then over and over again we get lost as a goose just like John Ortberg because we're not following the guidance and the instructions that He has for us.

To many of us who are Christians today, I believe the big problem is that Jesus Christ is sitting there waiting for you and for me to get so frustrated over our failure we finally just give in and turn over to Him—totally and completely—not only the controls, but to make us into the image of Christ so that we can be a wonderful witness for Him.

These Galatians were endeavoring to do it on their own time. That's the study.

You were running well until: You said “I do it myself!”

“Are you so foolish, having begun in the Spirit now are you being brought to maturity in the flesh?”—that is by your own human efforts.

I remember the story of the guy who went in and bought a chain saw. The guy told him, he said “Man, you can cut up a big pile of wood with this thing.” And he went out and worked all week and came back in and said, “You know, I can get more work done with my ax.” The owner said “Well hold it just a second.” He pulled on the cord and the motor started going and the guy said “What's that?”

You know, you've got all the equipment right there but you just want to use your good old ax and you just want to sweat bullets and do it your way. I'm just like that too. We've got a nature that way.

And yet that's just the struggle in the Christian life. It's so simple. It's so plain. Jesus is just saying, "Come on! Let me live out My life through you and watch what happens."

Now some of you are scratching your heads a little and saying "Is this just from you or do you have some other authority behind all that you're saying?" And yes, I do.

A. W. Tozer said:

It may be said without qualification that every man is as holy and as full of the Spirit as he wants to be. (*The Best of A. W. Tozer*, p. 37)

Charles Haddon Spurgeon said:

The moment we glorify ourselves, since there is room for one glory only in the universe, we set ourselves up as rivals to the Most High. (*Exploring the Mind & Heart of the Prince of Preachers*, p. 47)

That's convicting.

Perhaps our greatest weariness is weariness of ourselves. The one person that troubles me most is the one from whom I cannot get away as long as I am here. (*Exploring the Mind & Heart of the Prince of Preachers*, p. 49)

Spurgeon is saying again that we are indeed our own worst enemy.

Now, there's another truth that comes in verse 4 and I want to look at that with you.

v. 4 So many things did you suffer in vain? If indeed it be in vain.

“So many things did you suffer in vain? If indeed it be in vain.”

To a lot of people suffering is something you endure and they always say it comes from Satan.

God sovereignly uses suffering in the molding of our image into Christlikeness.

You stop and think of the rough times you've had in your life. And when you turn to the Lord and you've been broken and surrendered, was some of the greatest joy you've ever had in your life.

Because you did see God working all of it together for His good and for His glory and in touching of people's lives.

You see it's a give-me here. He's saying to these Galatians: “So many things did you suffer in vain?” You've went this long in being a Christian and you've hurt and you've been persecuted, maybe driven out of your homes. And all of these things and

they have no meaning now because you're turning away from the gospel and from the Lord Jesus.

He does hold out hope, doesn't he? "If indeed it be in vain."

He is hoping that somehow they will indeed return. That is question # five in the six questions.

Question #5: "So many things did you suffer in vain? "

Now, when it comes to the whole doctrine of suffering, Peter tells us in 1 Peter 4:12:

Beloved, don't be surprised at the fiery ordeal which is coming upon you, as though something strange was happening unto you; but rejoice inasmuch as you are sharing in the sufferings of Christ.

Romans 8:18

1 Thessalonians 3:3-4

Spiritual growth and development are sometimes accompanied by suffering and difficulty. The only way a Christian can grow and develop is to change. And to ask someone to change from what they are to what they should be involves pain. These Galatian Christians had already suffered, not only from the hands of God in the fact that they had grown to a certain point, but they were also suffering from

those around them because of the stand which they had taken in Jesus Christ.

So that makes that verse come alive.

Hebrews 5:8: “though he were a Son, yet learned obedience from the things which He suffered;”

Christ Himself.

