

## STUDY NOTES

### Galatians 3

#### ◆Understanding The Presence of the Spirit◆

#### The Law And Faith In Christ: (Verses 1-14)

*You foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you? Before your very eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed as crucified. <sup>2</sup> I would like to learn just one thing from you: Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law, or by believing what you heard? <sup>3</sup> Are you so foolish? After beginning by means of the Spirit, are you now trying to finish by means of the flesh? <sup>4</sup> Have you experienced so much in vain◆if it really was in vain? <sup>5</sup> So again I ask, does God give you his Spirit and work miracles among you by the works of the law, or by your believing what you heard? <sup>6</sup> So also Abraham ◆believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness. ◆*

*<sup>7</sup> Understand, then, that those who have faith are children of Abraham. <sup>8</sup> Scripture foresaw that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, and announced the gospel in advance to Abraham: ◆All nations will be blessed through you. ◆ <sup>9</sup> So those who rely on faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith.*

*<sup>10</sup> For all who rely on the works of the law are under a curse, as it is written: ◆Cursed is everyone who does not continue to do everything written in the Book of the Law. ◆ <sup>11</sup> Clearly no one who relies on the law is justified before God, because ◆the righteous will live by faith. ◆ <sup>12</sup> The law is not based on faith; on the contrary, it says, ◆The person who does these things will live by them. ◆ <sup>13</sup> Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: ◆Cursed is everyone who is hung on a pole. ◆ <sup>14</sup> He redeemed us in order that the blessing given to Abraham might come to the Gentiles through Christ Jesus, so that by faith we might receive the promise of the Spirit.*

#### GALATIANS 3:1

The Galatian believers had become fascinated by the false teachers◆ arguments, almost as though they had been bewitched. Magic was common in Paul◆s day (Acts 8:9-11; 13:6, 7). Magicians used both optical illusions and Satan◆s power to perform miracles, and people were drawn into the magicians◆ mysterious rites without recognizing their dangerous source.

#### GALATIANS 3:2, 3

Some of the believers in Galatia may have been in Jerusalem at Pentecost and received the Holy Spirit there. They knew that they hadn◆t received God◆s Spirit by obeying the Jewish laws. Paul stressed that just as they began their Christian lives in the power of the

Spirit, so they should grow by the Spirit's power. The Galatians had taken a step backward when they had decided to insist on keeping the Jewish laws. We must realize that we grow spiritually because of God's work in us by his Spirit, not by following special rules.

### **GALATIANS 3:5**

The Galatians knew that they had received the Holy Spirit when they believed, not when they obeyed the law. People still feel insecure in their faith because faith alone seems too easy. People still try to get closer to God by following rules. While certain disciplines (Bible study, prayer) and service may help us grow, they must not take the place of the Holy Spirit in us or become ends in themselves. By asking these questions, Paul hoped to get the Galatians to focus again on Christ as the foundation of their faith.

The Holy Spirit gives Christians great power to live for God. Some Christians want more than this. They want to live in a state of perpetual excitement. The tedium of everyday living leads them to conclude that something is wrong spiritually. Often the Holy Spirit's greatest work is teaching us to persist, to keep on doing what is right even when it no longer seems interesting or exciting. The Galatians quickly turned from Paul's Good News to the teachings of the newest teachers in town; what they needed was the Holy Spirit's gift of persistence. If the Christian life seems ordinary, you may need the Spirit to stir you up. Every day offers a challenge to live for Christ.

### **GALATIANS 3:6-9**

The main argument of the Judaizers was that Gentiles had to become Jews in order to become Christians. Paul exposed the flaw in this argument by showing that real children of Abraham are those who have faith, not those who keep the law. Abraham himself was saved by his faith (Genesis 15:6). All believers in every age and from every nation share Abraham's blessing. This is a comforting promise, a great heritage for us, and a solid foundation for living.

### **GALATIANS 3:10**

Paul quoted Deuteronomy 27:26 to prove that, contrary to what the Judaizers claimed, the law cannot justify and save—it can only condemn. Breaking even one commandment brings a person under condemnation. And because everyone has broken the commandments, everyone stands condemned. The law can do nothing to reverse the condemnation (Romans 3:20-24). But Christ took the curse of the law upon himself when he hung on the cross. He did this so we wouldn't have to bear our own punishment. The only condition is that we accept Christ's death on our behalf as the means to be saved (Colossians 1:20-23).

### **GALATIANS 3:11**

Trying to be right with God by our own effort doesn't work. Good intentions such as "I'll do better next time" or "I'll never do that again" usually end in failure. Paul points to Habakkuk's declaration (Habakkuk 2:4) that by trusting God believing in his provision for our sins and living each day in his power we can break this cycle of failure.

