

The Righteous will Live by Faith

Galatians 3:1-4 (vv. 11-14)

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I. Historical Background and Biblical Contexts

A. Historical Background

Let us recall some significant moments and enduring divine interventions in the history of the Israelites in this section.

1. God revealed Himself to Abraham and Sarah; God chose them; they didn't choose Him.
2. It is God who raised up *a people* who will be called by His Holy and Righteous Name through Abraham and Sarah;
3. The Relationship between the LORD and Abraham was based on God's Promises, Abraham's Faith and Obedience from the beginning;
4. God required all the males in the household of Abraham to be *circumcised* when He entered a Covenant Relationship with them;
5. God made for Himself *a people* who became known as the Israelites (now Christians) to be a blessing to others;
6. Much later, God gave *His Law* to Moses to give to the Israelites;
7. God also made Provisions in the Law for people of other nations to be included and be treated the same way as the Israelites;
8. The history of the Israelites is full of unfaithfulness and disobedience which resulted in periods of defeats, moral decay and enslavement.

B. Biblical Contexts

In spite of the history unfaithfulness and disobedience of the Israelites, the LORD kept His Promises given to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and David.

- God also remained Faithful to His people and always found a way to advance His Plan of Salvation generation after generation;
- God sent His own Son to fulfill the Law and all the prophecies of the OT;
- God made Salvation by faith in Jesus Christ available to all sinners regardless of their ethnicity, race or nationality;
- God also continued to raise up faithful and obedient servants who would proclaim His Word in every generation;
- God instituted the Church as His instrument to advance His Plan of Salvation all over the world;
- God made redemption, restoration and freedom freely available to those who believed in His Word.

II. The Lesson: The Righteous Live by Faith

God made Salvation accessible **only by faith** in Jesus Christ thereby eliminating any kind of **material thing** and **human effort** from being considered in **Spiritual matters**. In other words, access to God and relationship with Him is *only possible through faith*. Since faith is not a material thing, it cannot be bought, sold or inherited. God made faith one of the *inherent qualities* of human beings; **faith is both intangible and intrinsic**. Therefore, everyone has the ability to have faith in God. However, people tend to put their faith in people, themselves or material things. When people have faith in themselves, another person(s) or thing(s), *they believe in idols*. In addition, faith cannot be produced by human effort. God made Himself accessible ONLY through **Spiritual Means**. Therefore, God *excluded* any kind of **material things** and anything involving **human efforts** *from qualifying anyone for Salvation*. In other words, no matter the *quantity* and *quality* of the material possessions a person has, he or she cannot buy or earn his or her Salvation. No matter how noble, admirable, etc. a person's effort might be, it *cannot earn anyone* Salvation and Reconciliation with God. **That is why God made Faith the ONLY KEY which unlocks the Door to Salvation, the Door to God being Jesus Christ.**

By *eliminating* any kind of **physical things** such as money, gold, silver, land, etc., or the result of **human effort** (position, title, degree, etc.), God made Faith in Christ the ONLY *qualification* that everyone needs to receive Salvation and reconciliation with Him. Of course, the Jewish priests and Pharisees who benefited from the old customs and traditions didn't like the *radical changes* Jesus Christ represented. They wanted to keep alive the old traditions because accepting the New Covenant in the Blood of The Lamb meant losing their position, title and privileges. Therefore, they insisted that observing the Law was necessary to receive Salvation. The high priests and their associates wanted to *reintroduce the Law* because they feared losing their grips over people! **But Jesus did away with the Priesthood!** The Jewish authorities wanted to maintain the Priesthood because they benefited from the animals and tithe people brought to the Jerusalem Temple. **But Jesus did away with animal sacrifices and tithing when He offered Himself as the Lamb of God!** The Jewish authorities wanted to preserve the Jerusalem Temple as the only center of worship. **But Jesus did away with the Jerusalem Temple!** Jesus instituted the Church which decentralized place of worship! No need for a **physical temple** which had to be glorious in size and quality of materials! **People who believed in Jesus Christ can praise, worship and serve God anywhere including in their homes!** God made Himself available everywhere *in and outside of Jerusalem* wherever people who believed in Jesus Christ formed a church. But the Jewish authorities *persisted* in trying to persuade the Christians to believe in the old traditions in an effort to hold on to their former

positions, titles and privileges! So, they continued to send their emissaries to churches in every region to dilute the Gospel of Jesus Christ and to discredit the apostleship and ministry of Paul. And some of them succeeded in confusing and dividing the Christians with their false teaching!