Peter said: “For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that we should follow in his steps.” (1 Peter 2:21)

I’m really looking forward to that wonderful day in glory when I get to meet Margaret Clarkson. She’s the one that wrote that great old hymn, “So Send I You”... to labor unrewarded. She hardly ever got out of her bed all of her life. She suffered intensely and yet she forged one of the greatest doctrines of human suffering for believers. Let me just give you a little snippet of *Grace Grows Best in Winter*:

We may work with God to allow Him to bring His glory out of our suffering, or we may resist Him and frustrate His purposes for us. In either case, we will suffer, for suffering is the common lot of humanity. But how sad to suffer without hope when God means us to rejoice in the hope that His glory and our eternal good are being worked out through our pain! May we seek God’s grace that we may lose nothing of the glory God has for us in our suffering! (*Destined for Glory*, pp. 68-69)

And then she says this:

Oh, what I owe to the file, to the hammer, to the furnace of my Lord Jesus ... Why should I start at the plow of my Lord, that maketh deep furrows on my soul? I know that He is no idle Husbandman: He purposeth a crop! (*Grace Grows Best in Winter*, p. 67)

Dietrich Bonhoeffer is another that comes to mind. He wrote the book *The Cost of Discipleship*. He was a Lutheran pastor in Nazi Germany. He was arrested and put into prison. He wrote this wonderful book while he was in prison.

He dreamed of the day, and some of those letters just cut you so deeply because his fiancée was counting the days that he would be liberated and get out of prison and they could be married. Well in April of 1945, just before the liberation of Europe in June, he was hanged by the Gestapo. Here are two statements from him:

All suffering must lead the Christian to the strengthening of his faith and not to defection.

Suffering only becomes disastrous when we fail to learn its growth-producing lessons.

(*Seize the Day with Dietrich Bonhoeffer*, July 30)

There it is. This is as clear as it can be in a simple statement.

Elisabeth Elliot who has suffered through two husbands. You know her husband Jim Elliot was killed in Ecuador in 1956 and her other husband has died of cancer. She said:

... suffering is “having what you don’t want, or wanting what you don’t have”; it can range in scope and severity from “traffic jams to taxes to tumors.”

(Seeking Him by Nancy Leigh DeMoss & Tim Grissom, p. 93)

And Warren Wiersbe says it well:

“When you are in the furnace, your Father keeps His eye on the clock and His hand on the thermostat.” *(Seeking Him by Nancy Leigh DeMoss & Tim Grissom, p. 94)*

So love Him. Don’t question what He’s doing. Respond and realize He’s going to do something for His glory.

Just a couple more.

Oswald Chambers, Pearl and I read him every morning:

The highest and the greatest expression of faith in the whole Bible is—“Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him” (Job 13:15). *(My Utmost For His Highest, Oct. 31)*

Brennan Manning:

Passion is not high emotion but a steely determination, fired by love, to stay centered in the awareness of Christ’s present

riseness, a drivenness to remain rooted in the truth of who I am, and a readiness to pay the price of fidelity.
(*Abba's Child*, p. 137)

There it is.

v. 5 Therefore the one supplying the Spirit to you and working miracles among you (Is He doing it) by the works of the law or by the message of faith?

“Therefore”—you find out where it’s there for, right?

Question #5:

“Therefore the one supplying the Spirit to you and working miracles among you (Is He doing it) by the works of the law or by the message of faith?”

Multiple choice once again. How are there results from what you’re listening to?

Does it come:

1. “by the works of the law or”
2. “by the message of faith?”

Ian Thomas says:

Allowing the Holy Spirit to occupy the whole of your personality with the adequacy of Jesus Christ. (source unknown)

That's the Holy Spirit taking over in my life. He is the one who involved, not only in my salvation, but my spiritual growth.

The easiest and simplest place to turn is in the upper room just as they're getting ready to leave after Jesus answered those questions of Thomas and Judas (not Iscariot). They left the upper room and they were standing there looking over the Kedron Valley and they could see slashing fires from the vineyards. And the Lord Jesus said "I am the vine, you are the branches. Abide in me and I in you." In other words, be in living connection with Jesus Christ. "Without me you can do nothing." That's hard, isn't it?

"Herein is my Father glorified that you bear much fruit..." (John 15:8).

Ok, how is that going to happen then? It's going to be Him in living union with you producing His life through you to touch the lives of others.

You see, we fight so much against the sinful principle of the life-giving life of the Savior living out His life through us that brings the joy and the blessing that could be ours. And the Lord must have known that because He spoke of it just before He went to the cross.

Now, just to give you a recognition of what it's like to be living in the flesh rather than the Spirit.

J. Dwight Pentecost was a professor at Dallas Seminary. He is still teaching at the school and he's in his 90's. He is the most amazing man. Listen to what he says, speaking of King Saul:

Saul's irritability must be recognized as the product of the flesh, not the product of the Holy Spirit. That which characterizes the Holy Spirit is quietness, peaceableness and rest. He will never produce that which is contrary to His own character in a child of God. Thus the Holy Spirit never produces irritability in a child of God. That is the product of the flesh or the old nature. The child of God who walks in disobedience or is controlled by the flesh will manifest the irritability and restlessness of his father, the devil. If the Spirit of God is in control, he will reproduce the quietness and peacefulness of Jesus Christ. Can you imagine Christ being irritated and snapping somebody's head off?
(Man's Problems and God's Answers)

He's just saying it's awful easy to recognize the flesh.