## The Law And God's Promises: (Verses 15-22)

*<sup>15</sup> Brothers and sisters, let me take an example from everyday life. Just as no one can set aside or add to a human covenant that has been duly established, so it is in this case. <sup>16</sup> The promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. Scripture does not say "and to seeds," meaning many people, but "and to your seed," meaning one person, who is Christ. <sup>17</sup> What I mean is this: The law, introduced 430 years later, does not set aside the covenant previously established by God and thus do away with the promise. <sup>18</sup> For if the inheritance depends on the law, then it no longer depends on the promise; but God in his grace gave it to Abraham through a promise.*

*<sup>19</sup> Why, then, was the law given at all? It was added because of transgressions until the Seed to whom the promise referred had come. The law was given through angels and entrusted to a mediator. <sup>20</sup> A mediator, however, implies more than one party; but God is one. <sup>21</sup> Is the law, therefore, opposed to the promises of God? Absolutely not! For if a law had been given that could impart life, then righteousness would certainly have come by the law. <sup>22</sup> But Scripture has locked up everything under the control of sin, so that what was promised, being given through faith in Jesus Christ, might be given to those who believe.*

## GALATIANS 3:17

God kept his promise to Abraham (Genesis 17:7, 8) he has not revoked it, though thousands of years have passed. He saved Abraham through his faith, and he blessed the world through Abraham by sending the Messiah as one of Abraham's descendants. Circumstances may change, but God remains constant and does not break his promises. He has promised to forgive our sins through Jesus Christ, and we can be sure that he will do so.

## GALATIANS 3:18, 19

The law has two functions. On the positive side, it reveals the nature and will of God and shows people how to live. On the negative side, it points out people's sins and shows them that it is impossible to please God by trying to obey all his laws completely. God's promise to Abraham dealt with Abraham's faith; the law focuses on actions. The covenant with Abraham shows that faith is the only way to be saved; the law shows how to obey God in grateful response. Faith does not annul the law; but the more we know God, the more we see how sinful we are. Then we are driven to depend on our faith in Christ alone for our salvation.

## **GALATIANS 3:19, 20**

When God gave his promise to Abraham, he did it by himself alone, without angels or Moses as mediators. Although it is not mentioned in Exodus, Jews believed that the Ten Commandments had been given to Moses by angels (Stephen referred to this in his speech, see Acts 7:38, 53). Paul was showing the superiority of salvation and growth by faith over trying to be saved by keeping the Jewish laws. Christ is the best and only way given by God for us to come to him (1 Timothy 2:5).

## **GALATIANS 3:21, 22**

Before faith in Christ delivered us, we were imprisoned by sin, beaten down by past mistakes, and choked by desires that we knew were wrong. God knew we were sinners prisoners, but he provided a way of escape—faith in Jesus Christ. Without Christ, everyone is held in sin's grasp, and only those who place their faith in Christ ever get out of it. Look to Christ—he is reaching out to set you free.

## **God's Children Through Faith: (Verses 23-29)**

*<sup>23</sup> Before the coming of this faith, we were held in custody under the law, locked up until the faith that was to come would be revealed. <sup>24</sup> So the law was our guardian until Christ came that we might be justified by faith. <sup>25</sup> Now that this faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian. <sup>26</sup> So in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith, <sup>27</sup> for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. <sup>28</sup> There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. <sup>29</sup> If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.*

## **GALATIANS 3:24, 25**

The picture of the law as a guardian is similar to a tutor giving a young child supervision. We no longer need that kind of supervision. The law teaches us the *need* for salvation; God's grace *gives* us that salvation. The Old Testament still applies today. In it, God reveals his nature, his will for humanity, his moral laws, and his guidelines for living. But we cannot be saved by keeping that law; we must trust in Christ.

## **GALATIANS 3:28**

Some Jewish males greeted each new day by praying, ◆Lord, I thank you that I am not a Gentile, a slave, or a woman.◆ The role of women was enhanced by Christianity. Faith in

Christ transcends these differences and makes all believers one in Christ. Make sure you do not impose distinctions that Christ has removed. Because all believers are his heirs, no one is more privileged than or superior to anyone else.

It ♦s our natural inclination to feel uncomfortable around people who are different from us and to gravitate toward those who are similar to us. But when we allow our differences to separate us from our fellow believers, we are disregarding clear biblical teaching. Make a point to seek out and appreciate people who are not just like you and your friends. You may find that you have a lot in common with them.

### **GALATIANS 3:29**

The original promise to Abraham was intended for the whole world, not just for Abraham ♦s descendants (see Genesis 12:3). All believers participate in this promise and are blessed as children of Abraham.

What Is the Law?	
Part of the Jewish law included those laws found in the Old Testament. When Paul says that non-Jews (Gentiles) are no longer bound by these law, he is not saying that the Old Testament laws do not apply to us today. He is saying certain types of laws may not apply to us. In the Old Testament there were three categories of laws:	
Ceremonial law	This kind of law relates specifically to Israel's worship (see, for example, Leviticus 1:1-13). Its primary purpose was to point forward to Jesus Christ. Therefore, these laws were no longer necessary after Jesus' death and resurrection. While we are no longer bound by ceremonial laws, the principles behind them ♦to worship and love a holy God ♦still apply. The Jewish Christians often accused the Gentile Christians of violating the ceremonial law.
Civil law	This type of law dictated Israel's daily living (see Deuteronomy 24:10, 11, for example). Because modern society and culture are so radically different, some of these guidelines cannot be followed specifically. But the principles behind the commands should guide our conduct. At times, Paul asked Gentile Christians to follow some of these laws, not because they had to, but in order to promote unity.
Moral law	This sort of law is the direct command of God ♦for example, the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:1-17). It requires strict obedience. It reveals the nature and will of God, and it still applies to us today. We are to obey this moral law, not to obtain salvation, but to live in ways pleasing to God.