

May 4, 2008



Oaks Early Risers Bible Class

**The Oaks
Baptist Church
Grand Prairie, Texas**



**Lesson Leader:
James Haymon**

**Class Leaders:
Joe & Comella Liles**

SALVATION BY FAITH

GAL 2:15-3:5

Thoughts from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary

Today's lesson shows Paul pleading with the Galatians, both on a logical and an emotional level. It is clear from the apostle's impassioned words that he is greatly concerned that those whom he had worked so hard to bring to Christ remain free in Christ. Before studying these verses, we must keep in mind that the Jews in Paul's time had a very different understanding of the word *law* than we do. We tend to think of *law* as including civil rules and regulations, prescriptions that govern our conduct with each other. While there was an element of that within Old Testament laws, that system was primarily a way to get right with God. To the Jew in Paul's time, these laws consisted of not only regulations concerning one's relationships with others, but also ceremonial regulations covering such matters as worship and diet. Moral and ethical living was only a part of what the Jews thought of when they used the word *law*. There is another important factor in the background of this text, and Paul alludes to it in the verses immediately preceding the first part of our text. It concerns Paul's report of a serious disagreement between him and Peter (Galatians 2:11-14). The conflict arose over how Peter treated certain Gentiles at Antioch where Paul and Barnabas were ministering. Antioch was the first church to evangelize large numbers of Gentile converts. Peter had previously spoken eloquently on two occasions about accepting the Gentiles. The first followed the conversion of Cornelius and his household (Acts 11:1-18); the second came at the Jerusalem Conference (Acts 15:6-11). However, during the incident cited by Paul in Galatians, Peter shunned Gentile believers in order to spend time with Jewish Christians. Paul notes that Peter did this, "because he was afraid of those who belonged to the circumcision group" (Galatians 2:12). Peter seems to have yielded to a measure of "peer pressure" and had demonstrated some of the qualities associated with the "old" Peter (unreliable, quick to falter under pressure). No doubt Peter's actions hurt many of the newer Gentile Christians. Peter's behavior had even affected Barnabas (v. 13), who was known for his generous spirit. Paul confronted Peter and told him that what he was doing was wrong. That surely took some courage! This confrontation between Paul and Peter, along with the material we are covering in today's lesson, show how controversial the question of Jew/Gentile relations was in the early church. When one reads the book of Acts, he or she cannot help but see that God is nudging and pushing the church to reach out to Gentiles with the gospel message. The gospel first comes to Jews, then to Samaritans, then to an Ethiopian Jewish proselyte, and finally to Cornelius, a Gentile. As noted earlier, it was Peter, not Paul, who welcomed the first Gentile convert. This may be another reason why Paul was so disturbed about Peter's conduct in Antioch. Following the report of this difficult confrontation, Paul elaborates on the importance of justification by faith. Perhaps this teaching was some of what he shared with Peter.

Thoughts from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator

It is a great truth of the faith that Christ died for our sins and that faith in Him gives us salvation. This is the good news of the gospel. If that were all there was to it, it would still be a good deal. But there is more. Christ also gives us His righteousness, and we are justified by faith. This is possible through identifying with the death and resurrection of Christ. When we are born again, we stop living our old life because the old man was crucified with Christ. In place of the old man that we were, the Spirit of Christ is now living in us. The more we realize this, the more we can appropriate it in our lives by faith and the more we will see Christ's influence in our lives. Romans 6:4 says, "Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life." This is the essential message of the gospel, and it was a huge stumbling block to the Jews of Paul's day. It remains a stumbling block to many people today. The Jewish Christians wanted to measure their righteousness by how well they followed the law, just as they had done previously. They also wanted the newly converted pagans to do the same. This was the reason Galatians was written to combat the idea that we are still under the law. The law still exists, but we no longer live in that frame of reference. Now the Spirit of Christ lives in us and surpasses the law through us. Paul's opponents, as well as many people today, charged that if we are not under the law, this could amount to a license to sin. Paul flatly denied the charge and said that if we go back to the law, the law will only show us that we are sinners. Paul advocated a much better way, the way of faith. If a person could be justified by the law, there would have been no reason for Christ to die. Jesus came to earth to die and to set us free from sin. A key part of this was doing away with the idea that we can be righteous through the law. Instead of trying to be good enough and hoping that maybe we will be saved, we have faith. We are saved by faith in Christ, and we live by faith in Christ. That is what His living in us means. This should make us take the focus off ourselves and put it on Christ. There are only two things that can happen when we try to be justified by law, and both of them are bad. One is that we can think we are doing well and become prideful. The other is that we can fail and be consumed with guilt. We were crucified with Christ, and now He lives in us. We died with Him and were raised with Him. We were not raised to go back to rules and regulations that did not work anyway. We were raised with Christ so that we can live in the newness of life that Romans 6:4 describes. We now have resurrection power to overcome sin; so there is no need for law. We actually serve better because we live in the power of Christ and not in the power of our own flesh.