The other way you can recognize the flesh, and this is coming from a pastor:

You can recognize the flesh when people get their nose out of joint when they're not appreciated for the sacrifices or the things they're doing. (source unknown)

In other words, they're doing it for an audience. And that is a picture of the flesh manifesting itself to bring disruption and division in the oneness within the body of Christ.

Now Tozer asks the question and we've got to squirm a little:

Are you sure that you want your personality to be taken over by One who will not tolerate the self sins? For instance, self-love. You can no more have the Holy Ghost and have self-love than you can have purity and impurity at the same moment in the same place. He will not permit you to indulge self-confidence. Self-love, self-confidence, self-righteousness, self-admiration, self-aggrandizement, and self-pity are under the interdiction of God Almighty, and He cannot send His mighty Spirit to possess the heart where these things are. (*The Best of A. W. Tozer*, p. 211)

And so he's just telling us that it's the Spirit of God's purpose to energize us with the life of Jesus Christ and to watch Him live out His life through us.

Now, the remainder of the study is just an illustration of Abraham.

You're going to see Abraham occur in several of these verses and he'll be in the last one. So look with me now at verse 6 and see what he has to say about this whole business of getting out of the way and letting the Lord do it.

v. 6 Even as Abraham believed God and it was reckoned unto Him for righteousness.

“Even as Abraham believed God and it was reckoned unto Him for righteousness.”

That’s a quotation of Genesis 15:6.

Now why is he turning to Abraham? Well just think about it for a minute. When was the Law given? Well, at least 400 and something years after all this. So the Law wasn’t even in existence when Abraham came to faith and was declared righteous.

So it’s a powerful argument and anybody who’s thinking rightly would have to say “The Law sure didn’t have anything to do with Abraham!” It couldn’t because he pre-dated it. He just believed God and as a result of that faith, he was reckoned unto Him for righteousness.

That great verse, you see it over and over again in the Bible, at least 4 times in other passages.

You’re going to see Abraham in verse 6, verse 7, verse 8, verse 9 and verse 14.

v. 7 You are knowing therefore that those who are of faith these are sons of Abraham.

“You are knowing therefore that those who are of faith these are sons of Abraham.”

By the fact that we have come to know Christ, Christ is the seed of Abraham and responsible for our being declared righteous. So we are brothers and sisters with him, Paul is saying.

Chambers said:

God wants you to understand that it is a life of *faith*, not a life of emotional enjoyment of His blessings. (*My Utmost for His Highest*, Oct. 31)

v. 8 Now the scripture, having foreseen that on faith God is justifying the Gentiles announced beforehand to Abraham all the Gentiles shall be blessed in you.

“Now the scripture, having foreseen that on faith God is justifying the Gentiles”—Remember Gentiles? Anybody that’s not a Jew here. That’s Paul’s ministry and he’s making that clear because these are Gentiles churches that he’s writing to—“here because that announced beforehand to Abraham all the Gentiles shall be blessed in you.”

In other words, what happened to him is going to happen to you Gentiles. That was way back there in the book of Genesis as part of the Abrahamic covenant. That there would be a message and a provision for the Gentiles. And Paul is

vindicating Gentile salvation as that which was promised Abraham.

v. 9 So that those who are believing ones (of faith) are being blessed with believing Abraham.

“So that those who are believing ones (of faith) are being blessed with believing Abraham.”

You getting a little weary over just one word? Faith. Believing. Faith. Believing.

He wants you to. The Spirit is given by faith. Our maturity in Christ is by faith, not in the flesh. Abraham was accepted before by God on the basis of faith.

Now comes a big verse. Verse 10 and verse 13 are the two that I really want you to get ahold of in this final look at these verses.

v. 10 For as many as are of the works of the law are under a curse. For it is written “Cursed is everyone who is not remaining in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.”

“For as many as are of the works of the law are under a curse.”

Cursed is the absence of blessing. As long as I am living by performance I am missing the blessing that could be mine by obedience to Christ.

Oh my! What we could be missing on a daily basis if we could just get out of the way and let Him do His thing.

