



Week Three:
GRACE THAT CLOTHES US
Bible Study

MAY 6 - MAY 12, 2019

KEY VERSE

You are all God's children through faith in Christ Jesus. All of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek; there is neither slave nor free; nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. — Galatians 3:26-28 (CEB)

BIBLE STUDY

Galatians Chapter 3

GATHERING PRAYER

Consider using one of the Opening Prayers, the Prayer for Illumination, and/or the Statement of Faith from the Week 3 Worship Helps for this series.

OVERVIEW

In this chapter, Paul challenges the Galatians with a series of rhetorical questions, intending to convince them of the unreasonableness of forfeiting the way of salvation by faith for a hopeless adherence to the Mosaic Law. Each section highlights a different appeal defending Justification by Faith alone – the Galatians own experience, the example of Abraham and the purpose of the Mosaic Law.

In the first section, *Galatians 3:1-5*, Paul essentially asks them “*How can you give up the freedom you've known in accepting the free gift of grace given to you through what Jesus did on the cross for a legalistic, works-oriented righteousness that comes through trying to obey the entire law of Moses? What would make you think that something that is Spirit-born can be lived out by human effort?*”

In the second section, *Galatians 3:6-14*, Paul continues by pointing to Abraham as the picture of justification by faith alone. He directs the Galatians to recognize that Abraham is fully accepted by God not by observing the law, but by his faith in God's promises. He was accepted solely because he surrendered his entire life to God's promises. Paul's argument in this section of *Chapter 3* is, it isn't Abraham's outward mark of Jewishness (circumcision) that justifies him; it's his faith. It is faith, not circumcision (as Paul's opponents were seeking to convince the Galatians) that justifies. Those who, like Abraham, have trusted God's promises are Abraham's true descendants. Those who would choose to base their salvation in an adherence to specific laws are not part of Abraham's tribe.

In the third section, *Galatians 3:15-29*, Paul uses a variety of arguments to point out the futility of holding onto the law as a means of salvation. He begins with an example from the legal world; the legal system doesn't allow any additions or subtractions to a properly established will. In the same way, the covenant between God and Abraham cannot be revised in any way by the law, which came about 430 years later. In fact, the law has only two functions; to act as a prison guard and a tutor for an under-age child. Its purpose was to reveal Israel's sinfulness, and, in effect, hold Israel prisoner until Christ came ("until the descendant would come to whom the promise had been made" *Galatian 3:19*). The Law was like an under-age child's tutor, who has responsibility for keeping the child in line until a certain age. In these verses, the Law has a limited function, for a limited time. It was never intended to be a means of salvation. Paul ends the chapter with a reminder of who the Galatians are, namely, the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. It was in baptism that the act of adoption into the family of God was celebrated. Baptism in the early church was the initial response of faith. It was not seen as necessary for salvation, but faith without baptism was not faith for the early church. To be clothed with Christ may refer to the early Christian practice of putting on a white baptismal robe, to signify the putting on Christ's characteristics. Ultimately, Paul wanted the Galatians to see that, in Christ, there are no racial, social or gender distinctions, because all are one. The implications of "all" in v.26-28 are seen in v.29; those who belong to Christ are both Abraham's true descendants and heirs of the promises made to him. The way we are saved is by grace through faith in what Jesus Christ has done on the cross.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What seems like an irrational belief to you? UFO's? Ghosts? Other beliefs?
2. What changed for you when you said "Yes" to God in salvation?
3. How would you define faith?
4. Are there ways people still try to live out a works-oriented way of salvation? How do you understand the relationship between faith and works?
5. The false teachers taught that by an external ritual (circumcision), a person could gain merit with God. What are some "externals" in our day that someone might believe can gain them merit with God?
6. Is the content of the law no longer binding? Are there ways we fulfill the law in the way we live as Christians?
7. If you were able to add another distinction that separates people in v.28, what would it be? Why do we as humans put so much focus on what separates us rather than what unites us?
8. How is adoption into the family of God a fitting analogy for what happens as a result of being justified by faith?
9. How does being clothed with Christ help eliminate barriers between people?
10. How can this passage help us to understand that our differing backgrounds and experiences can be a gift that reflects the fullness of the body of Christ rather than a source of competition or division among us?

SENDING FORTH

Close with prayer.

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