Let us now examine the 14 verses in Galatians chapter 3 with a focus on verses 11 through 14.

1. **vv. 1-5. Everything about God is Spiritual.**

In verses 1 to 5, Apostle Paul asked the Galatian churches the following *rhetorical questions* to help them understand that they didn't earn their Salvation by obeying the Law, material possessions, or human effort. In addition, Paul also emphasized that they didn't receive the Holy Spirit with their human effort! *The radical transformation that they all experienced came by **Miraculous Spiritual Means!*** Therefore, Paul asked them the following:

- a) “**Who has bewitched you?**” In his follow up question Paul reminded them that they received their Salvation only after they accepted Jesus Christ as their Savior *by faith*, when they heard about His crucifixion on the Cross which liberated them from slavery of sinful living!
- b) “**Did you receive the Spirit by observing the Law, or by believing what you heard?**” The follow up question: “**Are you so foolish?**”
- c) “**After beginning with the Spirit, are you now trying to attain your goal by human effort?**”
- d) “**Have you suffered so much for nothing – if it really was nothing?**” The *suffering* Paul was referring to about the losses people suffered when they became Christians. In those days, conversion to Christianity exposed the believers to persecution, confiscation of land, homes, etc.
- e) “**Does God give you His Spirit and work miracles among you because you observed the Law, or because you believed what you heard?**”

Recall that the Galatians never saw Jesus **physically**. They weren't there **physically** to witness His Crucifixion. ***Just like you and I, they believed when they heard the Gospel of Jesus Christ preached to them! It was a Spiritual Experience!*** Just like you and I, they received the **Holy Spirit** *when by faith*, they accepted Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior! ***It was a Miraculous Spiritual Experience!*** *The Invisible God, His Son and the Holy Spirit, whom we have never seen **physically**, granted us Salvation when we put our faith in Jesus Christ!* We didn't receive our Salvation by reading and obeying the Law, by circumcision, putting money on the alter or traveling to Jerusalem Temple with animals to be offered there. *No, it happened because we just **believed** the message that Jesus Christ is the Son of God!* **Everything about God is Spiritual.**

2. vv. 6-9. **The Scripture Foresaw the Gentiles being Justified by Faith.**

Recall Abraham and Sarah belonged to a pagan nation. *God blessed Abraham only after he **believed** and immediately acted upon his convictions.* **Later, God credited Abraham's faithfulness as righteousness.** Recall that **the Law** was given many generations after the death of Abraham and Sarah. However, God's Promises to Abraham and Sarah became fulfilled in their descendants because of the Covenant Relationship the LORD made with them. Therefore, in verse 8, the Bible says "**The 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'.**" All of the blessings given to Abraham *became true even in us* because he believed God and acted upon his faith when he left his family, community and country he had known for 75 years!

3. vv. 10-13. **Christ came to Save us from the Curse of the Law.**

The Scripture says that anyone who didn't **obey** "everything written in the Book of the Law" is under a curse. **Since none of us can obey and fulfill all that the Law requires of us, we remain cursed deserving of eternal death.** *The Law was given to show us how utterly helpless we are to overcome our weaknesses and wickedness.* In verse 10, the Bible says, "Cursed is everyone who does not continue to do everything written in the Book of the Law." **Abraham was not justified before God by the Law. Rather, he was justified for trusting God and acting upon his faith.** That is why the Bible says in verse 11, "**The righteous live by faith.**"

It is humanly impossible to obey and live by the Law! Yet, the Jewish authorities were trying to impose the Law upon the churches! *Aren't you glad that the Loving, Merciful and Gracious God made a way for us to be delivered from all the Curses in the Law that condemn us to a life of destitution, oppression and exploitation in this life as well as eternal damnation in the next!? **All we had to do was put our faith in Jesus Christ! "The righteous live by faith!"***

III. **Conclusion/Application**

4. v. 14. **Redeemed by Faith in Christ to be a Blessing to Others!**

In verse 14, the Bible highlights several things for us.

- God redeemed us in Christ so that we become a blessing to others just like Abraham;
- We must live by faith so that all the blessings we have received in Jesus Christ might be extended to those who don't know God;
- We must live by faith so that the Promises of God will be manifested in us through the Holy Spirit.