“For as many as are of the works of the law are under a curse.”—the absence of blessing—“For it is written ‘Cursed is everyone who is not remaining’”—and if you want to circle those next words—“in all things”—you’ve got to keep the whole thing—“which are written in the book of the law to do them.”

You break one, you’re guilty of all of it.

The futility of being able to live this kind of life is beyond human comprehension. To think, that what I do affects the level of my godliness rather than what He is doing in me and through me.

James 2:10: “For whosoever should keep the whole law and offend in one point, he’s guilty of all.”

Ray Ortlund wrote a little book, *You Don’t Have to Quit*. I read this when I was working on retirement:

1. Everybody gets discouraged. You’re not at all alone. A forlorn-looking Charlie Brown comes up to the information desk and asks, “Where do you go to give up?”

Jim Berkeley says a pastor can tell things are bad when ... “he’s elected Pastor Emeritus and he’s only twenty-eight!” (p. 73)

“Cursed is everyone who is not remaining in all things.” You don’t just take part of it.

I would like to have time today, and I don’t, to just give you the 10 commandments as kind of a little test to see how you’re doing. And if there’s anyone of you who has a wiggle worm about it, you’ve already failed just as much as I have. There’s several we can look at and we’ve got to say “I’m guilty.” Ok, then so you’re guilty of the whole thing and your only hope is in Jesus Christ and what He has done on the Cross for you.

v. 11 But that in the law no one is being made righteous before (in the sight of) God is clear (evident) because the righteous (man) shall live by faith.

“But that in the law no one is being made righteous before (in the sight of) God is clear (evident) because the righteous (man) shall live by faith.”

It is not by the works of the Law. No one is being declared or made righteous. That was not the purpose of the Law.

Martin Luther was trying to climb up the sacred stairs when he got the realization that the just, the righteous shall live by faith. And that set the stage for the Reformation. That’s why he loves the book of Galatians.

v. 12 Now the law is not of faith but the one who has done them shall live in them.

“Now the law is not of faith but the one who has done them shall live in them.”

You know, so many people sit right here. They are determined that they have done the best they could. They have performed all their lives. They have neglected personal faith in Jesus Christ to cover all these things. And they’re going to die by it. Basically he’s saying, you’re going to live in it. When the time of judgment comes, you’re going to be judged on the basis of the Law. What a sad, sad destiny because of our unwillingness to allow the Lord to move and to work in our lives.

I don’t know what it is. People seem today just to have the idea that if you’re a good law-keeper you ought to be rewarded.

Now let’s say that for the last 40 years that I’ve been traveling on the road, that I have a perfect driving record, which I don’t. Let’s just say for the sake of illustration that I have. And then I’m hurrying home one Friday night late, because I want to get home to my sweetheart and I’ve been gone all week. And I’m going 70 in a 55 and I see the flashing gumball machine. Ok, he pulls me over. And he says “I’m writing you a ticket for going 70 in a 55.” And I say to him “Sir, would it do any good if I told you that for 40 years I’ve been a law abiding citizen and I’ve stayed within the speed limit and this is the first citation

I've gotten in 40 years?"

"Absolutely not. Here's your ticket. Meet the judge."

The Law was not designed to show appreciation or to give gifts. God did not design it that way. The Law condemns us, drives us to the cross of Christ and our need of a Savior. That's what the Law does. So don't turn it around and then put it into the Christian life as that which is going to make you whole. Rather then, turn to your blessed Lord who has provided everything that is necessary to make us like His Son.

There it is in verse 13.

v. 13 Christ delivered us by the payment of a ransom from the curse of the law. Having become a curse in behalf of us because it is written cursed is everyone who is suspended upon a tree.

"Christ delivered us by the payment of a ransom from the curse of the law. Having become a curse in behalf of us because it is written cursed is everyone who is suspended upon a tree."

Circle the words "delivered us." It's not "will deliver us." He's already done it. He accomplished it on Calvary's cross—past tense. The graphic picture is complete. All He waits now is for us to respond and take what He has provided.

. . . television personality Phil Donahue explains his chief objection to Christianity: “How could an all-knowing, all-loving God allow His Son to be murdered on a cross in order to redeem my sins? If God the Father is so ‘all-loving,’ why didn’t He come down and go to Calvary?” (*Grace Notes* by Philip Yancey, p. 111)

I mean, he just does not understand anything about what eternal salvation is all about!

v. 14 In order that to the Gentiles the blessing of Abraham might come in Jesus Christ, in order that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.

Last verse. Two purpose clauses.

1. “In order that to the Gentiles the blessing of Abraham might come in Jesus Christ”
2. “in order that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.”