God's Project: Effective Christians Who have been Set Free Studies in Galatians

<u>Date</u>	<u>Lesson</u>	<u>Text</u>
4/27	No Other Gospel	1:1-12
5/04	Salvation by Faith	2:15-3:5
5/11	<i>Mother's Day Special</i>	
5/18	Purpose of the Law	3:19-4:7
5/25	Christian Freedom	5:1-15
6/01	Walking in the Spirit	5:22-6:10

Special Guest for a Special Day!
Next Sunday
Be sure to be here!!

All members are encouraged
to **ENCOUNTER** God each
Wednesday at 6:30pm
in Luper Hall

NOTES AND CROSS-REFERENCES

JUSTIFIED BY FAITH (GAL 2:15-18)

Not justified by works (vs 15-16)

- Because if God kept a record of works and sins, no one would be saved (Ps 130:3-4)
- Because no one can be justified by works (Acts 13:38-39)
- Because no one can be declared righteous by works (Rom 3:19-20)
- Because if by works, there would be no value in faith (Rom 4:13-14)
- Because it is only through God's mercy anyone is justified (Titus 3:4-7)
- Because works of the law never made anyone perfect (Heb 7:18-19)

Justified by Jesus (vs 17-18)

- Through Jesus' permanent priesthood (Heb 7:24-25)
- Through the redemption of Jesus (Rom 3:24)
- Through faith in Jesus (Rom 5:1-2)
- Through the name of Jesus (1 Cor 6:11)

CRUCIFIED BY FAITH (GAL 2:19-21)

Dead to the law (vs 19)

- Because we are not under the law, but grace (Rom 6:14)
- Through the body of Christ (Rom 7:4)
- Through being released from the law (Rom 7:6)
- Through setting our minds on things above (Col 3:1-3)

Dead to sin (vs 20)

- Through offering our bodies as an instrument and slave to righteousness (Rom 6:11-13)
- Through Jesus indwelling us (Rom 8:10)
- Through being baptized into Jesus (Rom 6:2-4)
- Through the old self being crucified (Rom 6:6)
- Through crucifying the world to us and us to the world (Gal 6:14)

Alive through grace (vs 21)

- Through God's great love (Eph 2:4-5)
- Through Jesus (1 Cor 15:22)
- Through God's forgiveness (Col 2:13-14)
- Through the grace brought about by Jesus (Rom 5:15-17)
- Through justification (Titus 3:7)

FILLED WITH THE SPIRIT BY FAITH (GAL 3:1-5)

To be obedient (vs 1)

- Obedience through the power of the Holy Spirit (Acts 5:32)
- Obedience through living in Jesus (1 John 3:24)
- Obedience through love (John 14:21)
- Obedience through guarding faith (2 Tim 1:13-14)
- Obedience through our spirit being alive in Christ (Rom 8:10)
- Obedience through God's love being made complete in us (1 John 2:5)

To be perfected (vs 2-3)

- Perfected by keeping God's word (1 John 2:5)
- Perfected through God abiding in us (1 John 4:12)
- Perfected through love (1 John 4:17)
- Perfected through God's grace (2 Cor 12:9)
- Perfected through sanctification (Heb 10:14)
- Perfected through works of faith (James 2:22)
- Meaning of perfected (Barnes Notes)

So that faith is not in vain (vs 4-5)

- Faith is not in vain because of the gospel (1 Cor 15:2)
- Faith is not in vain because of standing firm in God (1 Cor 15:58)
- Faith is not in vain because Jesus was resurrected (1 Cor 15:13-15)
- Faith is not in vain because of the testing of our faith (2 Cor 13:5-6)