Wow! What a study.

Take those things, revel in them today and realize that God’s plan all the way from way back in Abraham was for us by faith to be declared righteous in appropriating what Jesus Christ has done for us upon the Christ.

Now you will notice there are more lessons today than normal. It's because it's a doctrinal section. There are two lessons for you to consider.

I'd like to end with a prayer of Eugene Peterson:

Cleanse me, Christ. Wash the stain of sin from my soul, blow the dust of doubt from my mind, wipe the dirt of evil from my spirit: "I long to be perfectly whole." Amen.

God in Christ: you probe my heart and discover behind the words that I speak the life that I live. Purify and sanctify that inner life so that I may please you and glorify your name. Amen.

(A Year With Jesus, pp. 314 & 180)

And we would say, in Jesus' name. Amen.

STUDY NUMBER FIVE – UNTIL: YOU SAID, “I DO IT MYSELF” – GALATIANS 3:1-14

KEY VERSE 3:3

v. 1 O foolish Galatians who fascinated (bewitched) you before whose eyes Jesus Christ was portrayed having been crucified.

v. 2 This only I am desiring to learn from you. Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law or by the message of faith?

v. 3 Are you so foolish, having begun in the Spirit now are you being brought to maturity in the flesh?

v. 4 So many things did you suffer in vain? If indeed it be in vain.

v. 5 Therefore the one supplying the Spirit to you and working miracles among you (Is He doing it) by the works of the law or by the message of faith?

v. 6 Even as Abraham believed God and it was reckoned unto Him for righteousness.

v. 7 You are knowing therefore that those who are of faith these are sons of Abraham.

v. 8 Now the scripture, having foreseen that on faith God is justifying the Gentiles announced beforehand to Abraham all the Gentiles shall be blessed in you.

v. 9 So that those who are believing ones (of faith) are being blessed with believing Abraham.

v. 10 For as many as are of the works of the law are under a curse. For it is written “Cursed is everyone who is not remaining in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.”

v. 11 But that in the law no one is being made righteous before (in the sight of) God is clear (evident) because the righteous (man) shall live by faith.

v. 12 Now the law is not of faith but the one who has done them shall live in them.

v. 13 Christ delivered us by the payment of a ransom from the curse of the law. Having become a curse in behalf of us because it is written cursed is everyone who is suspended upon a tree.

v. 14 In order that to the Gentiles the blessing of Abraham might come in Jesus Christ, in order that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.

NOTES

QUESTIONS:

1. Read Galatians 3:1-14 and in your own words pull out the main thought of this passage.

2. What did Paul want to learn from them, according to verse 2?

3. How are we “brought to maturity” in the Christian faith, according to verse 3?

4. How does Paul illustrate his truth, according to verses 6-9?

5. What is the condition of those who are under the “works of the Law,” according to verse 10?

6. When someone begins to try and keep the Law, what is his responsibility?

7. How is the “righteous man” described in verse 11?

8. How did Christ deliver us from the “curse of the Law,” according to verse 13?

9. What verse in the study has meant the most to you?

10. What lesson have you learned from this study?

LESSONS FROM THE PASSAGE:

What are some of the lessons we can learn from this particular study?

LESSON #1: The Gospel story begins with the death of the Lord Jesus. “For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures” (1 Cor. 15:3-4 NASB).

LESSON #2: “Now to the one who works, his wage is not reckoned as a favor, but as what is due. But to the one who does not work, but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is reckoned as righteousness” (Rom. 4:4-5 NASB). Abraham believed God and it was reckoned unto Him for righteousness.

LESSON #3: “Yet, with respect to the promise of God, he did not waver in unbelief, but grew strong in faith, giving glory to God” (Rom. 4:20 NASB).

LESSON #4: It is a very real possibility that we can get sidetracked by false teaching.

LESSON #5: God’s gracious gift in the Lord Jesus Christ is totally adequate for salvation, sanctification, and glorification.

LESSON #6: You cannot experience the new birth by the Spirit and then be brought to maturity in the flesh.

LESSON #7: Suffering is a vital tool of God for spiritual growth and development.

LESSON #8: The Spirit of God comes in when you become a Christian.

LESSON #9: Everything God does is on the basis of faith.

LESSON #10: The curse of the Law is that you must do it all to make it. “For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles in one point, he has become guilty of all” (Jam. 2:10 NASB).

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LESSON #11: There is no gain without pain.

LESSON #12: Christ took the curse of the Law, that we might have the blessing.

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